

01 | Queen, government and religion, 1558–69

If you were 16 in 1558, when Elizabeth I became queen, you would have already outlived at least 21% of those born in the same year as you. You might also be fast approaching the half-way point of your life, as the average life expectancy was between 28 and 41.

In those 16 years, hundreds of people would have been put to death by the English government. It is likely that you would have heard about, or even witnessed, the agonies of those being burned alive for their religious beliefs. Holding religious beliefs different from the monarch's was extremely dangerous. Since the reign of Henry VIII, religion in England had changed with every new king or queen. From November 1558, England's religion was decided by Elizabeth I.

Traitors also faced execution. Elizabeth had herself been imprisoned as a traitor in the Tower of London in 1554. She was suspected of treason against her sister, Mary I. After becoming queen herself, Elizabeth often found her life threatened by plots.

Elizabeth was 25 when she took the throne. Her first task was to secure her position as queen. To do so, she arranged her coronation for January 1559 and then drew up her plans for England's religion. By doing these things, Elizabeth would be the ultimate source of political and religious power in England.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, you will:

- know and understand how English society and government were organised
- know and understand what problems Elizabeth faced on becoming queen
- know and understand how Elizabeth dealt with the problems caused by England's religion
- know and understand why Mary, Queen of Scots, was a threat to Elizabeth.

Learning outcomes

- Understand the structure of Elizabethan society in 1558.
- Understand the circumstances Elizabeth I found herself in when she came to the throne, including the issue of her legitimacy.
- Understand the challenges Elizabeth faced, both at home and abroad, during the early years of her reign.

Society and government in 1558

Elizabethan England was often a violent and dangerous place. As there was no police force or permanent army, keeping order relied upon a clear social structure in which everyone knew their place and had a role. Equality was not something that was important to Elizabethans. In fact, society, government, and law and order were based on inequality.

Society

Elizabethans had a very clear idea of where everyone belonged in society. The monarch was at the top of the social scale as the most important member of the **nobility**, followed by the rest of the nobility and **gentry**. Your place in this hierarchy was generally determined by how much land you had and whether you owned or rented it. About 90% of England's population lived and worked in the countryside. **Yeomen** were men who held a small amount of land or an estate – they were essentially lower gentry. **Tenant farmers** farmed rented land, which was usually owned by yeomen or the gentry.

In towns, the hierarchy was based on wealth and occupation. Wealthy **merchants** were at the top, followed by **professionals**, such as lawyers and doctors. Next came skilled craftsmen, such as silversmiths, glovers, carpenters or tailors, who could be quite wealthy business owners. They organised themselves into guilds, which were trade associations to monitor standards, working conditions and who were allowed to practise the trade. **Craftsmen** were skilled employees, and also included apprentices. **Unskilled labourers** and the unemployed came at the bottom of society.

Wherever you were in Elizabethan society, you owed respect and obedience to those above you and had a duty of care to those below you. Landowners ran their estates according to these ideas. Ideally they would take care of their tenants, especially during times of hardship.

Households were run along similar lines to society. The husband and father was head of the household. His wife, children and any servants were expected to be obedient to him.

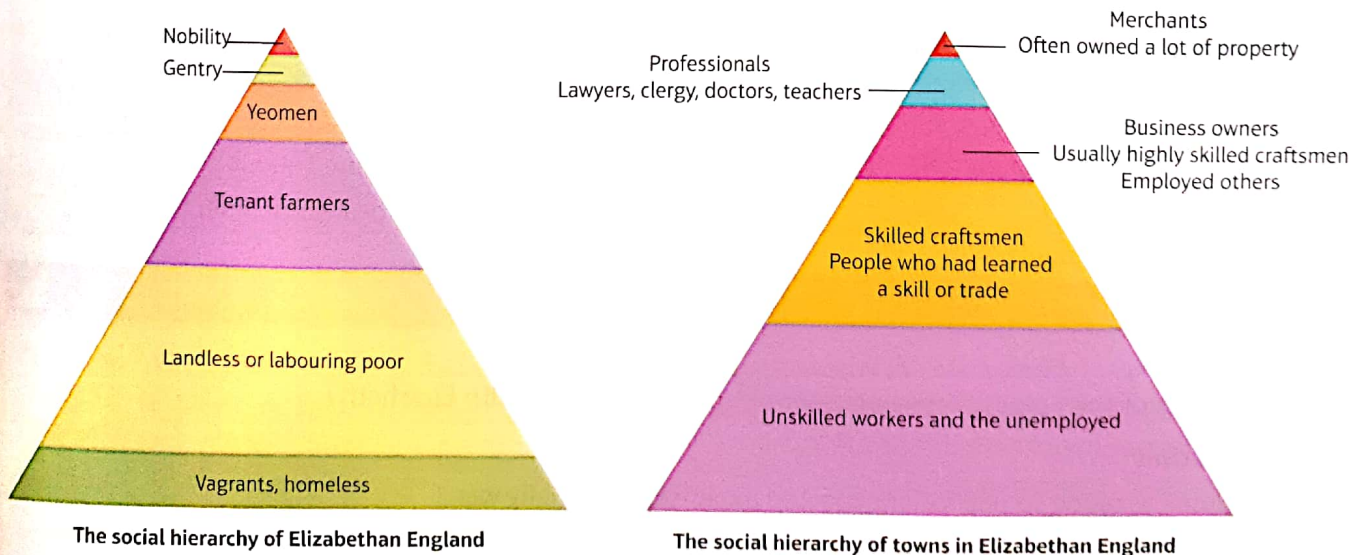


Figure 1.1 Elizabethan society was a hierarchy in which everyone had a clear place in the social order.

Government

Elizabethan government had many key features. Different organisations had varying roles to keep Elizabethan England running smoothly.

Elizabethan Government		Role
What	Key features	
Court	The court was a body of people who lived in, or near the same palace or house as the monarch. The court was mostly made up of members of the nobility. They were the monarch's key servants, advisers and friends. Attending court required the monarch's permission.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To entertain and advise the monarch A public display of wealth and power Courtiers* had influence with the monarch rather than actual power.
Privy Council	The Privy Council was made up of leading courtiers and advisers, as well as nobles and very senior government officials, like Sir William Cecil. There were approximately 19 members on the Privy Council, chosen by the monarch. They met at least three times a week, and the meetings were often attended and presided over by the monarch.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To debate current issues and advise the monarch on government policy Made sure the monarch's final decisions were carried out Oversaw law and order, local government and the security of England Monitored Justices of the Peace Monitored the proceedings of Parliament.
Parliament	Parliament was made up of the House of Lords (which included bishops) and the House of Commons. Parliament could only be called and dismissed by the monarch. Elections were held before each new parliament, but very few people could vote. Elizabeth I called parliament ten times during her reign.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To grant extraordinary taxation* Passed laws (Acts of Parliament) Offered advice to the monarch.
Lords Lieutenant	Each county had a Lord Lieutenant chosen by the monarch. They were members of the nobility and were often also on the Privy Council. They were essential to maintaining the monarch's power and England's defences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In charge of raising and training the local militia* and overseeing county defences Oversaw the enforcement of policies Part of the local government.
Justices of the Peace (JPs)	JPs were large landowners who kept law and order in their local areas. They were unpaid and they reported to the Privy Council. Being a JP was a position of status, and so was a very popular job.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To make sure all social and economic policies were carried out Heard county court cases every three months for more serious crimes Part of the local government.

Key terms

Courtiers*

Were usually members of the nobility. Courtiers spent much of their lives with Elizabeth I.

Extraordinary taxation*

Occasional, additional taxation to pay for unexpected expenses, especially war.

Militia*

A military force of ordinary people, rather than soldiers, usually raised in an emergency.

The monarch

The government in Elizabethan England centred on the monarch. During, and even before, the Elizabethan period, monarchs of England believed they had the right to rule 'by the grace of God'. This was later known as divine right*. Because of this, Elizabeth I made government policy, making all the important decisions with the advice of her Privy Council. She could also:

- declare war and make peace
- call and dismiss parliament, and agree to, or reject, any laws they voted for
- rule in some legal cases, for example, if the law was unclear or if people appealed a judgement
- grant titles, lands, money, and jobs.

To provide someone with an important job or position is known as **patronage**. This could involve a grant of land, a title or championing a cause. Patronage is a very effective way of getting support from people and controlling them. What the queen gave, she could also take away if displeased. Other wealthy people could give patronage too, but the queen was the ultimate patron.*

The Secretary of State

Elizabeth's most important Privy Councillor was her Secretary of State. He was the person in government that she was closest to, and advised the queen on matters important to the Crown*. The most significant person to hold the position was Sir William Cecil, who held the position until 1573. He was later raised to the nobility and became Lord Burghley.

Key terms

Divine right*

Belief that the monarch's right to rule came from God.

