

Mapping Diplomatic Representation in Europe, 1648–1715

New Data from the *Repertorium der diplomatischen Vertreter*

Magnus Lundgren
University of Gothenburg
magnus.lundgren@gu.se

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Abstract

This paper introduces new data on diplomatic representation in Europe between 1648 and 1715, drawn from Band I of the *Repertorium der diplomatischen Vertreter aller Länder*. The data comprise 13,344 diplomatic missions, exchanged among 141 sending and 201 receiving polities, and 8,852 individual representatives. The paper describes the source and coding procedure, assesses the quality and limits of the data, and reports patterns in participation, rank, and mission duration. In an illustrative application, I use the data to examine diplomatic continuity across ruler successions, with findings suggesting that individual appointments remained tied to the person of the ruler even as the relationships they served proved durable. The dataset will be useful for research on recognition and membership in the states system, status and hierarchy among polities, and the formation of the early modern state. Data collection will continue, and Bands II and III will extend the series to 1815.

Keywords: diplomacy; diplomatic representation; embassies; early modern Europe; data

1 Introduction

Diplomacy is among the oldest institutions of the international system. Its modern European form emerged with the resident embassies of Renaissance Italy and became general after the Peace of Westphalia (Mattingly, 1955; Anderson, 1993). Scholars have long studied how this system took shape, including the diffusion of resident representation and the ordering of states by rank and precedence (e.g., Osiander, 2001; Watkins, 2008). These accounts rest predominantly on qualitative evidence, including histories of particular courts, envoys, and negotiations. Quantitative data on diplomatic representation, by contrast, exist from 1817 (the Correlates of War Diplomatic Exchange and H-DATA series; Bayer, 2006; Teorell, 2023), with later datasets adding annual or sampled observations for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Moyer et al., 2021; Niklasson and Towns, 2023). These data have supported a wide-ranging scholarship in international relations, including work on status and recognition (Renshon, 2016; Duque, 2018), on the formation of diplomatic networks (Kinne, 2014), and on representation and trade (Rose, 2007). However, for the preceding two centuries, during which enduring practices and institutions of the international system in Europe emerged and solidified, no such data exist.

This paper introduces a dataset of diplomatic representation in Europe covering 1648–1815, built from the *Repertorium der diplomatischen Vertreter aller Länder*, a three-volume reference work compiled from European foreign-ministry archives in the early twentieth century (Bittner and Groß, 1936). This version covers 1648–1715. It records 13,344 individual diplomatic missions exchanged among 233 distinct political authorities, and names 8,852 representatives. These authorities include sovereign monarchies, republics, free imperial cities, ecclesiastical principalities, imperial diets, and powers outside Christian Europe such as the Ottoman Empire and Persia. Each mission records the sending polity,¹ the receiving polity, the representative and the rank held, and any event of the mission (such as the presentation of credentials, an audience, or a departure). For most missions, dates are given to the day, giving the data a very high temporal granularity. The data are compiled at the mission level, but I also arrange them into an annual dyad-year panel.

Descriptive analysis of the aggregate data reveals three patterns. First, at the level of the system, diplomatic activity was already extensive by the mid-seventeenth century and grew thereafter: around 200 missions were under way in the late 1640s, rising to between 550 and 700 by the 1660s and remaining at that level through the major wars between 1672 and 1714. Second, at the level of the polity, participation was broad but asymmetric. The Habsburg court at Vienna received about one mission in ten, while dozens of smaller polities sent or received only a handful. Third, at the level of the mission, standing residencies made up about a fifth of representation, and this share did not rise over the period.

To showcase the utility of the data, I examine the impact of ruler successions on a polity’s diplomatic representation network. This allows me to shed light on a central question in the literature on state formation (North et al., 2009; Ertman, 1997), namely whether the diplomatic apparatus of the early modern state was patrimonial, an extension of the ruler’s own person, or bureaucratic and impersonal. Two results emerge. First, diplomatic missions were sensitive

¹I use *polity* throughout as a convenient label for any authority that sent or received diplomatic representation; some, such as the imperial diets and assemblies, are not polities in a strict sense.

to ruler successions, suggesting that appointments remained tied to the ruler. Second, ruler successions were not associated with a change in a polity’s diplomatic partners, suggesting that its international network was shaped by relationships more durable than the individual appointments.

