

CONTENTS

The Principles

The Context

England's Dependent Territories

Relations with Scotland

Relations with France

Relations with the Holy Roman Empire

Relations with the Low Countries

Relations with Spain

Relations with the Papacy

Relations with Others:

The Hanseatic League

Portugal

Scandanavia

Russia

Italy

The Ottoman Empire

The role of Sea Power in Foreign Policy

Foreign Policy under Edward VI

Protector Somerset

The Duke of Northumberland

Reading Suggestions

TUDOR FOREIGN POLICY

1. THE PRINCIPLES

- a) **In all renaissance states what would later be called 'foreign policy' was the prerogative of the monarch.** Even where there were strong representative assemblies (as in England), such assemblies were not normally consulted, and had no customary right to be consulted, on issues of war or peace, friendship or hostility.

Foreign policy was essentially shaped by the relationships between rulers.

- b) **Renaissance wars were normally fought to secure some temporary advantage.**

Alliances were similarly opportunistic,

The average duration of a 'perpetual' treaty was about three years.

Warfare was expensive

The resources of most monarchs were inflexible and limited.

- c) **All European aristocracies were land based, and military in origin.**

Most noblemen considered it to be their primary function to serve their king in war.

War was for them the main source of honour, reward and promotion.

Monarchs needed to take this motivation into account, because their own relations with their nobles were essential elements in domestic government.

- d) **Merchants and ecclesiastics were normally opposed to war,** and (if they were consulted) tended to give contrary advice to the nobles.

The more important trade was the relationship between two states, the less likely they were to go to war for trivial reasons.

- e) **Royal attitudes might be influenced (but not determined) by established patterns of friendship or hostility.**

Eg the English and the French had a long history of conflict and mutual dislike;
as did the English and the Scots.

- f) **'International relations' were transformed by the onset of the reformation.**

In the second half of the century confessional allegiance (whether a country was Catholic or Protestant) was added to the determinants of war and alliance, although it did not entirely displace traditional factors.

From 1535 to 1553, and again after 1559, there was a fixed 'polarity' between England and the Papacy, which played a large part in determining England's friendships and hostilities, and greatly circumscribed the monarchs' freedom of action.

2. THE CONTEXT

a) **In 1485 England was a minor power, except in relation to Scotland.**

Her stance in many situations was therefore more likely to be determined by the actions of others than by autonomous considerations.

At the end of the fifteenth century,

France was concerned to secure control of Brittany (hitherto an autonomous duchy), and of the Kingdom of Naples.

The former was an issue of direct concern to England.

The latter set up a prolonged conflict with Spain.

In 1516 Charles I inherited the Crowns of both Castile and Aragon, consolidating Spain into a single state. At the same time Spain began to establish territorial colonies in the New World. Franco-Spanish rivalry in Italy was accentuated.

In 1519 Charles I of Spain also became the Emperor Charles V, controlling the Holy Roman Empire, which included the Low Countries.

Because of its constitutional arrangements, his power in the Empire was very limited, and most of its constituent princes were determined to keep it that way.

Charles consequently began to draw most of his resources from Spain.

The Ottoman Empire

By 1500 the Ottoman Empire was advancing strongly in the Balkans and the Levant.

Venice was greatly weakened by this advance, and diminished as a factor in European diplomacy.

The conquest of Egypt (1516-18), and of Rhodes (1522) greatly strengthened the Ottoman grip on the Eastern Mediterranean.

The defeat of the Hungarians at Mohacs (1526) brought the Turks face to face with the Holy Roman Empire.

The development of confessional strife in Germany meant that the Emperor was confronted after 1530 by a princely alliance (the Schmalkaldic League), which provided a lever against him within Germany, and with which he was forced to bargain for support against the Turks.

The union of Spain and the Holy Roman Empire virtually surrounded France. This is often referred to as -'The Habsburg encirclement of France

This not only set up a new 'polarity' in European politics, it also greatly strengthened the strategic position of England, which controlled the sea lanes between Spain and the Low Countries.

From 1520 to 1555 the need of France and the Empire to compete for English friendship gave Henry VIII an artificially enhanced importance, & helped both him and his son to

defy the papacy.

The Great Empire of Charles V came to an end in 1555.

Thereafter the Holy Roman Empire and Spain went separate ways.

Spain was left in control of the Low Countries, Northern Italy, Naples and its expanding New World colonies.

The Empire remained in stalemate with the Turks, and Spain became the dominant power of the second half of the century.

After 1560, France descended into a series of civil wars.

It ceased to be a major power,
the 'polarity' of 1520-1555 came to an end.

The sixteenth century saw the development of settled diplomacy through resident ambassadors, a system almost confined to Italy before 1500.

The pioneers of permanent diplomatic missions were the Venetians and the papacy.

Ambassadors were accredited to rulers, not states, and by the middle of the century the Tudors maintained regular missions with the Emperor, the Regent of the Low Countries, the King of France, the King of Scots, and the Republic of Venice.

Later in the century regular missions were maintained in Spain and Denmark, and occasional ambassadors were sent to Lisbon, Moscow and Constantinople.

3. ENGLAND'S DEPENDENT TERRITORIES

These are not strictly speaking to be considered under foreign policy, but they played a part in it, and their position needs to be understood]

a) Isle of Man

Although its geographical position might suggest a key role in Anglo-Scottish relations, the Isle of Man (which was a lordship under the English Crown, held by the Earls of Derby) played no part in international affairs, and its history throughout the period is obscure.

b) The Channel Islands

During the Anglo-French wars before 1453 the Channel Islands had become tacitly recognised as neutral ground, and that continued to be the case during Henry VIII's reign.