Patron*

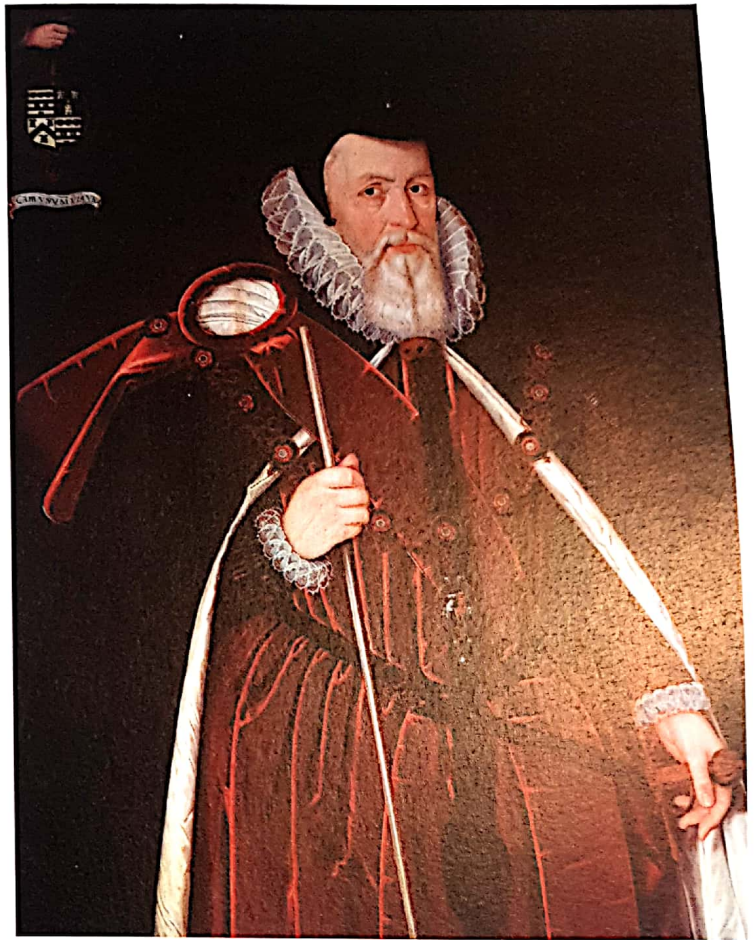
Someone who gives encouragement or financial support to an individual or a cause. For example, Elizabeth I was a patron of many explorers during her reign. She funded their voyages and publicly praised their efforts.

Crown*

With a capital 'C', the Crown refers to the monarch and their government.

Source A

Sir William Cecil (Lord Burghley from 1571), painted after 1587 by an unknown artist.



The monarch and parliament

Although the monarch had a regular income, there were often times when more was needed. Raising extraordinary taxation could only be done with parliament's agreement and so it was not possible to govern effectively without parliament.

Although the queen could issue direct orders (known as proclamations), they could not be enforced in England's law courts. Acts of Parliament, however, could be enforced and so any really important policies would be presented to parliament for its approval. Although, in theory, it was possible to vote against what the monarch wanted, this rarely happened. There were some areas that only the monarch had the right to decide upon. This was known as the **royal prerogative**. Elizabeth I claimed

Key term

Succession*

The issue of who was going to succeed the throne after the existing monarch died.

Extend your knowledge

Elizabethan parliament

Elizabeth's House of Commons was very different from today. There were no political parties, no prime minister and only wealthy men could vote or become members of parliament (MPs). Candidates for election were chosen by Privy Councillors. There were elections, although most were unchallenged.

Although MPs claimed the right to free speech, this did not prevent MPs from being sent to the Tower of London when it was decided, usually by the queen, that they had gone too far (they were always released). This meant that Elizabeth had considerable control over parliament.

Activity



Write a job advertisement for one of the roles in Elizabeth's government listed in the table above (see page 10). You should:

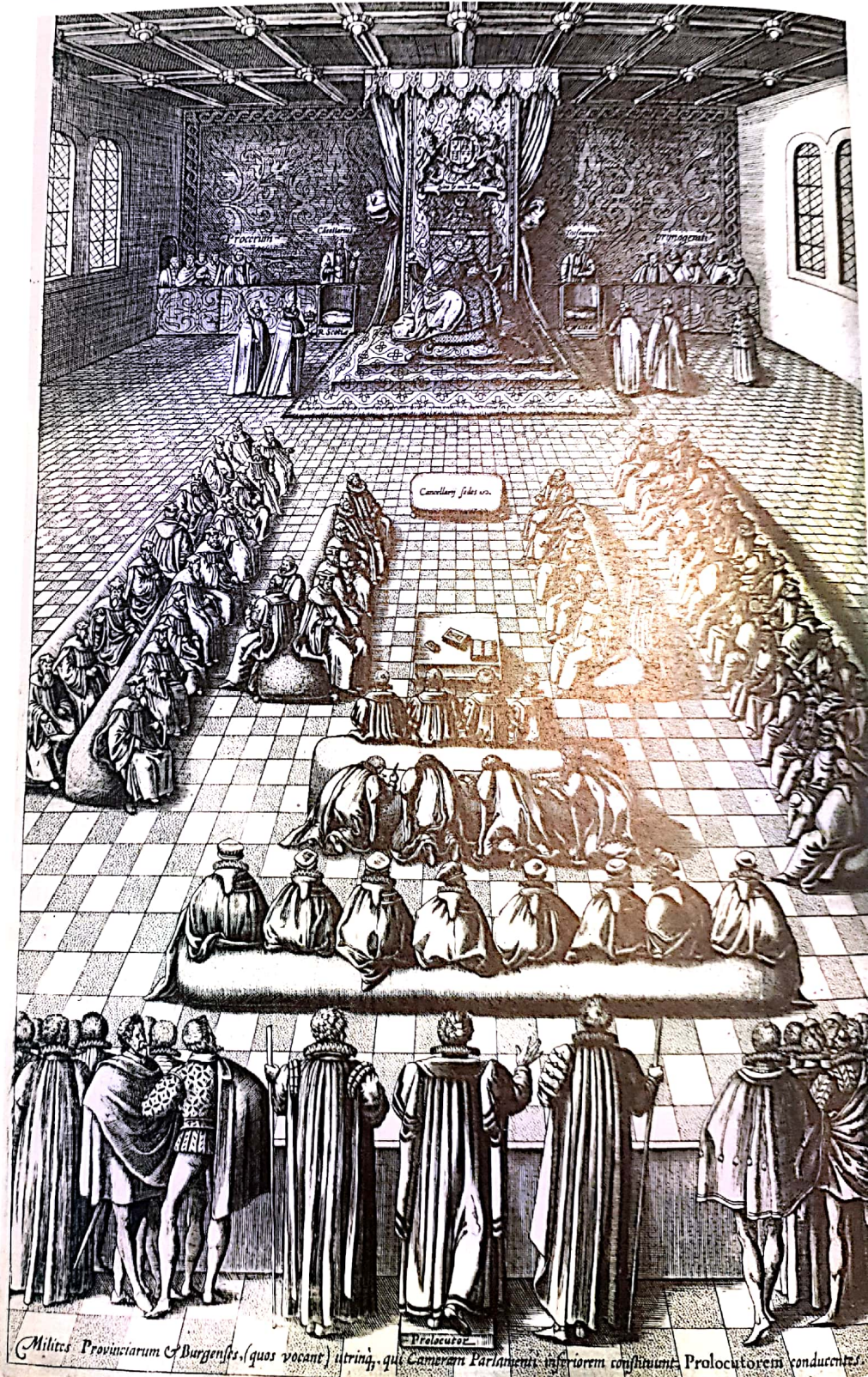
- a describe the key features of the role
- b explain what responsibilities the role involved
- c describe why the job was important to the queen.

Ask a classmate to check the advertisement you have written, and suggest improvements.

it was her right as monarch to stop parliament discussing any issues she didn't want them to discuss. The most important of these included foreign policy, marriage and the succession*.

Source B

A drawing of Elizabeth I sitting in parliament. It is an English engraving from the 16th century. The queen's importance is shown by the size of her throne.



The Virgin Queen

Legitimacy

To inherit the throne, it was essential that the monarch was legitimate, which meant being born whilst the reigning king and queen were married (in wedlock). It was not possible for any child to inherit unless they were born in wedlock. Elizabeth I's legitimacy was in doubt because of how her father had divorced his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, in order to marry Elizabeth's mother, Anne Boleyn.

Henry VIII wanted to divorce Catherine in 1533 to marry Anne Boleyn, in the hope of getting a male heir. Catherine had given birth many times, but only one child had lived past infancy: a female heir, Mary. Henry wanted a male heir because he believed a woman could not rule the country with the same authority as a man. Henry believed Catherine could not give him the son he desperately wanted.

The head of the Roman Catholic* Church, the pope, refused to grant the divorce, leading to one of the most important developments in English history: the English Reformation. Henry VIII created the Church of England, separate from the Catholic Church, with himself as its head. He was then able to 'grant himself' a divorce (often referred to as an annulment). Henry married Anne Boleyn on 25 January 1533; Elizabeth was born on 7 September.

Key term

Roman Catholic*

The form of Christianity followed throughout the whole of Western Europe until the 16th century. A feature of Roman Catholicism includes allegiance to the pope, the head of the Catholic Church.

Committed Catholics refused to acknowledge Henry's divorce because the pope had not agreed to it. Catherine of Aragon was alive when Elizabeth was born, and so not everyone accepted that Elizabeth was legitimate. Some Catholics were even executed for refusing to accept her legitimacy.