These data should be useful for several lines of inquiry that have so far been pursued mainly with qualitative evidence, or in quantitative work only for the period after 1815. A first concerns recognition and membership of the states system. Since the dataset records the full range of polities that exchanged diplomatic representatives, it can be used to study which polities were admitted to diplomatic society, extending an established area of research back to the early modern era (Kinne, 2014; Teorell, 2023; Osiander, 2001). A second concerns status and hierarchy, for which the data on diplomatic rank provided here offer a behavioral measure of precedence among states (Duque, 2018; Renshon, 2016; Bruneau, 2023). A third concerns the character of the early modern state, and the debate over whether its institutions remained dynastic and patrimonial, organized around the person of the prince, or had begun to acquire an impersonal, bureaucratic form, a question touched on in the illustrative application below (Nexon, 2009; Teschke, 2003; Ertman, 1997). A fourth is diplomatic history, where these data should enable broader and comparative study of questions relating to diplomats as individuals, to courts as sites of politics, and to the diplomatic corps as an emerging profession (e.g., Watkins, 2008; Sowerby and Hennings, 2017).

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 describes the source, data-construction procedures, and coverage. Section 3 presents descriptive patterns at the system, polity, and mission levels. Section 4 examines diplomatic continuity following ruler succession. Section 5 concludes.

2 Data

2.1 Source: the Repertorium

The main source of the dataset is the *Repertorium der diplomatischen Vertreter aller Länder seit dem Westfälischen Frieden*, a reference work that records the diplomatic representatives exchanged across Europe after the Peace of Westphalia. Band I, edited by Ludwig Bittner and Lothar Groß, appeared in 1936 and covers the period 1648–1715 (Bittner and Groß, 1936). Bands II and III, edited by Friedrich Hausmann (1950) and Otto Friedrich Winter (1965), continue the record to 1815. This paper uses Band I, while Bands II and III will be added in subsequent versions.

The data collection appearing in the *Repertorium* was undertaken under the auspices of the International Committee of Historical Sciences as a decade-long international collaboration funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Austrian government (Harsin, 1942). More than sixty correspondents contributed to the first volume, each compiling a national chapter from the state and foreign-ministry archives of the country concerned.

Band I, comprising about 800 pages, is organized into chapters, each covering a sending polity (e.g., France) and, within each chapter, by receiving polity, with missions ordered by their starting date. Entries identify the representative and report rank, dated acts marking

the course of the mission, and an archival or published source; many also record the mission's purpose. The volume covers permanent and special missions, including ambassadors, envoys, residents, agents, commissioners, and treaty plenipotentiaries.

2.2 Units of observation and inclusion rules

The elementary record is the printed entry, a block of text devoted to one representative under one sending polity and one receiving polity. An entry reports one or more dated acts, each a documented event in the course of a representation, such as the presentation of credentials, an audience, a recall, or a departure. The principal unit of analysis is the mission, i.e., the representation of one polity to one receiver by one or more representatives, delimited by its first and last recorded act. An entry is coded as a mission when it records at least one qualifying act, meaning an act of diplomatic representation other than the signing of a treaty alone.

Some entries record only a treaty signature and no other act. These are excluded from the main data but retained in a separate set of treaty signings. An entry that records both a treaty signature and another qualifying act appears in both sets. On this coding, Band I yields 13,344 missions and 1,498 treaty signings.

2.3 Extraction and coding

The volume was digitized as a scanned image with a machine-readable text layer produced by optical character recognition (OCR).² A layout-aware parser, implemented in Python, converts this text into structured records, one entry at a time, using the typography to divide each entry into component fields, including the sending polity, the receiving polity, the representative, the rank, the dated events, and the source. Chapter headings mark the sending polity, subheadings the receiving polity, and spacing and type size separate names, entries, and footnotes.