In 1548 the French took Sark, but did not exploit the position and withdrew a few years later.

Throughout the second half of the century the English retained garrisons on the islands, and used them as staging posts for the armies fighting in Brittany in the 1590s.

Ecclesiastically the islands were virtually autonomous, having been separated from the bishopric of Coutances by Henry VII, and placed under Winchester.

The supervision was nominal, and French protestantism was well developed by 1556, when one of John Foxe's most atrocious martyr stories was acted out on Guernsey.

In spite of the number of Anglo-French conflicts in the sixteenth century, control of the islands was never an important issue.

c) Calais

By contrast, the Calais pale (the last remnant of the once extensive English possessions in France), was always in the front line.

It was a regular jumping off place for English attacks on France, and was heavily fortified and garrisoned.

The wool staple was also located there.

Calais had both a military government and a civilian government, and sent burgesses to parliament after 1536.

In January 1558 it was taken by the French in a surprise attack, and attempts to recover it in the 1560s were in vain.

d) Ireland

By far the largest English dependency was Ireland, which became a separate kingdom in 1541.

Tudor policy within Ireland need not concern us here, but because large parts of the island remained outside English control, there was always a danger other powers would try to make a base there.

The Scots had a fluctuating presence in Ulster, a papal force landed at Smerwick in 1579, and a Spanish army at Kinsale in 1601, both trying to take advantage of Irish rebellions against English rule.

Although these invasions were repulsed without much difficulty, Ireland was a constant drain on England's military resources, and attempts to increase control through a series of colonial plantations stored up plentiful trouble for the future.

Philip II regularly hoped to use Ireland as a lever against Elizabeth.

4. RELATIONS WITH SCOTLAND

In the first half of the sixteenth century, Scotland was characterised by its traditional friendship a. with France (the 'auld alliance'), and b. by the chronic instability of its internal politics.

The latter was partly also traditional, and partly the result of two prolonged royal minorities, from 1513 to 1530 and from 1542 to 1561.

The English Crown had an ancient claim to suzerainty over Scotland,

The Scots had consistently, and successfully, rejected since the thirteenth century.

Neither side had effective control over the clans which operated across the Anglo-Scottish border,

Their raiding and feuding was a constant irritant.

James III had involved himself in a minor way in England's civil wars in the fifteenth century, and had temporarily secured control over Berwick as a result. That control he had lost by the time of his death in 1488.

James IV, however, had an incentive to intervene again when it appeared that Henry VII was in trouble over the pretensions of **Perkin Warbeck**.

He welcomed Warbeck to Scotland,
gave him a bride of royal blood,
recognised his claim.

However, an invasion in Warbeck's interest in 1492 was a fiasco.

The Scots nobility were much more sceptical about Warbeck than the king appeared to be, and were lukewarm about the campaign.

It also quickly transpired that the Pretender had little support in England, and James extricated himself as expeditiously as possible.

As Henry had no aggressive designs on either Scotland or France, only habit supported continued hostility in the north.

James signed a truce with Henry at Ayton in 1499, and a full peace treaty in 1503.

The latter was sealed with a marriage between James and Henry's elder daughter, Margaret, and relations for the remainder of Henry's reign continued to be amicable.

Henry VIII, however, quickly made it clear that he intended to renew the ancient struggle with France. He expected his brother-in-law to remain neutral, but Louis XII put him under heavy pressure to honour the auld alliance.

In 1513, while Henry was campaigning in France, James crossed the border in strength. James was confronted by an English army under the earl of Surrey at Flodden, and totally defeated.

James died on the battlefield, leaving his one year old son as James V.

For about the next seventeen years Henry attempted to control or influence the minority governments in Scotland through his sister, Margaret, now the Queen Dowager.

Margaret's second marriage to the Earl of Angus complicated this policy, as she became sucked into the aristocratic feuding, and it was generally unsuccessful.

The Scots did not, however, become involved in the Anglo-French War 1522-25.

In 1527-28 Henry and Margaret considered arranging a marriage between James V (then aged 15-16 and Henry's daughter Mary (then aged 11-12) but neither pursued the negotiation with much determination.

After 1535 Henry's main objective was to persuade James to break off his alliance with the papacy, but James had no incentive to do that as he already enjoyed extensive control over the church in Scotland.

Instead Scotland renewed the old alliance when James married Madeleine of France, the daughter of Francis I in 1537.

Madeleine died a year later,

James also found his second bride in France, in the person of Mary of Lorraine.

Henry continued to press for an anti-papal understanding,

James agreed to meet him at York in 1540.

The Scottish Council persuaded him to break the arrangement,

Henry was furious.

In 1542, when he was intending to renew his conflict with France,

Henry deliberately provoked James into launching an invasion, which was heavily defeated at Solway Moss, where many Scottish lords were taken prisoner.

James died shortly after (of disease, he had not been present at the battle), leaving his week old daughter Mary as Queen of Scots.

Taking advantage of his prisoners, and of the weakness in Scotland, Henry then forced the Treaty of Greenwich (1543) on the Scots, the main clause of which was for a marriage between Mary and his own son, Edward (aged 6).

The Scottish parliament repudiated the treaty, and Henry then began a campaign of harassment and small scale aggression, known as '**the rough wooing**', to force them to reconsider. He failed.

After Henry's death in January 1547 Edward VI became king (aged 9), and his first regent, the Duke of Somerset, renewed the Scottish campaign, defeating the Scots again at Pinkie Cleugh (September 1547).