In 1536, when Anne Boleyn was executed for treason, Henry VIII himself declared Elizabeth illegitimate and excluded her from the succession. However, he later reversed this decision.

Gender and marriage

A queen who ruled in her own right was something very unusual and it seemed unnatural to 16th-century society for a woman to rule. The Christian religion taught that women should be under the authority of men. Furthermore, monarchs were still expected to lead their armies into battle.

PRO

My potential husband could fulfil the role of military leader in war, which is an important part of a monarch's role.

PRO

Having children will ensure England's stability, as there would be no 'vacancy' for the heir to the throne that could lead to conflict between rival claimants.

CON

Who would I marry? I am queen, and yet wives are expected to be obedient to their husbands. I would be sidelined: 16th-century prejudice means my husband would be seen as the figure of authority – not me.

CON

The only man of suitable rank I could marry would be a foreign prince, but he would put England's needs second to his own country.

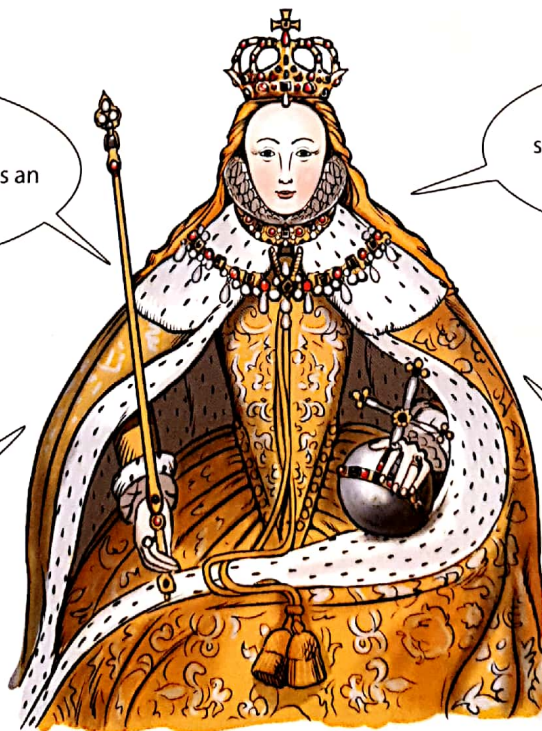


Figure 1.2 The pros and cons of Elizabeth marrying.

Women were not considered to be physically, mentally or emotionally capable of governing, and even the home was supposed to be under the authority of the husband or father. It was unusual for women to be in a position of power.

Many people thought that Elizabeth should marry. However, she had no intention of doing so. Elizabeth turned down offers from some of the most eligible princes of Europe, including her own brother-in-law, Philip II of Spain. Other failed suitors included King Eric of Sweden and the French heir to the throne, the Duke of Alençon.

The majority of people thought that women were not capable of ruling (see Interpretation 1). This prejudice had not been helped by Mary I's reign (1553–58). As England's first queen regnant* her short reign had not gone well.

- England had allied with Spain in a war against France and had lost. Morale was low.
- England's finances were poor and so were many of its people. There had been several bad harvests leading to disease, hunger and poverty.
- Mary's marriage to King Philip II of Spain was so unpopular that it had led to a rebellion.
- Mary burned almost 300 people for their religious beliefs. Although most people were Catholic, like Mary, the burnings had not been popular.

Key term

Queen regnant*

'Regnant' is a Latin word and means 'reigning'. Elizabeth was a queen regnant because she ruled in her own right, like her sister, Mary.

Character and strengths

Elizabeth was highly intelligent and well educated, with an eye for detail and an excellent grasp of politics. She spoke Latin, Greek, French and Italian. She had also experienced being a prisoner in the Tower of London, where she was held in 1554 on suspicion of treason against Mary I. She understood the dangerous world of court politics, where ambitious courtiers schemed and plotted to gain power and influence. The lifestyle for courtiers was lavish, but the stakes were high: fall out of favour with the queen and you could lose your life.

Elizabeth was confident and charismatic, able to make great speeches and win over her subjects, though she had a temper that people feared. She also often took a long time to make up her mind, especially over serious matters, and her Privy Council and advisers could find her extremely frustrating.

Activities

- 1 Working in pairs, write a quiz about Elizabeth I. The sections of the quiz should be 'The powers Elizabeth I had' and 'The problems Elizabeth I faced'. You must write out the questions and answers in full. Once you have finished, swap quizzes with another pair and answer the questions.
- 2 List the qualities that you think would make a successful 16th-century monarch.
- 3 Did Elizabeth I have these qualities? Make a table with two columns showing her strengths and weaknesses as a queen.

Interpretation 1

Historian Christopher Haigh interprets Elizabeth as a strong, independent female leader in the book *Elizabeth I* (1988). Elizabeth sought to present herself, woman though she was, as a fit occupant of the throne of England, and she did not propose to confuse the issue by recruiting a husband or an heir. ... This was done not by an attack upon the sixteenth century stereotype of a woman. Elizabeth accepted the image and often derided her own sex... she did not seek to change the ideal, but to escape from it, by suggesting that she was no ordinary woman.

Source C

Elizabeth I (1558–1603) at her coronation, painted after 1600 by an unknown artist.



Extend your knowledge

Elizabeth and Anne

To further legitimise her claim to the throne, Elizabeth campaigned for her mother, Anne Boleyn, to be remembered in a positive way. Anne Boleyn had been executed by Henry VIII, but Elizabeth wanted her to be remembered as his greatest love, and a martyr to her Protestant cause (see page 16).

Challenges at home and from abroad

Financial weakness

England's monarchs could not do whatever they pleased. They might rule by divine right, but they needed money and support to rule successfully.

Monarchs could raise money from:

- rents and income from their own lands (Crown lands)
- taxes from trade (known as **customs duties**)
- special additional taxes known as subsidies, which had to be agreed by parliament

- profits of justice (fines, property or lands from people convicted of crimes)
- loans (sometimes loans were 'forced', meaning they were compulsory and never repaid).

Elizabeth's government did not have a lot of money, as England had fought costly wars before she became queen and lots of Crown lands had been sold off to raise money to fight them. When she took the throne, the Crown was £300,000 in debt, which was a huge sum in 1558. In contrast, the total annual income of the Crown at that time was approximately £286,667.

Extend your knowledge

Elizabethan money

Money in Elizabeth's time was very different from today. There was no paper money, and coins had to contain a specific amount of silver (or gold). To make more money to fight wars in the 1540s, the government had reduced the amount of silver in each coin. This is known as debasement, which made coins less valuable and it meant that prices went up. Elizabeth also needed to improve the quality of English money to improve England's finances.

To be strong, Elizabeth had to be wealthy. Defending England and her throne was very expensive. Taxes were unpopular and parliament had to agree to them. In return, parliament could make demands on Elizabeth. She did not, therefore, want to have to rely too much on parliament for her income.

The French threat

France was wealthier and had a larger population than England. It was also England's traditional enemy and was an ally of England's other enemy, Scotland. Their friendship was known as the **Auld Alliance**. There was an added complication for Elizabeth: the Scottish monarch, Mary, Queen of Scots, was her cousin and had a strong claim to the English throne (see Figure 1.3 on page 17). She was also half French and married to Francis, heir to the French throne. She became queen of France in 1559 when her husband became King Francis II.

France and Scotland

Mary, Queen of Scots, declared herself the legitimate Catholic claimant to the English throne when Mary I died. Mary, Queen of Scots, was Elizabeth's second cousin, the granddaughter of Henry VIII's sister. Catholics who had not accepted Henry VIII's marriage to Anne Boleyn could rally to Mary, Queen of Scots' claim to be England's legitimate, Catholic monarch.

Scotland was an independent country and a traditional enemy of England. England's border with Scotland was remote and hard to defend, which meant it saw constant fighting and raids. In 1558, Mary's mother, Mary of Guise,

was ruling Scotland for her daughter and had French troops stationed there.

France and Calais

England had held the French port of Calais since 1347. It was useful as it meant that England had a military base in France. It was also an important trading post. In the 1550s, England had sided with Spain in a war against the French, as Mary I was married to the Spanish king. In 1559, the conflict ended with the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis. Under this treaty, England had to return Calais to France. The English felt humiliated by this loss, and so regaining Calais was an important aim of Elizabeth's foreign policy when she became queen. By regaining Calais, Elizabeth could right the mistake of Mary I. She could also reclaim some of the glory enjoyed by past monarchs, who had successfully held Calais as an English outpost in France for hundreds of years.

Elizabeth was also concerned that France and Spain were no longer at war. Although the two powers were great rivals, they were both Roman Catholic countries. Countries took their monarch's religion and Elizabeth was Protestant. Protestants were Christians, but did not accept the pope as their religious leader. Nor did they agree with some Catholic teachings, such as clergy not being allowed to marry, or church services and the Bible only being in Latin. Divisions between Protestants and Catholics were already causing conflict in Europe. There was a real possibility that Catholic Spain and France would unite against England and its Protestant queen.

Activities

- 1 Add a section to the quiz which you began on page 14 to test others in your class on foreign threats to Elizabeth I.
- 2 Identify and explain the three most important problems faced by Elizabeth I on becoming queen.
- 3 Look back at your work on the powers Elizabeth had as queen and the strengths she had as a person. Work with two or three of your classmates to draw up an action plan for her to tackle the three problems you identified in Q2. Present it to the class.