Figure 1 shows a passage from the chapter on Sweden. Table 1 gives the record extracted from its first entry. The entry names Christoph Carl von Schlippenbach, an envoy sent by Sweden to Brandenburg-Prussia in 1654, and records the dates on which his credentials were issued and accepted. The printed entry is terse: the rank appears as “e. o. env.”, short for *envoyé extraordinaire*, and the two acts as “c.” (credentials, 15 July 1654) and “re.” (recredentials, 18 September 1654), with the month in Roman numerals and the purpose (*Notifikation*, a notification) in parentheses. These abbreviations are the Repertorium's own, defined in the volume's key to rank and act codes. The parser expands each occurrence against that key, coding the rank along the five variables shown in Table 1 and each act as a controlled event type; where the volume gives a date in both the Old Style (Julian) and New Style (Gregorian) calendars, it records both. The same procedure is applied to every entry in the volume.

A mission is treated as active from its first to its last recorded event. The Repertorium reports events with very high temporal granularity. The opening event is dated to the day for 91 percent of missions, to the month for 4 percent, and to the year for the remaining 5 percent. Both the opening and closing events are dated to the day for 61 percent of missions.

²I am grateful to the University Library, University of Gothenburg, for assistance in this process.

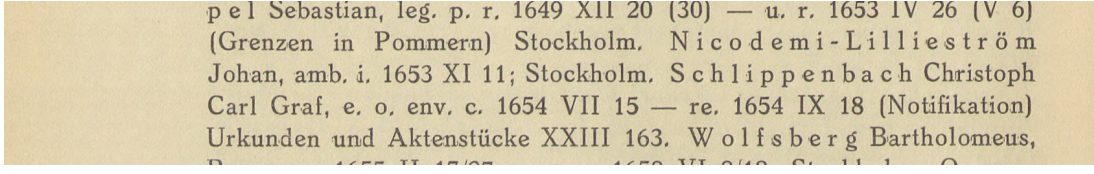


Figure 1: A passage of the Swedish chapter as printed (Band I, p. 482). The entry beginning “Schlippenbach” is parsed in Table 1.

Table 1: The parsed record for the entry in Figure 1.

Field	Value
Mission id	11402
Sending polity	Schweden (Sweden)
Receiving polity	Brandenburg-Preußen (Brandenburg-Prussia)
Representative	Schlippenbach, Christoph Carl, Graf
Rank, as printed	e. o. env.
Rank, coded	ceremonial level: envoy or minister; extraordinary: yes; resident post: no; full powers: no; papal series: no
Event	credentials issued, 15 July 1654
Event	recredentials accepted (<i>re.</i>), 18 September 1654
Purpose	Notifikation
Source	Urkunden und Aktenstücke XXIII 163
Page	482

2.4 Variables and dataset structure

The core of the dataset is a register of missions, one row per mission (Table 2). For each mission, this records the sending polity, the receiving polity, the representative(s), the diplomatic rank, the dates of its first and last recorded acts, the stated purpose where the entry gives one, and the archival or published source. Representatives are matched to the Repertorium’s index of persons, so that one who served in more than one mission can be identified across the register.

Rank is coded on five variables (Table 3): its ceremonial level (ambassador, envoy or minister, resident, agent or commissary, secretary or chargé, courier, or other); whether the post was resident or temporary; whether the appointment was ordinary or extraordinary; whether the representative held full powers (*plena potestas*), that is, formal authority to negotiate and sign an agreement on the sovereign’s behalf, styled *bevollmächtigt* or *plénipotentiaire* in the source; and whether the rank belonged to the papal series (nuncio, internuncio, cardinal, legate, and related Curial titles). The original wording is kept alongside the coded values.

The register rests on an underlying event table, in which each row is a single dated act, such as a presentation of credentials, an audience, a recall, or a departure; the mission dates are taken from these acts. For comparison with the annual series available after 1817 (Bayer, 2006), I aggregate the register into a dyad-year panel, in which each row is an ordered pair of polities in a given year, with the number of active missions and the ranks present. Treaty signings are kept separately.

Table 2: Variables of the mission register. Each row is one mission.