Somerset then began a 'hearts and minds' campaign,
issuing propaganda in favour of the union of the crowns,
seeking to turn the budding Scottish protestant movement into a pro-English party.

The presence of English garrisons in Scotland, however, nullified the propaganda, and the Scots turned again to France.

Henry II sent an army north, and the English garrisons were driven out.

By the Treaty of Haddington (1548)
Mary was betrothed to the Dauphin, Francis, and sent to France later the same year.
Mary of Guise (the Queen Mother) became Regent, in the French interest.

During the next Anglo-French war (1557-9) there was tension in the north, but only the Queen Regent wanted war, and hostilities did not go beyond border raiding.

However,
the growing strength of the Scottish protestant party,
the accession of Elizabeth in England,
Scottish dislike of too great a dependence on France, began to change the situation in 1560.
The 'Lords of the Congregation of Jesus Christ' rebelled against the Regent, and after considerable hesitation, Elizabeth assisted them.

The Regent died, and the French were driven out by the **Treaty of Edinburgh**.
A protestant government was established in Scotland.

Henry II of France had died in 1559, and Mary [Stuart] was briefly queen of both Scotland and France, as well as claiming the Crown of England.

However, Francis II also died in December 1560, and Mary returned to Scotland in 1561.
She did not succeed, however, in displacing the protestant government,
an uneasy balance existed between a pro-French queen and a pro-English council.
Elizabeth regarded Mary as a threat, but did not attempt further intervention.

Instead, Mary destroyed her own position,
firstly by marrying the unstable Henry, Lord Darnley, in 1565, and
secondly by appearing to be involved in his assassination (1567).

Mary was driven out in 1568, fleeing to England, where she was kept in confinement; a new (protestant) regency was established for her son, James VI.

Thereafter, English interest in Scotland was mainly to protect the protestant ascendancy, which became increasingly capable of looking after itself.

James's friendship for his Francophile kinsman, Esme Stuart (Duke of Lennox, 1581), caused diplomatic ripples, but the main English concern became for the approaching prospect of James as King of England.

Mary's involvement in conspiracies against Elizabeth, and her subsequent execution (1587) had little impact on Anglo-Scottish relations.

5. RELATIONS WITH FRANCE

France was a powerful and traditionally hostile neighbour which could never be ignored.

Henry VII felt compelled to make a hostile gesture (1492) in support of his treaty with Brittany (Redon), but allowed himself to be bought off.

He felt threatened by the French take over of Brittany, but considered serious war too risky, and too expensive.

After protracted negotiations he married his elder son, Arthur, to Catherine, the daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain; this signalled an anti-French position within Europe, but one that he never felt obliged to realise.

Henry VIII was a great admirer of his ancestor Henry V, and in 1511 joined an anti-French alliance of Spain and the Papacy, for no better reason than that he was an aggressive young man, looking for a fight.

In the subsequent campaigns he took Therouanne and Tournai (temporarily), established himself as a significant player in the international game (which was one of his main objectives), and spent a great deal of money.

When Spain made a separate peace (1514) he also signed a treaty with France, and married his younger sister Mary to Louis XII.

Louis died a few months later, but the Anglo-French treaty held, largely because the new king, Francis I, was more interested in Italy, where he won a **great victory at Marignano in 1515.**

Cardinal Wolsey, Henry's Chancellor and chief minister, was also anxious to preserve the peace, and brought off a spectacular *coup* by persuading all the leading states of Western Europe to sign a 'perpetual' **Peace Treaty at London in 1518.**

Wolsey's motives were mixed;

he wanted to enhance his master's honour (and consequently his own);

he was aware that Henry could not afford large scale or protracted warfare;

he was anxious to keep a good reputation in the papal curia,

he knew that Henry wanted him to be the next pope.

**Whether Wolsey himself was driven by a desire for the tiara is more controversial .
He probably was not**

The Treaty of London 1518

This treaty was placed under immediate strain by the Imperial election of the following year, and the attempt to maintain an Anglo-French *entente* by getting Henry and Francis together at the Field of Cloth of Gold in 1520 backfired badly.

In spite of the elaborate courtesies, the two kings disliked each other intensely (they were too much alike), and the main result was a treaty with the Emperor in 1521.

This contained a rather optimistic clause for a marriage between Charles (21) and Henry's daughter, Mary (5), and an agreement to attack France the following year.

The campaigns were poorly co-ordinated, and the English achieved very little, partly because of shortage of money.

When Charles defeated and captured Francis at Pavia in 1525, Henry came up with an ambitious plan for the partition of France.

Charles was unimpressed by such an unrealistic proposal, especially coming from an ally who had done so little, and broke his treaty with Henry by marrying Isabella of Portugal in 1526.

Henry had expected this, but pretended intense annoyance and (again prompted by Wolsey) signed a peace with France at the More in 1527.

In theory this committed him to hostilities against Charles, but this was a 'phoney war'. So phoney, indeed, that Wolsey (who had other things on his mind) had a last minute scramble to be included in the **peace treaty of Cambrai in 1529**.

For the next decade Henry's relations with his neighbours were largely dictated by his 'Great Matter' and its consequences.

This meant hostility to the Emperor and the Pope (who both supported Catherine), and such friendship as he could get with Francis (who was neutral).

Henry, however, never had any serious intention of finding a bride in France (which would have focussed the king's mind), and Francis never delivered on a half promise to support the annulment proceedings in Rome.

There were some discussions of a French marriage for Mary (Henry's daughter, who was 18 in 1534), but they came to nothing.