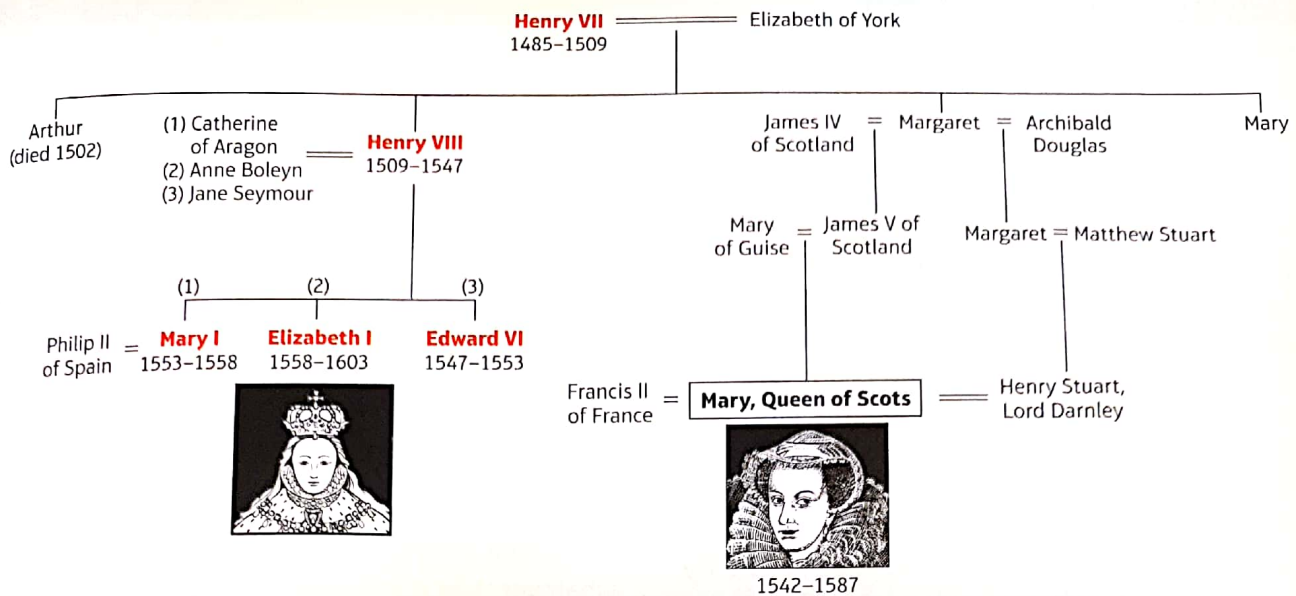


Figure 1.3 Elizabeth I's family tree showing Mary, Queen of Scots' claim to the English throne.

Summary

- Elizabeth I was only England's second ruling queen and it was thought unnatural for women to rule alone.
- Elizabeth was highly intelligent, educated and charismatic, but could be indecisive.
- Elizabeth was the head of the government and made all the key decisions.
- However, she also needed her Privy Council, parliament, Lord Lieutenants and JPs to govern effectively.
- The monarch decided what the country's religion would be.
- England faced possible threats from France, Scotland and Spain.
- Elizabeth's claim to the throne was doubted by some Catholics who looked to her cousin, the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots, as a possible heir or potential alternative ruler.

Checkpoint

Strengthen

- S1 Give two issues Elizabeth I faced over her suitability to rule England.
- S2 Give at least two ways in which the Privy Council, parliament and JPs were important in governing England.
- S3 Describe Elizabeth I's strengths and weaknesses as a monarch.

Challenge

- C1 Explain how at least two factors combined to make governing England a problem for Elizabeth I. For example, gender and politics; foreign and domestic issues.
 - C2 Explain how a combination of factors made the defence of England a problem for Elizabeth I.
- If you are not confident about any of these questions, form a group with other students, discuss the answers and then record your conclusions. Your teacher can give you some hints.

Learning outcomes

- Understand the key features of the English Reformation and religious divisions in England in 1558.
- Understand the key features, and impact, of Elizabeth's religious settlement.
- Understand the role of the Church of England under Elizabeth's rule.

The English Reformation

Religion was central to life in the 16th century. Until 1517, Catholicism dominated Western Europe. Baptism, marriage and death were all marked by special services and ceremonies. Confession of sins and taking part in mass* were vital to keeping your soul from eternal damnation in hell and, even after you were dead, prayers from others could still help you on your way to heaven. Religious festivals marked the agricultural year. These festivals included Plough Sunday in January, where ploughs were traditionally blessed, and the Harvest Festival, which gave thanks for a plentiful harvest. Religion guided people's morals and behaviour as well as their understanding of the world.

The Reformation* began in Europe because a growing number of people believed that the Roman Catholic Church had become corrupt, greedy and no longer represented a truly Christian life: it needed to be reformed. This led some people, known as Protestants, to abandon the Roman Catholic faith altogether and establish their own Churches, without the pope.

The English Reformation began in 1532, when Henry VIII created the Church of England. However, Henry was never a true Protestant – his changes came out of his desire to divorce his first wife.

Key terms

Mass*

Roman Catholic service at which Catholics are given bread and wine. Catholics believe that this involves a miracle: the bread and wine is turned into the body and blood of Christ.

The Reformation*

A challenge to the teachings and power of the Roman Catholic Church. This movement is said to have begun in Europe in 1517.

By 1558, the Reformation was tearing Europe apart. It is hard to appreciate the impact that this had on people at the time. Beliefs that had been held for centuries were challenged and this threatened to overturn established social and political hierarchies.

Protestantism

Most ordinary people could not read or write in Latin. When the Bible was only in Latin, as the Catholic Church believed it should be, ordinary people had to accept whatever the Church told them was God's will. They had no power to interpret the Bible in any other way. Protestants believed that the Bible should be translated into their own languages so that people were able to more easily engage with their religion.

Once people were able to understand and study the Bible for themselves, some more extreme Protestants wanted to base their religion solely on what was in the Bible. Few of the traditional church ceremonies and decorations were in the Bible. Nor were certain Church offices, such as bishops, so why were they needed?

Under a threat this serious, the Roman Catholic Church focused on strengthening the Catholic faith. Many countries were divided, leading to persecution and even civil and religious wars.

Source A

The title page of Elizabeth I's personal Bible, given to her in 1568. It was written in English.



The Reformation: comparing Roman Catholicism and Protestantism

Roman Catholicism

- The pope is the head of the Church.
- Underneath the pope are cardinals, archbishops, bishops and priests.
- The Bible and church services should be in Latin.
- The Church acts as an intermediary* between God and the people.
- The Church can forgive sins.
- During mass a miracle occurs when the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ.
- Priests are special and should wear special clothing (vestments).
- Churches should be highly decorated in honour and glory of God.
- There are seven sacraments.*
- Priests are forbidden to marry.

Protestantism

- There should not be a pope.
- It is not necessary to have cardinals, or even archbishops or bishops.
- The Bible and church services should be in your own language.
- People have their own, direct relationship with God through prayer and Bible study.
- Sins can only be forgiven by God.
- The bread and wine simply represent the Last Supper* in the Bible. There is no miracle.
- Priests are not special and should not wear special clothing.
- Churches should be plain and simple so as not to distract from worshipping God.
- There are only two sacraments: baptism and Holy Communion*.
- Priests are permitted to marry if they wished.

Religious divisions in England in 1558

Elizabeth I was a Protestant. However, historians now believe that when she became queen in 1558, most of her subjects were Catholic. Edward VI (1547–53), Elizabeth's brother, was the only true Protestant monarch England had ever had. Henry VIII was head of the Church of England but had never really accepted most Protestant beliefs, and Elizabeth's sister, Mary I, had faced very little opposition to making England Roman Catholic again.

There was a great deal of religious conflict spreading through Europe as Roman Catholics and Protestants fought to establish their faith as the 'true' religion. Elizabeth feared this conflict would spread to England, and for good reason. Catholics who had not accepted Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon believed Elizabeth to be illegitimate and therefore that she had no right to be queen. There was also a Roman Catholic alternative for the English throne, Elizabeth's cousin Mary, Queen of Scots.

The clergy*

In 1558, most of England's bishops were Catholic. Changing the religion of the country needed an Act of Parliament. The House of Commons would be likely to

agree with what Elizabeth wanted, but there were lots of Catholic bishops in the House of Lords. Although many priests changed their religion to keep their jobs, others were committed Catholics and would not agree to work in a Protestant Church.

Key terms

Intermediary*

Someone who acts as a go-between when direct communication is not possible.

Last Supper*

The last meal that Christ shared with his disciples (followers). Commemorating it is very important to Christians as it is a reminder that Christ sacrificed his life to save humanity.

Sacraments*

Special Church ceremonies.

Holy Communion*

Another name for mass, often used in Protestant churches.

Clergy*

Religious leaders, such as bishops and priests.

Key terms

Diocese*

An area looked after by a bishop.

German states*

Germany did not exist in the 16th century. There were, however, many (usually small) states where German was spoken but they were independent of each other. These states formed part of the Holy Roman Empire (see page 28).