Variable	Description
Mission id	Unique identifier for the mission
Sending polity	The polity that sent the representative
Receiving polity	The court or polity to which the representative was sent
Representative(s)	The named representative or representatives, linked to the persons table
Rank	The diplomatic rank, as printed and coded on five variables (Table 3)
First act	Date of the first recorded act, taken as the mission’s start
Last act	Date of the last recorded act, taken as the mission’s end
Purpose	The stated business of the mission, where the entry gives one
Source	The archival or published citation
Page	The page in Band I on which the entry appears

Table 3: Coding of diplomatic rank. Each of the 158 distinct rank descriptions in Band I is coded on five variables.

Variable	Description	Values
Ceremonial level	The rank’s position in the ceremonial hierarchy	ambassador; envoy or minister; resident; agent or commissary; secretary or chargé; courier; other
Resident post	Whether the post was a standing residence or a temporary mission	yes; no
Extraordinary	Whether the appointment was styled extraordinary or ordinary	extraordinary; ordinary; unspecified
Full powers	Whether the representative held full powers (<i>plena potestas</i>) to negotiate and sign agreements	yes; no
Papal series	Whether the rank belongs to the Curia’s own vocabulary (nuncio, cardinal, legate, and related titles)	yes; no

2.5 Validation

I subject the automated extraction to three kinds of validity checks. First, I apply internal-consistency checks derived from the structure of the Repertorium. If extraction has been carried out correctly, a set of structural relations must hold: each entry falls under exactly one sending chapter; the chapters together cover the whole volume without overlapping; each name in the index appears on the page the index lists for it; and a treaty that appears in more than one chapter has the same date in each. These structural checks identified 492 entries that had been assigned to the wrong sending chapter, which were subsequently corrected.

Second, I measure coverage against the Repertorium’s index of persons, an alphabetical

index (compiled separately from the country chapters) that lists every diplomat named in the volume together with the pages on which each appears. Because it enumerates the same persons independently of the chapter parse, the names it lists for a polity are the set the parse should have recovered, which makes it a natural benchmark for recall. Exact surname matching recovers 6,156 of 6,656 indexed persons (92.5 percent). As an additional check, treaty signings recorded in more than one chapter agree on the full date in 210 of 215 cases; the five exceptions are discrepancies in the printed volume rather than extraction errors.

Third, I assess accuracy by direct comparison with human coding. A stratified human audit of a random sample of entries remains to be completed before data release; it will report precision and recall separately for senders, receivers, persons, ranks, dates, and citations.

2.6 Limitations

The Repertorium is likely the most encompassing source on diplomatic representation in early modern Europe. Three limitations nonetheless deserve mention. First, since each national chapter was compiled by a different correspondent working the archives available in that country, coverage is uneven across polities. The implication is that the Repertorium is more comprehensive for some polities than for others. For instance, many correspondents worked on the German Empire and the Habsburg lands, while Spain, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire had few or none (Bittner and Groß, 1936; Jablonowski, 1938).

Second, the coverage of personnel is selective. The editors report that they focused on the permanently accredited heads of mission and their *chargés d'affaires* (Bittner and Groß, 1936, p. VIII), later adding special missions and treaty negotiators without a claim to completeness (Jablonowski, 1938). The 8,852 person records here therefore under-represent the subordinate staff who served in European legations. The register nonetheless covers most fully the representatives most relevant to research, the heads of mission who directed each legation and who are the usual unit of analysis in the study of diplomatic representation.

Third, the dates are censored at the boundaries of the period. Missions already active in 1648, or still active in 1715, are recorded only for the part of their span that falls within it, though dates outside 1648–1715 are retained where the volume reports them. The two calendars then in use, the Julian and the Gregorian, are less of a concern: the Repertorium follows a stated convention, giving dual dates as Julian first and Gregorian second and treating any unmarked date as New Style (Gregorian), and it flags the 127 genuinely doubtful cases in the text.