This phase came to an end when Francis and Charles signed a truce at Nice in 1538, which included an agreement to suppress heretics and schismatics. This was probably intended mainly to stop Francis from supporting the **Schmalkaldic League**, but Henry interpreted it as a threat to himself, and saw himself as isolated.

He entered into inconclusive discussions with the Schmalkaldic League, and married

Anne, the sister of Duke William of Cleves (who was not a member of the League, but was opposed to the Emperor).

The Franco-Imperial *entente* had broken down by 1540,

Henry repudiated his new bride.

In 1543 he returned to his earlier policy,

signed a treaty with Charles for a renewed attack on France.

The motives for this aggressiveness seem to have been largely personal to Henry, but a foreign

war would also help to rally the English aristocracy behind him after the divisive domestic policies of the last few years.

The alliance with the Emperor did not last, because

Charles signed a separate truce at Crespy in 1544.

The English successfully captured Boulogne,
and beat off a French counter attack in 1545.

Both kings were getting old, and in financial difficulties, so they finally buried the hatchet at Camp in 1546, and both died in the following year.

Edward VI's council endeavoured to remain at peace, not least because of the problems they faced at home, but Henry II made it clear that he intended to recover Boulogne.

Taking advantage of the 'camping summer' of 1549, he declared war in August. His attacks on Boulogne were beaten off, and his forces defeated at sea.

In 1550 the English council (under new management) cut its losses and sold Boulogne back to Henry for 400,000 crowns (£100,000), which was much more than he wanted to pay; so honours were about even.

When Edward's health began to deteriorate,

Henry was invited to support a plot in England to exclude Mary (who was known to have close relations with the Emperor) from the succession.

He was sympathetic, but responded too slowly, and
Mary secured the Crown within a few days.

Mary became Queen

As expected, Mary quickly declared herself to be an Imperialist, and relations with France were immediately strained.

Henry II

did his best by diplomatic means to frustrate her intention to marry Charles's son, Philip; but he was not prepared to risk an extension of the war to England, and his support for an anti-Philip rebellion in January 1554 was again too little, too late.

Charles abdicated in 1555, and Philip and Henry signed a truce at Vaucelles in January 1556.

It did not last, for reasons which do not involve England, but Philip was by this time King of Spain, controlling the Low Countries, northern Italy and Naples, and his interest in England (and Mary) was waning. Partly for that reason, she felt impelled to support him, when he asked for it, and against the advice of her council, took England into the anti-French alliance in June 1557.

The English war effort was half hearted, and when the Duke of Guise suddenly attacked Calais in January 1558, he took it without trouble.

Death of Mary: Elizabeth becomes Queen

When Mary died in November 1558 Philip ceased to be King of England and peace negotiations were already under way.

The king did his best (up to point) to recover Calais for his ally, but was not prepared to risk the breakdown of negotiation.

At Cateau Cambresis (April 1559) therefore, Henry retained Calais, in theory for a limited period of time.

Henry II's death a few weeks later

began the slide of France into a series of civil wars which were to last (on and off) for the rest of the century.

Elizabeth attempted to exploit the first of these wars to recover Calais.

She received Le Havre from the Huguenots as a pledge (1562-3), but when they were defeated, lost both her pledge and any remaining claim to Calais.

Thereafter the main thrust of her policy was to support whoever in France was resisting the advance of Spanish and Ultra-Catholic interests.

When this was the government, she signed a treaty of alliance with France (Blois, 1572), but otherwise she avoided entanglement.

She twice contemplated a French marriage,

first to the Duke of Anjou, who became Henry III, and then to his brother the Duke of Alencon.

In both cases the negotiations were serious and protracted, and the reality of the Queen's intentions is hotly debated.

However, it seems likely that in both cases her main purpose was to check the advance of Spanish interests without being seen as an overt supporter of the Huguenots.

Many of her councillors urged a more openly protestant foreign policy, but Elizabeth resisted this as long as possible.

After 1589, however, she could no longer avoid involvement, in order to support the protestant king, Henry IV, against the Spanish backed Catholic League. When he converted to catholicism in 1593, she felt constrained to continue that support, because the enemy was still the Catholic League.

Between 1590 and 1596 English armies campaigned alongside the French royalists in Normandy and Brittany, but these were purely defensive aspects of England's main war against Spain, and no territorial (or other) gains were sought - or obtained.

This intervention finally ceased with the peace of Nantes in 1598, although the war with Spain was to continue for another six years.

6. THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

The Empire was a loose federation of

secular and
ecclesiastical principalities, and
free cities,

which had no collective presence in international terms.

English relations were conducted,

either with the Emperor personally, or
with the princes (individually or collectively) who owed allegiance to him.

The relations of Henry VII and Henry VIII with Maximilian (before 1519) were generally amicable (except when Maximilian received Perkin Warbeck), but unimportant.

The Emperor was theoretically a member of the Holy League against France in 1512-14, but did little except receive a subsidy from Henry.

After 1519, however, Charles V was an immensely powerful figure, because of his Spanish resources, and

Henry was inclined to friendship with him,
partly because of hostility to France, and
partly because he controlled the Low Countries, which were vital to English trade.

The Anglo-Imperial treaty of 1521 included a clause for marriage between Charles and Mary [see above]. Relations deteriorated after 1525 (when Charles rejected Henry's proposal to carve up France), and 1526 (when Charles married Isabella).

From 1527 to 1529 there was theoretically war between Charles and Henry

from 1527 onward Charles opposed Henry's attempts to annul his first marriage.