Activities



- 1 Imagine you are Elizabeth I. Explain what it is you dislike about:
 - a The Roman Catholic religion
 - b The Puritan religion.
- 2 Identify the problems Elizabeth I would face in establishing her Protestant religion in England. Remember that she needs to get parliament to agree to it and then has to make sure that the people obey it.
- 3 Are there any ways around the problems Elizabeth I faced? What could she do to ensure England's religion could be changed without causing unrest or rebellion?

Geographical divisions

Parts of England were more Catholic than others, meaning the people living there were less likely to accept Protestantism. These areas, such as Lancashire, tended to be further from London. Parts of the north, west and diocese* such as Lichfield were especially Catholic. The more remote a community, the more likely it was to be Catholic.

London, East Anglia and the south-east tended to be more Protestant. They had closer links with the Netherlands and the German states* where Protestantism had become popular. Therefore, Protestant books and ideas often came into England through London and the south-east, where they spread.

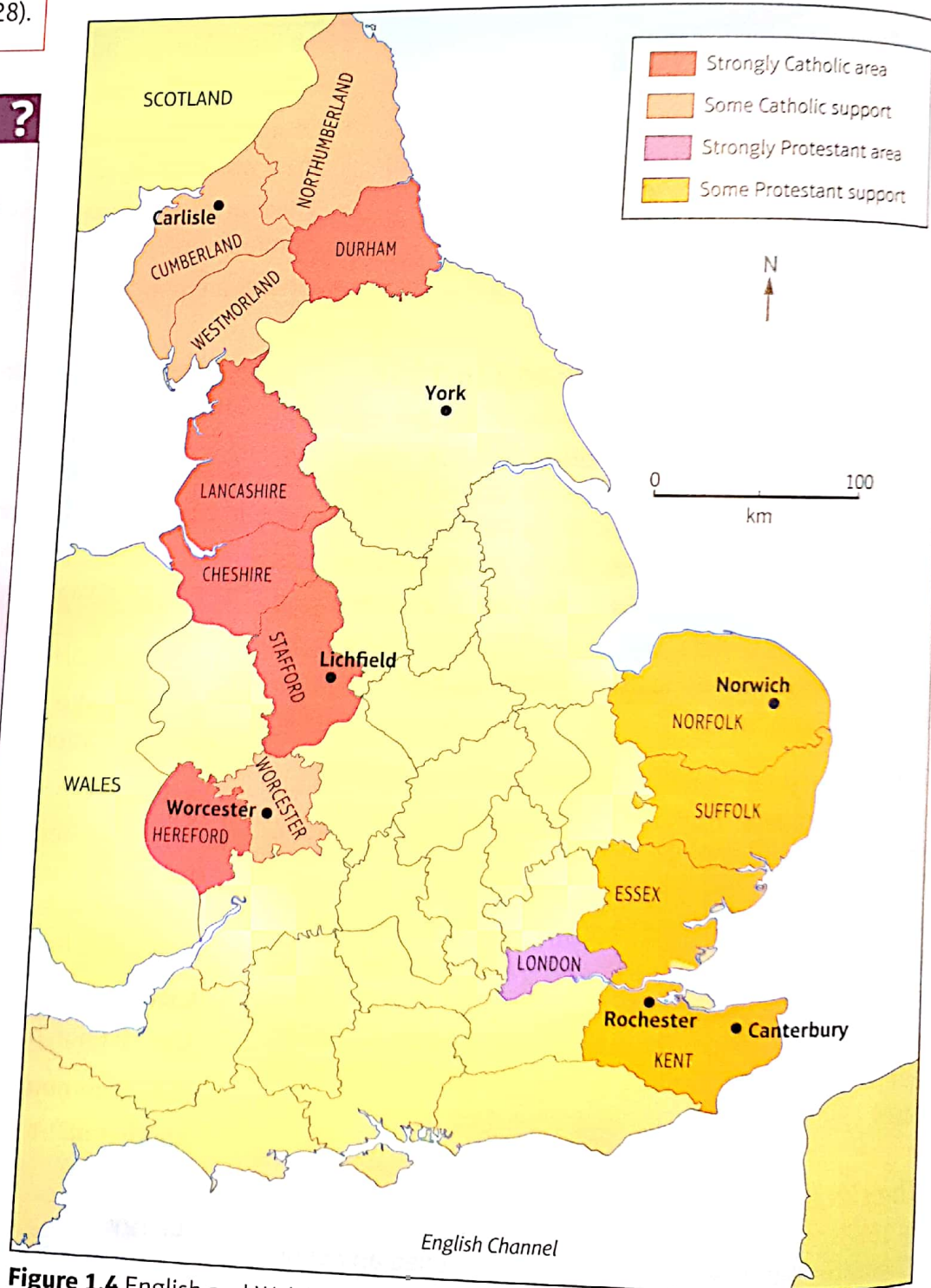


Figure 1.4 English and Welsh diocese at the time of Elizabeth I.

Puritans

When Mary I was queen of England, approximately 300 Protestants were burned for their religious beliefs. Many more escaped into exile in more tolerant Protestant states on the continent, such as the Netherlands. They returned to England when Elizabeth inherited the throne as much more committed Protestants with more radical (extreme) beliefs.

Radical Protestants were often referred to as **Puritans** because they wanted to 'purify' the Christian religion by getting rid of anything that wasn't in the Bible. Puritan congregations wanted to manage their own churches themselves, rather than bishops or the pope choosing for them. However, under that system, there was no role for the monarch as head of the Church, either. Furthermore, Puritan churches would be very basic, without even the altars* or special clothes for priests that could be found in some Protestant churches and that Elizabeth I liked.

Key term

Altars*

The table in a church where mass is performed.

Elizabeth's religious settlement, 1559

Elizabeth wanted to find a compromise when it came to England's religion. This meant establishing a form of Protestantism that Catholics could accept. Elizabeth ruled out a Puritan religion as she didn't want to turn her Catholic subjects against her. Personally, Elizabeth herself did not believe in the extreme Protestantism practised by Puritans. Puritans also wanted to develop their own Church, under their own leadership, which would challenge her authority as queen. It was generally believed in the 16th century that successful governments needed the country to follow the monarch's religion. If not, to whom would people turn to as the ultimate source of authority: the monarch or the Church? There were some Puritans who believed that, in some circumstances, subjects had the right to overthrow their monarchs.

Features of the religious settlement

Elizabeth I's religious settlement was designed to be accepted by as many of her subjects as possible, be they Catholic or Protestant. The religious settlement was established in 1559 and came in three parts.

- The **Act of Supremacy** made Elizabeth supreme governor of the Church of England – all clergy and royal officials had to swear an oath of allegiance to her as the head of the Church.
- The **Act of Uniformity** established the appearance of churches and the form of services they held.
- The **Royal Injunctions** was a set of instructions, issued by Sir William Cecil on behalf of the queen to the clergy, on a wide range of issues to reinforce the acts of Supremacy and Uniformity. It included instructions on how people should worship God and the structure of services.

Under the Act of Supremacy, an Ecclesiastical* High Commission was established with the job of maintaining discipline within the church and enforcing the queen's religious settlement. Members of the clergy whose loyalty was in doubt could be punished.

The Act of Uniformity introduced a set form of church service in the Book of Common Prayer to be used in **all** churches. The clergy had to use the wording of the Prayer Book when conducting services. Anyone who refused to use it was punished. The wording of the service was deliberately unclear so that, for example, Catholics could take it as meaning the bread and wine became the body and blood of Christ, while Protestants could take it as simply an act of remembrance. It also made it clear that priests were to wear special clothing.

Key term

Ecclesiastical*

An adjective used to describe things to do with the Church.

Extend your knowledge

Transubstantiation

Term meaning that the bread and wine that form the central part of a Catholic Church service become the body and blood of Christ. They are **transformed**.

This does not mean that they change appearance and texture, but that Christ is present in them. Protestants didn't believe in it.

Key terms

Royal Supremacy*

This is when the monarch is head of the Church.

Pilgrimage*

A journey to an important religious monument, shrine or place.

Saints*

A saint is someone who lived an exceptional, holy life. To be made a saint by the Catholic Church, several conditions have to be met, including having lived a good life.

Interpretation 1

Historians Turvey and Heard look at the effectiveness of Elizabeth's settlement in *Change and Protest 1536–88: Mid-Tudor Crises?* (1999).

... the Settlement had mixed success. It largely succeeded in establishing a broadly based national Church which excluded as few people as possible. ... On the other hand, the Settlement not only failed to attract the Puritans but... devout [seriously committed] Catholics were likewise marginalised [sidelined] with the consequence of encouraging opposition and non-conformity.

The Act of Uniformity also ordered that everyone was to attend church on a Sunday and other holy days, such as Good Friday, or else be fined one shilling for every absence. There were 12 pence in a shilling. Although earnings varied widely, the Labourers' Act of 1563 said that:

- labourers could earn up to three pence a day
- skilled craftsmen could earn up to four pence a day
- a servant could earn between eight and nine pence a week.

Therefore, for many people, a fine for not attending church on a Sunday could total a week's pay. For the nobility, however, a shilling would not be a serious amount of money.