3 Descriptive patterns, 1648–1715

Figure 2 gives a snapshot of the data in a single year, 1700. In panel (a), each point marks a polity that received diplomatic representation, and its size is proportional to the number of missions present there that year. A few polities, including the period’s great powers and important courts, attracted many missions, while a much larger number of smaller polities, including many in the German states, received a smaller number. Panel (b) illustrates the networked nature of the data, showing the in- and outgoing diplomatic connections of the Emperor’s court in 1700. The incoming connections (42) outnumber the outgoing (23), and

the incoming side is dominated by the smaller German principalities and the Italian states, while the Emperor’s own missions focused on the major powers.

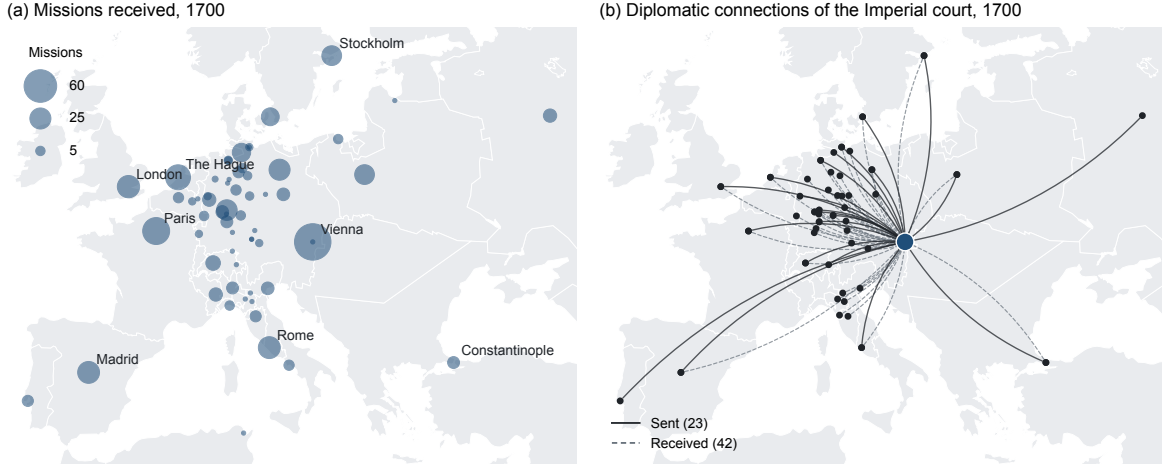


Figure 2: Diplomatic representation in 1700. Panel (a) plots receiving polities, with marker size proportional to the number of missions present. Panel (b) shows missions sent and received by the Imperial court in Vienna. The borders are an approximate historical base map for c. 1700, from the *historical-basemaps* project (<https://github.com/aourednik/historical-basemaps>; after Euratlas and Nüssli, CC BY-SA 4.0).

Table 4 reports the count of sent and received missions. The Emperor ranks first in both categories. France and Brandenburg-Prussia occupy the next two positions, although their order differs between missions sent and received. Outside Europe, the data record missions to the Ottoman Empire (296), Persia (29), and the Barbary states of Tunis (18) and Algiers (15).

Table 4: Senders and receivers most frequently recorded, 1648–1715.

Sender	Missions	Receiver	Missions
Holy Roman Empire, Emperor	1,188	Holy Roman Empire, Emperor	1,355
France	982	Brandenburg-Prussia	880
Brandenburg-Prussia	882	France	750
England	609	Imperial Diet at Regensburg	728
Poland	488	England	653
Mainz	459	Dutch Republic	625
Sweden	401	Poland	422
Denmark	381	Sweden	415

Turning to over-time patterns, Figure 3 shows the number of active missions each year. Activity rises from about 200 missions in the late 1640s to an average of 537 in the 1660s. It then remains broadly stable, generally between 550 and 700 missions, and reaches a peak of 698 in 1711. The shaded intervals identify the major wars of the period, including the Franco-Dutch War, the Nine Years’ War, the War of the Spanish Succession, and the Great Northern War. None coincides with a clear and sustained increase or decline in representation.