This was partly because Catherine was his aunt,

more substantially because she supported him in England, but

most seriously (apparently) because he simply believed that Henry was

breaking laws which cannot be broken.

In other words, he opposed him on principle instead of out of interest.

As he had a stranglehold on the pope at the time, his ascendancy in Rome would not have been affected if he had allowed Clement to respond positively to Henry's overture.

From 1529 to 1536 Charles supported Catherine and Mary, through his ambassador Eustace Chapuys. However, it remained moral support. Although he was prepared to encourage conspiracies against Henry, and to put pressure on him diplomatically, he was not prepared to intervene with force.

After Catherine's death in 1536, the tension eased slightly; and Mary's surrender in the same year deprived him of his most obvious lever against the king.

He declined to become involved when the Pilgrimage of Grace offered a serious threat in the

autumn of 1536.

In spite of the threatening language of the truce of Nice in 1538, it is unlikely that Charles ever seriously contemplated invading England.

In renewing the English alliance in 1543, Charles blandly ignored the fact that Henry was under the ban of the church.

The alliance broke down because there was no agreed strategy, and both rulers simply pursued their own priorities.

When Henry died, Charles did not immediately recognise Edward as king, because in his eyes the boy was illegitimate, having been born while the realm was in schism. However, he accepted him when it became clear that Mary was not going to press a claim.

Although he made no secret of his distaste for the heretical government of Protector Somerset, he was prepared to renew the 1543 treaty.

He was not, however, prepared to extend it.

As it stood, it committed him to assist England if the French attacked Calais, but not if they attacked Boulogne (which was what happened).

The second regency regime, led by the Earl of Warwick (John Dudley), was - from his point of view - worse than the first, and he soon found himself using diplomatic pressure again to protect Mary from Warwick's attempts to force the protestant settlement upon her.

By 1552 he was in poor health, and it is not quite clear how far the policies of 1552-3 were really his, and how far those of his half-sister Mary of Hungary, the Regent of the Low Countries.

When Edward VI died, he made no attempt to intervene on Mary's behalf, although this time she did claim the succession.

Charles' ambassadors were simply instructed to do business with whoever won.

Mary's victory, however, gave him an exceptional opportunity to strengthen his position. Nearly twenty years before, Mary had sworn that she regarded him as her true father, and would never marry without his consent.

Now (aged 37) she remembered that promise and asked for his guidance.

Charles V instructed his son Philip to extricate himself from his negotiations in Portugal (if possible) and to propose to the Queen of England.

Philip (who was 26) did not relish the prospect of marrying his aunt, but he did relish the prospect of becoming king of England, so he obeyed.

The marriage treaty was negotiated entirely by Charles's agents, and signed in December 1553.

It provided for

Philip to be titular King of England, but to exercise no independent authority;

Philip was not to use Spanish servants in governing England,
Philip was not to involve the country in the war with France.
Any child of the marriage was to inherit England and the Low Countries, but not Spain,
which was to go to Philip's existing son, Don Carlos.

Philip was greatly offended by the terms, and considered repudiating the treaty, but was persuaded to accept his father's wishes.

It is reasonably certain that the Emperor's main objective in negotiating these terms was to give Philip a power base in northern Europe from which to secure his position in the Low Countries when Charles stood down, which he was already planning to do.

Philip married Mary in July 1554, and stayed in England just over a year. In August 1555, when it had become clear that Mary's pregnancy was a phantom, he left to join his father in Brussels.

Charles handed over his titles to his brother Ferdinand and to Philip, between 1555 and 1556, and then retired to Spain, where he died in 1558.

Thereafter Anglo-Imperial relations faded into relative obscurity.

Elizabeth negotiated inconclusively (as her father had done) with the Lutheran princes; but Ferdinand, and later Maximilian, presented no threat to England.

The only significant contact was when Elizabeth considered marrying one of Ferdinand's younger sons, the Archduke Charles, in the 1560s.

The negotiation was serious, but abortive, and Elizabeth had no policy in respect of the Empire.

7. THE LOW COUNTRIES

Henry VII's attitude to the Low Countries was influenced by **two main factors**;

the importance of the English trade which passed through Bruges and Ghent, the hostility of the Dowager Duchess Mary.

The latter, Edward IV's younger sister, was a consistent supporter of Yorkist pretenders, and influenced the attitudes of both Maximilian and his son, Philip, who ruled the Netherlands on behalf of his father.

Henry's main purpose was to curb Mary, and this led to tensions with Philip and occasional disruptions to trade.

When these disputes were settled by treaties (such as the *Magnus Intercursus* of 1496 and the *Malus Intercursus* of 1506), these provided both trade guarantees, and undertakings not to support Henry's enemies.

Henry VIII had no particular policy towards this region for most of his reign, but generally supported the Merchant Adventurers whose trade in Antwerp was the largest single ingredient in the wealth of London.

By 1535 it was also the largest single ingredient in the wealth of Antwerp, and Charles was equally aware of it.

No matter what the tensions between Charles and Henry, means were always found to keep the trade flowing, and the political embargoes of the previous reign were not used.

Charles steadily extended his control over the region during his reign, and by 1548 there were seventeen provinces, loosely held together by virtue of the fact that he ruled each by a separate title.

Fifteen of these provinces also sent representatives to the Estates General, which was the only central institution, transcending provincial boundaries.

In 1548 the Emperor consolidated this position somewhat by creating the Burgundian Circle, which became partially detached from the Empire.

He then used that as pretext to settle the succession on his son, Philip, instead of upon his brother Ferdinand, who was to 'inherit' the Empire. [Inverted commas because the post was in theory elective, but Ferdinand had been King of the Romans (designated heir) since 1530].