The Royal Injunctions were issued to help further establish the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity. They covered a range of issues, including:

- all clergy were to teach the Royal Supremacy*
- anyone who refused to attend church was to be **reported** to the Privy Council
- each parish was to have a copy of the Bible in **English**
- no one was allowed to preach without a **licence from** the government
- pilgrimages* and monuments to 'fake' miracles **were** banned
- the clergy were to wear special vestments.

Pilgrimages to places where saints* were buried, or where miracles were supposed to have happened, were important to the Catholic religion. To Protestants, this was all superstition. The Royal Injunctions referred to 'fake' miracles, leaving the possibility that there might be real ones (although none had yet been found). This could have helped to make Elizabeth I's religious settlement more widely acceptable. The Royal Injunctions also allowed images in churches. This would help keep their familiar look for worshippers, again helping to make Elizabeth I's changes less unsettling. Puritans, however, especially disliked people praying before saints' statues, as the Bible forbade worshipping idols. Traditionally, idols were images or representations of gods. Puritans believed people should only pray to the one true God, and that praying to idols was a sin.

Exam-style question, Section B

Describe **two** features of the Elizabethan religious settlement. **4 marks**

Exam tip

The answer must give some supporting information for both examples. You will get a mark for each feature, and a mark for supporting each feature with one additional piece of information. Make your points clearly in fully developed sentences and then move on to the next question.

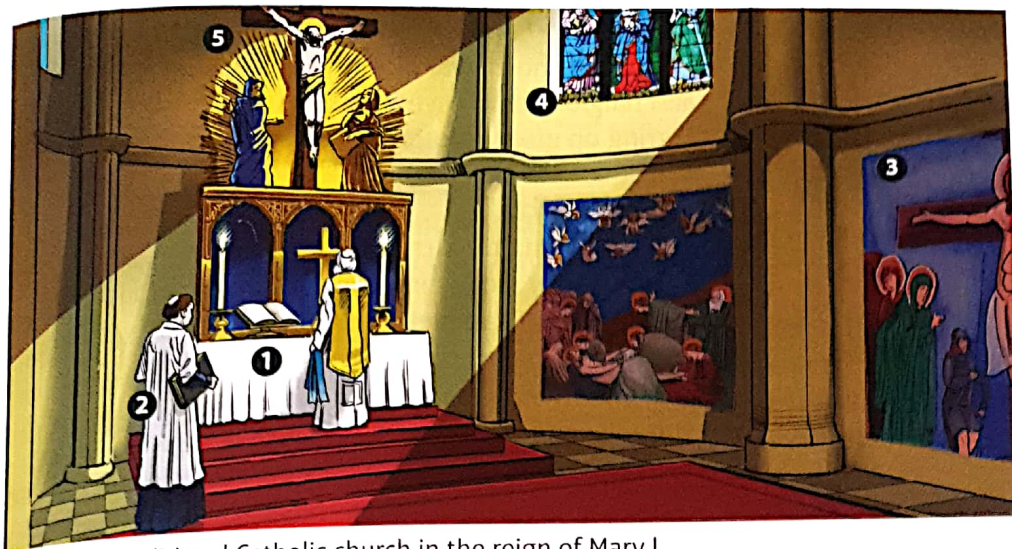


Figure 1.5 Traditional Catholic church in the reign of Mary I.

Key

1. Altar, which is set apart from the congregation
2. Ornate robes
3. Painted walls depicting Bible stories
4. Stained glass window
5. Elaborate crucifix and statues of saints

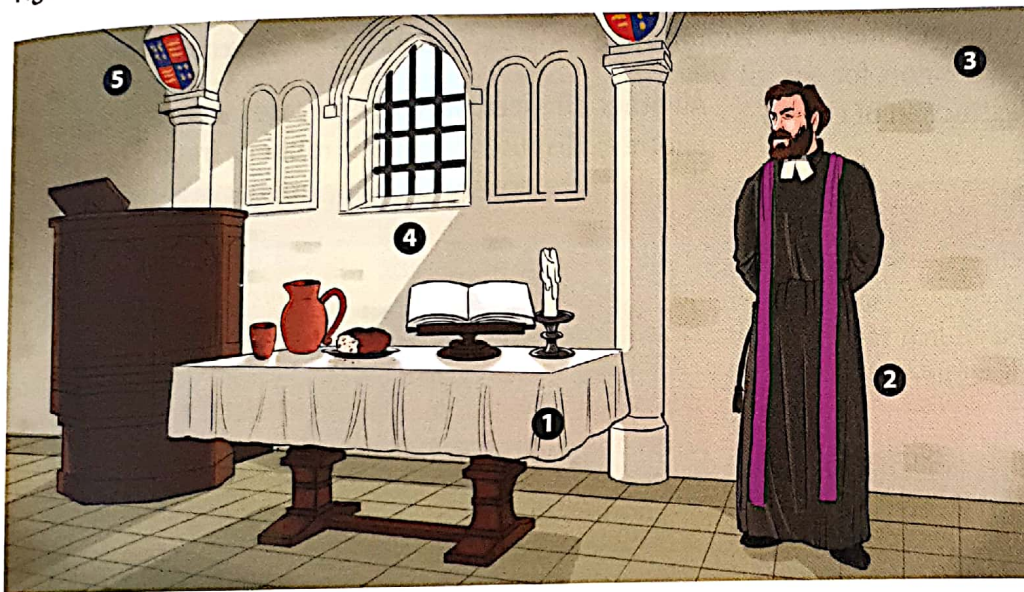


Figure 1.6 Protestant church in Elizabethan England.

Key

1. Plain table instead of an altar
2. Simple robes
3. No ornate decoration
4. Plain windows
5. Royal crest instead of religious decoration

The impact of the religious settlement

Elizabeth wanted a Protestant Church that Catholics could accept. She did not want them to feel forced to choose between loyalty to their religion and their queen, so she wanted to keep a Catholic 'feel' to churches. As long as people conformed outwardly, Elizabeth did not want persecution. She hoped that the Catholic faith would simply fade away in England as the old clergy died out. Interpretation 1 (see page 22) sees the Elizabethan religious settlement as successful – up to a point.

The clergy

All members of the Church had to take the oath of supremacy under the Act of Supremacy if they were to keep their posts. Eight thousand priests and less important clergy did so. There were approximately 10,000 parishes in England at this time, so this shows that the religious settlement was largely successful.

When it came to the bishops, however, only one agreed to take the oath. The others all had to step down and Elizabeth appointed 27 new bishops. This gave her the opportunity to put Protestants in place. She could not afford to lose the support of these new bishops, as there was a shortage of qualified Protestant clergy in England.

The people

The majority of ordinary people accepted Elizabeth's religious settlement and attended the Church of England services, even though many of them held on to Catholic beliefs. The wording of the new Prayer Book helped this because it could be understood to mean different things by Catholics and Protestants according to their beliefs.

Parishes in places like Lancashire, where Catholics were in the majority, were slow to change to the new services, however. Nevertheless, Elizabeth made it clear that she did not want the settlement enforced too strongly, even if people were recusants*.

In most of the country, the change of religion was smooth. However, in some places, Protestants welcomed the new Elizabethan religious settlement with sometimes violent enthusiasm. In London, for example, there was a great deal of destruction of church ornaments and statues of saints.

Key term

Recusants*

Catholics who were unwilling to attend church services laid down by the Elizabethan religious settlement.

Extend your knowledge

Continuing Catholicism

There were ways around the Elizabethan religious settlement for committed Catholics. For example, many attended church but then had private Catholic services in their homes. Sometimes the husband and father would go to Church of England services, but his wife and children would stay at home to say their prayers and practise Catholic beliefs. This meant they avoided fines.

Source B

Written by an observer attending an open-air preaching event at Dedham, Essex, in 1575. He describes the impact of the preacher.

... at Dedham men hang weeping on the necks of their horses after Mr. Rogers's sermon had acted out a little scene in which God threatened to take away the Bible from the English people.

The role of the Church of England

The parish church was a central point of village life, and religion could have a massive impact upon people, stirring up great emotion (as shown in Source B).

Church courts

Although Church courts mainly focused on Church matters, they did act in a range of minor disputes on moral issues. Examples of moral issues dealt with by the Church included marriage (ensuring both bride and groom were marrying of their own free will, or at a suitable age), sexual offences (such as bigamy – being married to more than one person at the same time), and slander (false insults). Church courts also dealt with wills and inheritance. For example, all wills had to be proved valid before anyone could inherit. Lawyers greatly resented the powers that the Church courts had.

All other offences, such as civil cases (one person suing another), disputes over land, robbery, fraud, rape and murder were dealt with in the ordinary court system.