Figure 4a reports the ranks of missions first observed in each decade. Envoys and ministers

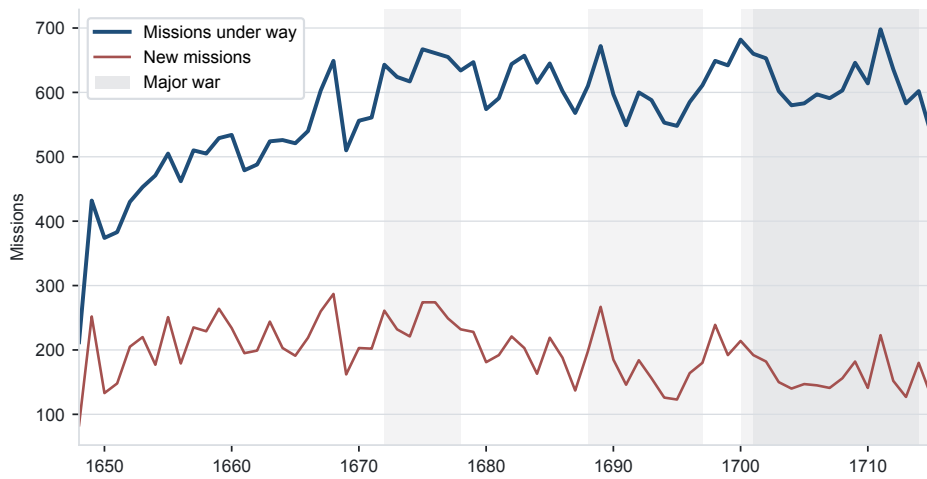


Figure 3: Active and newly recorded missions by year, 1648–1715.

grew to be the largest category over the period, while ambassadors remained a small minority, even in the later decades. A substantial share of missions, especially in the early decades, carry no stated rank.

Figure 4b reports the observed duration of missions, measured from the first to the last recorded act. Most are short, with 79 percent lasting no more than two years. At the other end of the distribution, a small number of missions continue for a decade or longer. These long spans include residents and other representatives attached to continuing posts.

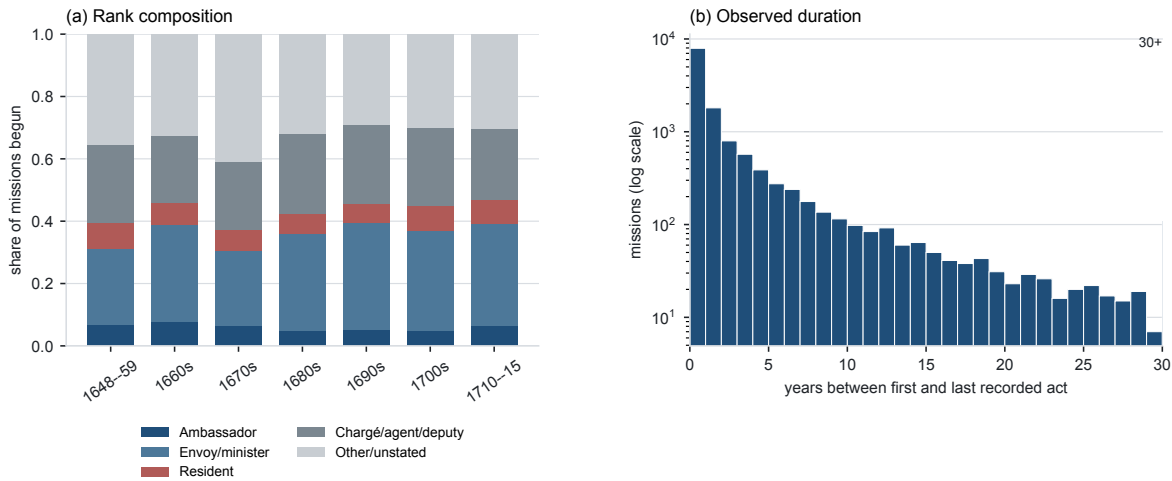


Figure 4: Rank and duration. Panel (a) gives the rank composition of missions by decade of first recorded act. Panel (b) gives the observed number of years between the first and last act.