In 1551 there was a crisis in the English cloth trade, which was not politically inspired, but which persuaded some London merchants that the time had come to seek for fresh markets.

When Philip became king of England, he tried to suppress this enterprise in the interests of his Low Countries subjects, making himself very unpopular in London.

He did not, however, prevent the establishment of the **Muscovy Company (1555)**, which also brought diplomatic contact with Tsar Ivan IV, and after his reign was over (1558) English trade with West Africa, the Levant and (unofficially) Spanish America, began to develop strongly.

Elizabeth was worried about the prospect of Spanish control in the Low Countries almost from the first.

When Philip's centralising policies began to inspire protest (1565-6), she encouraged it, and the resulting political tension with the Regent (Margaret of Parma) provoked a return of political embargoes.

This harmed Antwerp more than London, because the English merchants were already beginning to diversify, and the embargoes encouraged further efforts.

Elizabeth moved back and forth between conciliating Philip and provoking him, and the embargoes acquired an 'on/off' quality which heavily undermined confidence.

The arrival of the Duke of Alba with a powerful army (1567) caused real alarm in England, and it began to be suspected that Philip would use control over the deep water harbours (particularly the Scheldt), to launch an invasion of England intended to restore catholicism and/or promote Mary of Scotland (now sufficiently detached from France) to the throne.

Thereafter it became a prime objective of English policy to frustrate Spanish attempts to establish (or recover) such control.

Refugee and disaffected Dutch came to England in significant numbers after 1567, and were generally welcomed.

In 1568, in an attempt to put a spoke in Alba's wheel, Elizabeth allowed Sir William Cecil to seize a large sum of money from Genoese galleys which had ventured into English harbours on their way to the Netherlands.

This was intended to pay Alba's soldiers, and he reacted by renewing a total embargo on English trade, and by seizing all the ships he could lay his hands on.

When Elizabeth (alarmed by her own dangerous courses) expelled some of the more militant Dutchmen in 1572, the so-called 'Sea Beggars', she triggered off, probably inadvertently, a revolt in the Low Countries which became the war of independence, and lasted on and off until 1648.

Elizabeth hated supporting rebels, but could not avoid aiding the Dutch, with whom her own subjects were also strongly in sympathy.

Her objective became to do the absolute minimum necessary to keep the revolt alive. She endeavoured to persuade the French to intervene when they were not under Spanish influence.

She also allowed her subjects to serve with the rebels as volunteers.

Eventually, with the revolt apparently about to collapse after the assassination of its leader, **William of Orange, in 1584, she signed the Treaty of Nonsuch with the Estates General in 1585.**

By that time it was only the seven northern (and predominantly protestant) provinces which were sustaining the war, and this confessional alignment promoted the treaty. Philip understood the treaty as a declaration of war.

Elizabeth's subsequent relations with the Estates General were uneasy, and sometimes tense.

The Earl of Leicester, who commanded the first English expeditionary force, became embroiled in local politics and some of his troops defected.

The English military performance was less than glorious, but it did provide some stiffening at a vital time.

After 1590 the Dutch proved increasingly capable of holding their own unaided. Some English troops remained in the Low Countries until 1604, and volunteers until the truce of 1609 brought the first phase of the war to an end. In return, Dutch support against the Armada in 1588 helped to frustrate and delay the Duke of Parma's preparations, with fatal results for the Spanish campaign.

8. RELATIONS WITH SPAIN

Ferdinand and Isabella were the first European rulers with whom the Tudors formed a positive alliance.

After several years of negotiating, Henry's elder son, Arthur, married Ferdinand and Isabella's youngest daughter, Catherine, in 1501.

When Arthur died in 1502,
Catherine stayed in England.
Henry did not want to repay her dowry, and
Ferdinand did not want her back in Spain complicating the Castilian succession after her mother died in 1503.

There were on/off discussions for a marriage between her and Henry, the second son, and a dispensation was obtained, but nothing was concluded.

When Henry VIII came to the throne in 1509,
he promptly married Catherine, and
renewed his father's alliance with Ferdinand.
When war broke out with France in 1512,
Ferdinand persuaded Henry to send a force to Guienne, ostensibly to recover that old English possession.

Ferdinand, however, simply used the English as a cover for the seizure of Navarre, and then withdrew from the war.

Henry's anger caused the first chill in his marriage, but
Ferdinand died in 1516, and
Catherine produced a healthy child, so
Anglo-Spanish relations recovered.

This was reflected mainly in a healthy trade, as there was little political contact at this time, and the new king (Charles) had his own problems in establishing himself.

After 1519, Spain must be seen as part of the Empire for political purposes, and the generally amicable relations between Englishmen and Spaniards was one of the main casualties of Henry's Great Matter.

Spanish opinion was deeply offended by the rejection of Catherine, which was held to be an affront to the national honour.

At the same time, the break between England and the papacy caused the militantly catholic Spaniards (for whom their faith was essential to their national identity) to regard all Englishmen as heretics.

Charles never implemented a policy of harrassment, but it happened all over Spain.

English merchants were placed in an impossible situation.

If they disowned their king's actions, they were in trouble at home; if they defended him, their goods and ships were seized, and they suffered at least a spell in the prisons of the inquisition.

Trade collapsed, and in 1545 one of the few merchants to stick it out, Robert Reneger of Southampton, became so incensed by the seizure of his goods that he retaliated by capturing a valuable incoming vessel from the Indies.