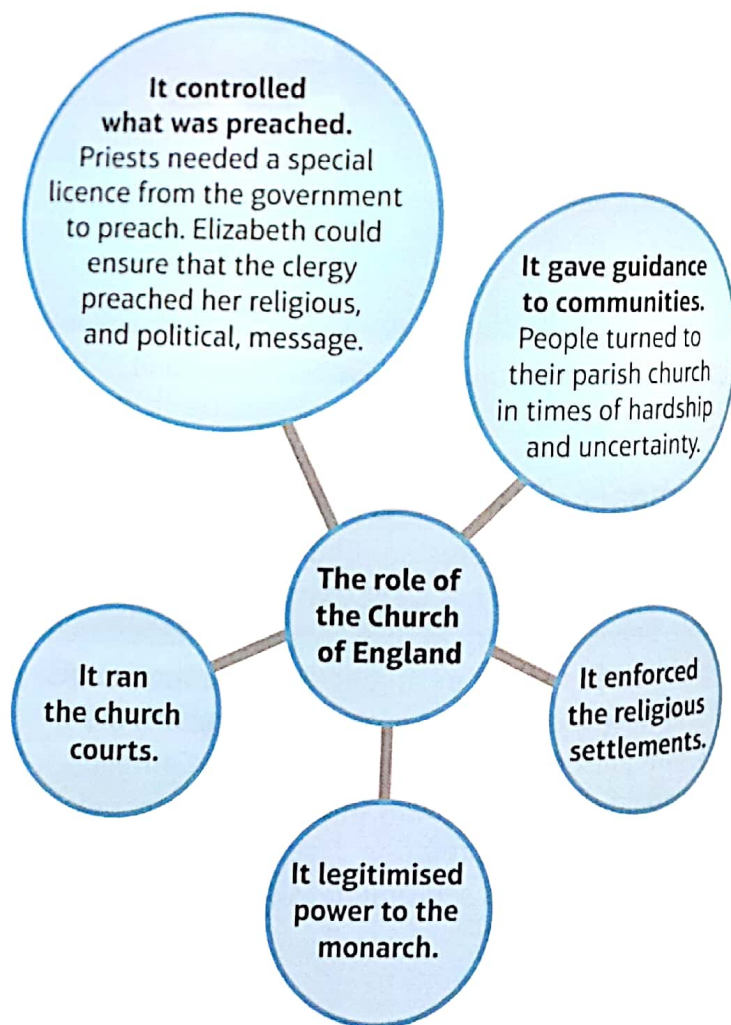


Figure 1.7 The role of the Church of England.

Enforcing the settlement

The Church was responsible for helping to enforce the religious settlement. Visitations were inspections of churches and clergy by bishops to ensure that everyone took the oath of supremacy and were following the terms of the religious settlement.

The first visitations were in 1559 and resulted in up to 400 clergy being dismissed. In some places, those carrying out the visitations caused a great deal of destruction of decorations and statues in churches, which was more action than Elizabeth wanted. In addition, she made it clear that she did not want people's religious beliefs investigated too closely.

After 1559, visitations took place every three to four years. They were very wide-ranging and did not just cover the Church. For example, not only did clergy have to present their preaching licences, but teachers, midwives, surgeons and physicians had to provide the licences that allowed them to practise their jobs. In this way, the Church was able to monitor other professions for the government.

Activities



- 1 Draw up a table with three columns: 'Catholic', 'Protestant' and 'Enforcement'. In each column, list as many features of the religious settlement as you can that (i) pleased Catholics; (ii) pleased Protestants; (iii) helped the government enforce the settlement.
- 2 Design a leaflet that informs the English people on what they need to know about the religious settlement. There should be sections on: what the queen's aims are; what churches and church services will be like; what all loyal subjects are supposed to do; and how the religious settlement will be enforced.

Summary

- Elizabeth was a Protestant queen but England was not a completely Protestant country.
- More Protestant areas of the country were London, the south-east and East Anglia, while Catholicism was especially strong in the north and west of England.
- The religious settlement came in three parts: the Act of Supremacy, the Act of Uniformity and the Royal Injunctions.
- In some places, changing over to the new religious settlement was very slow.
- Visitations enforced the religious settlement but Elizabeth ordered them not to be too harsh.

Checkpoint

Strengthen

- S1 What were Elizabeth's main aims in her religious settlement?
- S2 What two Acts of Parliament were part of the religious settlement and what did they say?
- S3 What were the Royal Injunctions?
- S4 What was the role of the Church of England in enforcing the religious settlement?

Challenge

- C1 Which key features of the religious settlement appealed to:
 - Catholics
 - Protestants?
- C2 What evidence is there that Elizabeth's religious settlement:
 - was very popular
 - was not very popular?

If you are not confident about any of these questions, discuss the possible answers in pairs and then record your conclusions. Your teacher can give you some hints.

Learning outcomes

- Understand the nature and extent of the Puritan challenge to Elizabeth I.
- Understand the nature and extent of the threat of the Catholic Church, including the Revolt of the Northern Earls.
- Understand the nature and extent of the threat of foreign powers to Elizabeth I.

The nature and extent of the Puritan challenge

Puritans hoped that Elizabeth I's religious reforms would be the beginning of further, more Protestant developments to the Church of England. For Elizabeth, however, the issue of religion in England had been dealt with. During the 1560s, the main Puritan challenge to the religious settlement came from within the Church of England itself, and especially the bishops.

It was not long before Puritan clergymen began ignoring or disobeying parts of the religious settlement. Elizabeth's aim of uniformity in the conduct of Church services was not met: for example, should people kneel to receive communion? Some clergy wanted the abolition of organ music accompanying hymns and certain holy days (which would not please ordinary people, especially when the holy day was a holiday). This all represented a direct challenge to her authority as Supreme Governor of the Church of England. The two biggest issues were over **crucifixes** and **clothing**.

The crucifix controversy

A crucifix is an image of Jesus Christ dying on the cross. The cross is the symbol of the Christian religion because Jesus was executed by crucifixion in about 33 CE.

To Elizabethan Puritans, crucifixes represented idols. Elizabeth, however, liked them and also wanted churches to keep their familiar look and feel. This was an important part of her religious settlement because she didn't want to anger her Catholic subjects by changing too much too fast. She therefore demanded that each church should display a crucifix. When some Puritan bishops threatened to resign, the queen backed down.

She was unable to enforce her will in this instance, as she could not afford to ignore their concerns. There weren't yet enough able Protestant clergymen to take the place of any bishops who were dismissed. Nevertheless, she insisted on keeping a crucifix in the Royal Chapel.

The vestment controversy

What priests wore was another issue for Puritans. Some thought that they should not have special clothing at all. Others believed that it should be very plain and simple. Elaborate vestments suggested that priests were set apart from ordinary people. In the Catholic faith they were special. Priests had the power to turn the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. They could also forgive sins. However, this is not what Protestants believed.

Source A

Puritan father teaching his family. This woodcut picture was made in 1563.



Elizabeth wanted the clergy to wear special vestments as set out in the Royal Injunctions. By 1565, it was clear that not all clergy were wearing what the queen had commanded. Some were also not following instructions on how to conduct services properly. In 1566, the archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker, issued further guidelines for priests in his 'Book of Advertisements'. These followed Elizabeth's commands. He also held a special exhibition in London to show priests what vestments they must wear and when. Of the 110 invited, 37 refused to attend and lost their posts. Unlike the crucifix controversy, the majority of priests consented to Elizabeth's insistence that special vestments must be worn, despite some opposition.

The nature and extent of the Catholic challenge

The papacy*

Although the Catholic Church was trying to tackle the spread of Protestantism by dealing with corruption and other problems throughout Europe, it was also leading an active fight back to strengthen Catholicism by supporting local communities, persecuting heretics* and encouraging the waging of war against Protestants. This campaign against Protestantism was known as the **Counter-Reformation**.

Although the papacy did not offer much leadership to English Catholics, in 1566 the pope issued an instruction that they should not attend Church of England services.

Although there were penalties for those who did not conform to the religious settlement, they were generally not imposed. However, punishments for repeat offenders included fines, imprisonment, or loss of property, job and even life, depending upon the crime. However, the authorities were ordered not to investigate recusants too closely: Elizabeth did not want to create martyrs* and preferred to ignore smaller examples of disobedience. As a result, England was stable in the first decade of her reign (see Interpretation 1).

Key terms

Papacy*

The system of Church government ruled by the pope.

Heretics*

People who have controversial opinions and beliefs at odds with those held by the rest of society, but especially those who deny the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Martyr*

Someone who is killed for his or her beliefs, especially religious beliefs.

Interpretation 1

From *The Reign of Elizabeth: England 1558–1603*, Barbara Mervyn talks about the effectiveness of Elizabeth's religious policies (2001).

By 1568, Elizabeth's policies seemed to be working. The early problems caused by the settlement seemed to be fading. The majority of Catholics outwardly conformed and, without any leadership from the Pope, were politically loyal.

England's nobility and the Catholic threat

It is difficult to know how acceptable English Catholics really found the Elizabethan Church. It is estimated, however, that one-third of the nobility and a sizeable number of the gentry were recusants, especially in the north-west of England. The nobility who remained Catholic tended to be from ancient families, especially in the north of England. The earls of Northumberland and Westmorland, for example, had been prosperous under Mary I. When Elizabeth I became queen, they found their influence at court greatly reduced. They disliked her favourites, such as Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and Sir William Cecil. Elizabeth's favourites tended to be Protestant and either from new noble families (Dudley) or not noble at all (Cecil).

In November 1569, the earls of Northumberland and Westmorland led a rebellion in the north of England against Elizabeth known as the Revolt of the Northern Earls (see Chapter 2). One of the key events of the rebellion was the taking of Durham Cathedral and the celebration of a full Catholic mass.