The data also support analysis of individual representatives. They contain 8,852 person records, of which 2,274 are linked to more than one mission and 446 to more than one sending polity, suggesting that a sizeable set of individuals took on diplomatic representation tasks for

more than one ruler during their career. Six of the representatives are women.³

4 An illustrative application: ruler succession and diplomatic continuity

To illustrate the analytical value of the mission dates, I examine whether ruler succession impacts the rotation of diplomatic missions. This makes it possible to distinguish whether the diplomatic apparatus of this period was patrimonial, that is, tied to the ruler, or an impersonal organization less sensitive to leader deaths or exits (Ertman, 1997; North et al., 2009). Previous studies have used leader deaths to estimate leader effects and political turnover to study bureaucratic persistence (Jones and Olken, 2005; Iyer and Mani, 2012; Akhtari et al., 2022).

The analysis covers 63 ruler transitions between 1651 and 1712, coded from secondary sources and verified against data on rulers collected by Kokkonen et al. (2022). For each transition, I identify the polity’s missions active in that year. The termination rate is the share of these missions whose last recorded act occurred in the same or following year. I compare this rate with the corresponding rate for the same polity in ordinary years, defined as years outside the three-year window surrounding any of its ruler transitions. The difference can be called the succession excess.

Figure 5 shows that diplomatic missions ended more frequently around ruler transitions. The termination rate was 10.7 percentage points higher in transition years than in ordinary years ($SE = 2.2$).⁴ In a permutation test that assigns each transition to a randomly selected ordinary year for the same polity, none of the simulated estimates was as large as the observed estimate ($p < .003$). Excluding transitions that fell in the onset or termination year of a major war leaves the estimate unchanged, at 10.5 percentage points ($SE = 2.6$). The estimates are also similar when regencies (successions in which a regent governed for a minor or incapacitated ruler) are excluded and when the analysis is restricted to standing posts or great-power receivers.

The day-level data show the same temporal pattern. Among the 40 transitions dated to the day, 32.6 percent of the missions active on the transition date ended within the following year, against 20.6 percent at placebo dates for the same polity⁵ (Figure 6).

There is no clear evidence that the association weakened during the period. The estimated succession excess was 12.2 percentage points before 1683 and 9.1 points thereafter. This suggests that diplomatic appointments remained tied to the ruler throughout the period, rather than becoming more impersonal. Given the relatively small number of ruler transitions per

³Five were noblewomen sent by France and one by the Palatinate, in extraordinary ceremonial ranks (*ambassadrice extraordinaire*, *envoyée*, or plenipotentiary). Where their purpose is recorded, it was to escort a bride or princess to a foreign court: the princesse de Lillebonne, for example, accompanied Anne-Marie d’Orléans to Savoy for her marriage in 1684.

⁴The reported standard errors treat the 63 transitions as independent. Clustering them by the 25 polities does not substantively change the result and, if anything, reduces the uncertainty (clustered standard error 1.9 percentage points, $t = 5.7$).

⁵For each transition I draw 20 random placebo dates for the same polity, each at least two years from any transition. The shares count missions active on the date that lasted at least 60 days, and are computed only for transitions with at least three such missions.