This blatant piracy provoked a furious complaint from the Imperial ambassador, but the English council tacitly supported Reneger, promoting him in the royal service.

By 1550, with England fully and explicitly heretical (which it had not been before 1547), Anglo-Spanish contacts were few and hostile.

It was against this background that Mary proposed to marry Philip in 1553.

Charles's ambassador, Simon Renard, who negotiated the marriage, provides the best evidence of the hostility which it provoked in England.

Whereas the English people generally
liked the Low Countrymen,
they hated the Spaniards above all others

- even the French and the Scots.
- This may have been an exaggeration, but it was not without foundation, and the Spaniards reciprocated heartily.

The marriage was celebrated without trouble (a rebellion against it having been suppressed), but it was quickly followed by brawls and assaults in which both parties were guilty, and which seriously embarrassed both Philip and Mary.

Philip sensibly dismissed most of his Spanish followers as soon as possible, but some remained with him, and there continued to be trouble as long as he was in England.

Once his presence was removed, the hostility subsided, and does not seem to have been so noticeable during his second visit in 1557.

Many of the English elite considered the marriage a good move, and hoped to serve in Philip's armies or bureaucracy, but they were disappointed, and by 1558 even its original supporters were disillusioned with the union.

As we have seen, Philip had seriously alienated the Londoners, and at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign there was little support in England for a continued Spanish alliance.

For several years Philip and Elizabeth professed friendship, being drawn together by a fear of French ambition and Mary Queen of Scots.

However, almost from the beginning English catholics began to take refuge in Philip's territories, and to look to him as their protector.

As he assumed that role, and
began to issue pensions,
he also allowed his ambassadors in England to conspire with the Queen's
enemies
and to seek to de-stabilise the regime.

At the same time, Elizabeth began to encourage her more militant and aggressive seamen to break into the Spanish American trade, and looked away when they raided Spanish ships and colonies.

A confrontation at San Juan d'Ulloa in 1568, in which John Hawkins and Francis Drake were defeated, resulted in a bitter (but unofficial) war of revenge.

Periodically both rulers drew back from confrontation
and tried to negotiate;
but the momentum of events,
and the attitudes of their respective subjects,
drove them on.

By the 1580s there was a settled animosity, even at the highest level, and the Treaty of Nonsuch was the last straw.

Almost inadvertently Philip and Elizabeth had become the symbols and protagonists of the ideological conflict which had split Europe into Catholic and protestant camps.

The war which lasted from 1585 to 1604 was inconclusive.

The most spectacular victories were won by the English, against the Armada in 1588 and at Cadiz in 1596 (with Dutch help), but Philip's power was not seriously reduced. Indeed in naval terms it was greater in 1598 (when Philip II died) than it had been ten years earlier.

The English, however, not only survived; they acquired a huge conceit of themselves which lasted for centuries.

Elizabeth's war against Spain, unintentional and purely defensive in aim, ended in achieving more than all the positive moves of Tudor foreign policy put together!

9. THE PAPACY

Before 1521 England's relations with the papacy were amicable, but hardly close.

Henry VII

relied upon ecclesiastical support to strengthen his title, and supported the pope over matters such as the jubilee.

John Morton represented England in the College of Cardinals until his death in 1500, Christopher Bainbridge from 1509 to 1514, and Thomas Wolsey from 1515 to 1530, but

Italian Cardinal Protectors usually looked after English affairs in Rome, and the curia paid little enough attention to what went on in the north.

Henry VIII, however, decided that he deserved a little more attention than he was getting, particularly with Wolsey cutting such a dash on the international scene.

Henry

was also jealous of the fact that the kings of France and Spain were styled respectively 'rex christianissimus' and 'rex catholicus', by papal grant.

In 1521 he took advantage of Luther's protest (of which he genuinely disapproved) to write a defence of catholic doctrine and papal authority entitled *Affirmation of the the Seven Sacraments (Assertio septem sacramentorum)*, and thus earned the coveted title 'Fidei defensor' - Defender of the Faith.

At this point he believed that he had influence in Rome, and thought that Wolsey might be elected Pope.

This illusion did not survive his first request for an annulment of his marriage.

He had some case in canon law, but it depended upon the dispensation of 1503 being declared *ultra vires*.

Clement VII would have been reluctant to do that in any case, and in 1527 he was in no position to resist the wishes of the Emperor.

He had been caught on the wrong side in the Franco-Habsburg war, and had had his city (inadvertently) sacked around him.

Little more than a prisoner in the castle of San Angelo, he refused all English overtures. Even when his position eased, Henry did not have the leverage to move him politically, nor the resources to bribe him adequately.

So the king (eventually) resorted to defiance.

He had his marriage invalidated in England, and took legislative steps to end the papal jurisdiction completely. Diplomatic relations finally broke down in 1533, and Henry was threatened with excommunication. The sentence was finally issued in 1535, and a bull of deprivation was approved in the Consistory in January 1536.

Paul III's intention was clear, but the promulgation was imperfect and no one made any move to enforce it.

Catherine was dead, and there was little point in ordering him to return to his wife.

In the summer of 1536, after Anne had been executed, Paul was hopeful that the king might reconsider his position, and there were some unofficial diplomatic exchanges, but nothing came of the initiative, and Anglo-Papal hostility remained complete and unbroken for the rest of Henry's life.

Edward was never excommunicated, not having reached the age of discretion, but as England moved from schism into heresy, and the papacy became Antichrist in the eyes of many protestants, a strong ideological element was added to the hostility.

Mary's reversal of policy in 1553 was in theory complete.

She had never shared in her father's excommunication, and her surrender to him in 1536 was tacitly ignored.

Early in 1555 the Acts of Supremacy were repealed, and the papal jurisdiction restored, with Reginald Pole as the papal legate.

Julius III had, however, been forced to pay a high price for this reconciliation, surrendering the church's claim to the property of all the dissolved religious houses.

Nor did the legacy of the schism in practice disappear.

Mary continued to use her royal authority to enforce ecclesiastical law, and to round up and punish heretics.

The popularity of the traditional religious practices which she restored did not extend to the papacy, which continued to be regarded with chilly hostility or indifference, even by many who called themselves catholics.

Diplomatic relations with the curia were fully restored, but the problems did not go away. Julius III died in March 1555, and his successor Marcellus II a few weeks later.

This brought onto the scene Gianpietro Carafa as Paul IV. Paul was bitterly anti-Spanish, and after several months of trying, eventually provoked Philip into war.

In theory England was not involved, but in practice communications with Rome were seriously impaired.

Paul also distrusted Reginald Pole as a crypto-heretic, and cancelled his legatine commission in 1557, summoning him back to Rome.

By this time Paul had been forced out of the war, but Philip and Mary would not allow Pole to leave England, nor would they receive the successor Paul tried to appoint (William Peto).

Anglo-Papal relations became very chilly, and much necessary English business hung fire in Rome, leaving many bishoprics vacant when Mary died in November 1558.

Ironically, Paul at first expected Elizabeth to be an improvement on her troublesome sister, although he was quickly disillusioned.

He had taken no action against her by the time he died in August 1559, but the renewal of the English schism was by then well known.

Diplomatic relations were again broken off, and Pius IV's attempt to persuade the queen to send representatives to the Council of Trent were headed off.

Pius wished to renew sanctions, but Philip was unco-operative, so he did not persist.

In 1570, however, his successor Pius V was more scrupulous. It was represented to him that English catholics (who it was claimed were the great majority), would not rise up and overthrow the heretic unless a lead came from Rome.

Without consulting Philip, he issued the bull *Regnans in Excelsis*, deposing Elizabeth and absolving all her subjects from their allegiance.

It was a declaration of war, and that is the best description of Anglo-Papal relations for the rest of Elizabeth's life.

Successive popes supported (and even funded) conspiracies against her, and urged her assassination.

By 1588 to be a loyal Englishman meant to be a protestant, and to regard the Pope as Antichrist.

Unfortunate English catholics, who had no desire to support the queens enemies, found themselves regarded as traitors, and priests were executed in significant numbers.

Pius's conscientious action turned John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments of the English Martyrs* into a best seller, and defined the cultural identity of England for at least two centuries.

10. OTHERS

a) **The Hanseatic League** (a federation of north German trading cities)

Edward IV had fought an unsuccessful war against the Hanse in the 1470s, and the League continued to control English trade into the Baltic until the middle of the sixteenth century.

The London Merchant Adventurers fought a prolonged campaign to curtail its privileges, and Henry VIII was sympathetic, but he could not manage without Baltic naval stores in wartime, and the privileges remained.

Edward VI's council was more radical (or more influenced by London) and after a renewal of bitter complaint by the Adventurers, cancelled all concessions in 1552.

Mary restored them to please the Emperor, and upset Londoners severely in the process.

After 1560 the trade declined in importance, and
the League progressively lost both power and coherence.

Elizabeth gradually whittled the privileges away over a number of years, and finally closed down the whole operation in the 1590s, by which time the League had virtually expired anyway.

b) **Portugal**

There was little diplomatic exchange between England and Portugal, the only significant negotiation being the prolonged quest of Dom Luis, the king's brother, for the hand of Mary (Tudor).

This began in the 1530s, and was finally quashed by Charles in favour of his son Philip in 1553. Luis never married.

In 1580 Portugal and its colonies passed under the control of Philip II, and provided much of his seapower in the Atlantic at the time of the Armada.

English attempts to support his rival, Dom Antonio, were frustrated in 1589, and came to nothing, but a large number of Portuguese ships were taken by English privateers.

c) **Scandinavia**

There was constant low-key contact with Denmark, which had much closer relations with Scotland, but no formal alliance, and no hostilities.

Henry VIII considered the widowed Christina of Denmark as a bride, but she rejected the idea. Elizabeth considered marrying Eric, the heir of Sweden in the 1560s, but negotiations failed.

d) Russia

Contact was established after the Chancellor voyage in 1554, and maintained intermittently thereafter. Russian ambassadors (when they appeared) attracted much interest as exotics.

e) Italy

England retained long standing diplomatic relations with Venice, where a resident was posted throughout the century, and the reports of the Venetian ambassadors in London are a prime source for English history.

However, apart from the Holy League in 1512-14 there was little to discuss except trade and gossip.

After 1535 England tried to remain on good terms with the Venetians, who were famous for their scepticism about the papacy, and English students attended Venetian universities in significant numbers, importing many valuable ideas on their return.

Some other Italian rulers (such as the Dukes of Milan) kept envoys in England upon an occasional basis, performing what would later be called 'consular' duties.

f) The Ottoman Empire

A one way diplomatic traffic, late in the century. Set up originally by trade agreements in the 1560s, England maintained a diplomatic presence in Constantinople after 1570.

There was no Ottoman presence in London, but a common hostility to Philip II gave the exchanges a political dimension.

Reading suggestions:

[There are very few studies of Tudor foreign policy as a whole. There are, however, many document collections, and monographs and a huge number of articles which usually relate to specific wars, treaties or negotiations. The following is a small selection.]

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