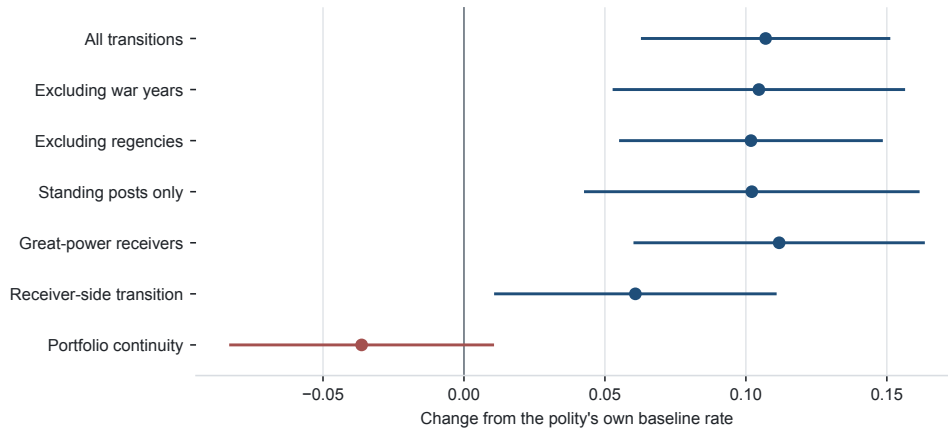


Figure 5: Succession excess across specifications. Each estimate is the change in a polity's mission-termination rate at a ruler transition, relative to its own ordinary-year rate, with 95 percent confidence intervals. The bottom row reports the change in portfolio continuity, the share of receiving polities retained across a transition.

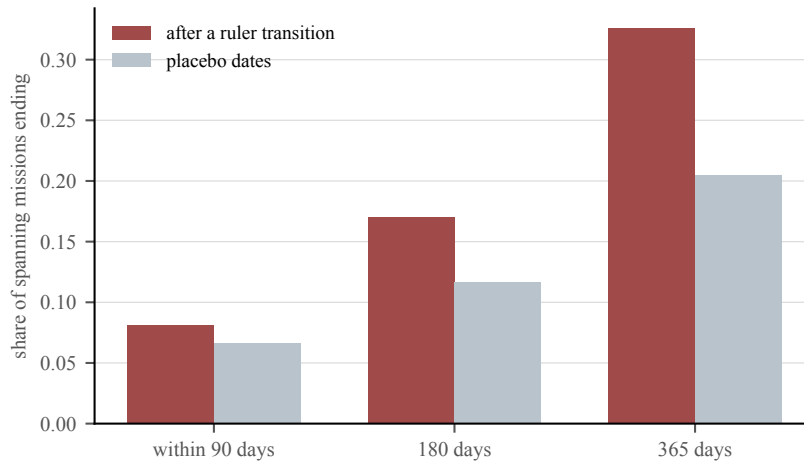


Figure 6: Additional test at day resolution. The figure reports the share of missions active on the transition date that ended within 90, 180, and 365 days, compared with placebo dates for the same polity, over the 40 day-dated transitions.

polity, there is not sufficient power to detect variation across polities.

While ruler succession affected who held a diplomatic appointment, the findings indicate no detectable effect on the portfolio of diplomatic partners, that is, the polities with which a polity engaged diplomatically. I measure portfolio continuity as the share of receiving polities served during the three years before a transition that were also served during the three years after it. Portfolio continuity was 3.6 percentage points lower at successions than in ordinary years ($SE = 2.4$), a difference that is not statistically distinguishable from zero. Succession thus affected individual mission records more strongly than the set of diplomatic relationships maintained by a polity.

5 Conclusion

This paper has introduced a dataset of diplomatic representation in Europe for 1648–1715, drawn from Band I of the *Repertorium der diplomatischen Vertreter aller Länder seit dem Westfälischen Frieden*, a reference work cataloguing the diplomatic representatives exchanged among European polities since the Peace of Westphalia. The data provide a quantitative view of a large and heterogeneous system, with 141 sending polities represented at 201 receiving polities across 1,796 directed pairs. They begin over a century and a half before the earliest comparable existing quantitative series (Bayer, 2006; Teorell, 2023) and, in many cases, record diplomatic missions at a level of detail and temporal granularity not captured in datasets covering more recent eras.

The descriptive patterns indicate that diplomatic activity was already extensive by the late seventeenth century, concentrated on a few major courts but reaching a large number of smaller polities. Residents made up about a fifth of active representation, and their share did not rise over the period, qualifying accounts of the emergence of the resident embassy.

An illustrative application showed that diplomatic missions ended more frequently when the sending polity changed rulers, suggesting that appointments were tied to the person of the ruler. The set of partners a polity served, however, changed little across successions. Ruler transitions therefore affected individual missions more strongly than diplomatic portfolios. This pattern is consistent with ruler-specific commissions operating within durable relationships between polities.

Several steps remain before the data are complete and can be released. A human transcription audit is a first priority, to estimate precision and recall for the automated extraction, alongside extending the data forward to 1815.

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