Even though the earls' reasons for rebelling stemmed from a lack of political power and influence under Elizabeth I, the Catholic religion brought many other northerners to their cause. Rallied by this support, the rebels marched south. By 22 November, they controlled the land east of the Pennines as far south as Braham Moor, north of Leeds.

The earls of Northumberland and Westmorland appealed to the Catholic nobility, especially in Lancashire and Cheshire, but they did not join them. The vast majority of England's nobles stayed loyal to Elizabeth, with the exception of the Duke of Norfolk, England's most senior noble and her distant cousin. On 24 November 1569, the rebels were forced to retreat.

The rebellion was successfully put down by royal troops under the leadership of the Earl of Sussex. Nevertheless, Elizabeth's reaction to it shows how dangerous she believed it was. Hundreds of rebels were executed in towns and cities across the north. These public displays of Crown power mark a change in Elizabeth's relationship with her Catholic subjects, which was to become even more difficult in the 1570s.

Foreign powers

England was not the only place in Europe where Protestantism was taking root. Scotland, France, parts of the Holy Roman Empire* and the Netherlands (which belonged to Spain) all had growing Protestant populations.

Key term

Holy Roman Empire*

A large grouping of different states and kingdoms covering a large area of central Europe, including much of modern Germany and parts of Poland and Austria. Although each state had its own ruler, the leaders of the seven largest countries elected a Holy Roman Emperor.

However, Europe was dominated by Catholic powers determined to limit the spread of Protestantism. One of the greatest of these was the Habsburg family, who controlled both the Spanish and Austrian empires, and also the Holy Roman Empire, during Elizabeth's reign. Although each of these was ruled by competing family members, defending the Catholic faith was one cause that could unite them.

France

When religious war broke out in France in 1562, Elizabeth I was concerned about its potential to threaten her realm by encouraging religious conflict in England. She wrote to Philip II of Spain on the matter in 1564, explaining how 'troubled and perplexed' she was.

Elizabeth had agreed in 1562 to help French Protestants, hoping to get back Calais in return. She had already successfully helped Scottish Protestant lords rebel against Catholic rule in 1560 (see page 32). This time, however, her policy failed. The French Protestants made peace with the Catholics later in 1562.

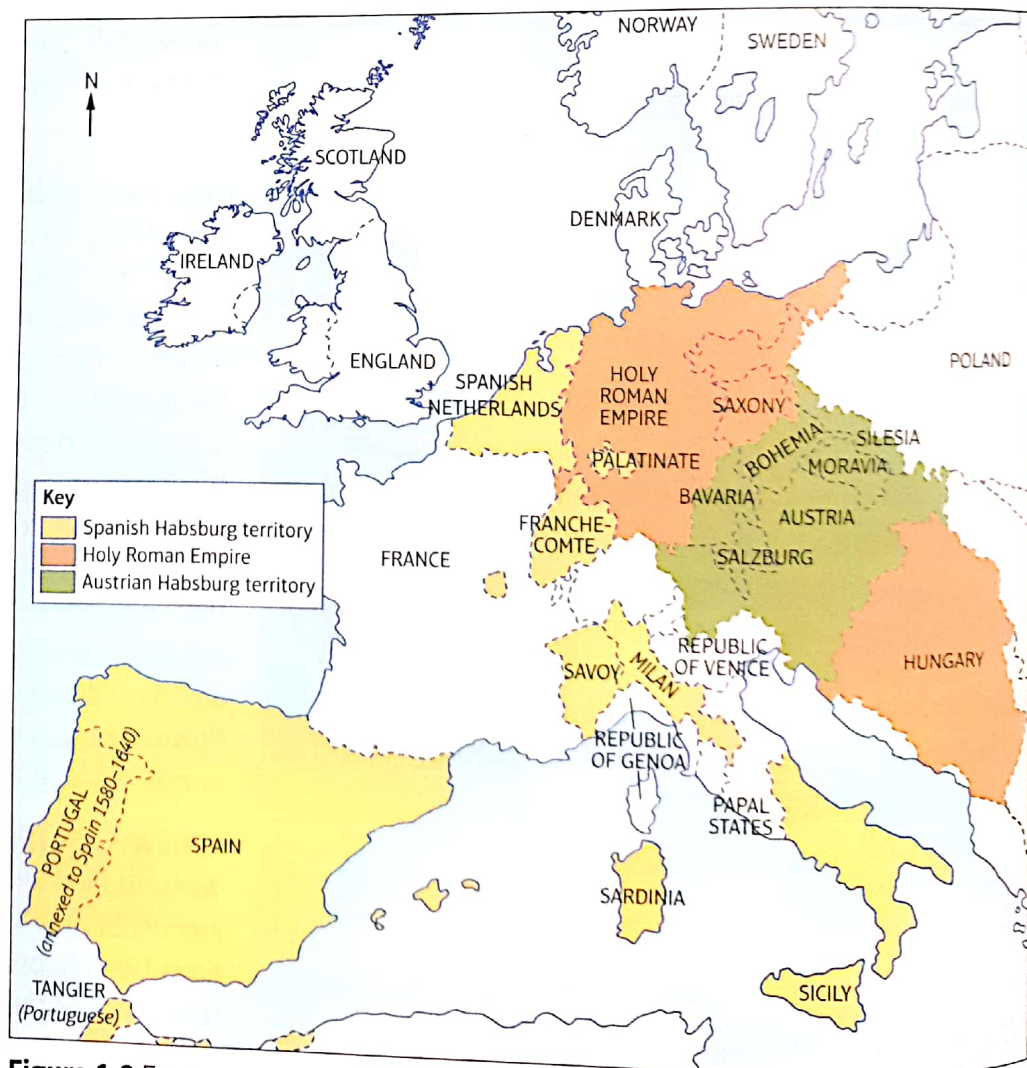


Figure 1.8 Europe during Elizabeth's reign.

In 1564, Elizabeth signed the Treaty of Troyes, confirming once and for all that Calais belonged to France. All that she had ultimately achieved was to irritate Philip II of Spain by supporting Protestant rebels.

Spain and the Spanish Netherlands

In the 16th century, the Netherlands belonged to the Spanish king, Philip II. He was a strict Roman Catholic and did not look favourably upon Elizabeth's support for Protestant rebels in Scotland and France. In fact, in 1563, he banned the import of English cloth to the Netherlands as he believed that English merchants were encouraging the spread of Protestantism there. Elizabeth retaliated and ceased trading with the Netherlands. This trade embargo* affected both countries economically and only lasted a year. For her part, Elizabeth was concerned that Spain and France might form an alliance against her. In the 1530s, Pope Paul III had excommunicated* Henry VIII after the break from Rome* and had then asked France and Spain to invade England and depose him.

Extend your knowledge

Philip II of Spain

Although his wife, Mary I, had just died, Philip II proposed a marriage alliance with Elizabeth I when she came to the throne. This suggests that he still valued England as an ally. Elizabeth refused him.

Key terms

Trade embargo*

When governments ban trade with another country.

Excommunicated*

A very severe punishment, imposed by the pope, expelling people from the Catholic Church.

Rome*

Capital of Italy – but also used to mean the pope or the Catholic Church.

Spanish Inquisition*

A political and religious body set up by Spain in 1478 to keep Spanish territories true to the Catholic faith. Anyone caught by the Inquisition who wasn't Catholic could be tortured or burned alive in a public execution.

The Dutch Revolt

Since the 1550s, there had been growing unhappiness in the Netherlands about Spanish interference in Dutch affairs. Although the Netherlands belonged to Spain, they were used to governing themselves. When Philip II decided to reorganise the Dutch government and Church, he also brought the Spanish Inquisition* to the Netherlands. These actions united both Catholics and Protestants against Spain, leading to the Dutch Revolt, which broke out for the first time in 1566. In 1567, Philip sent the Duke of Alba with an army of 10,000 men to the Netherlands to put down the revolt. By 1568, it had been defeated.

Alba established a Council of Troubles in the Netherlands (nicknamed the Council of Blood) to enforce both Catholicism and obedience to the Spanish Crown. It was made up of loyal Dutch nobles and Spanish officials. It ignored local law and legal processes, condemning thousands to death (mainly Protestants who had been protesting violently against Catholicism). Alba's actions led to thousands of Dutch Protestants fleeing into exile, many to England.

Elizabeth I was concerned about Alba's presence in the Netherlands for two reasons.

- Alba's large army, with its mission against Protestantism, was within easy striking distance of England. This especially worried Sir William Cecil.
- Elizabeth did not want to become seen as Europe's leading Protestant monarch. She wished to avoid war and openly condemned the Dutch rebels. Nevertheless the rebels still came to England.

Many Protestants, including those on Elizabeth I's Privy Council, saw events overseas as part of an international struggle between Protestantism (the 'true religion') and Catholicism. There was a belief that Spain, as the greatest Catholic power, wanted to destroy Protestantism everywhere, including England. Elizabeth was therefore coming under increasing pressure to deal with the threat posed by Alba's presence in the Netherlands. However, she wanted to avoid war at all costs. England did not have the resources to take on Spain – or worse, France and Spain together. Also a war fought on the basis of religious differences could threaten England with civil war. Yet at the same time she was also very aware of the dangers posed by Spain's mission in the Netherlands.

Source B

Colour engraving from 1567 showing the Spanish Inquisition arriving in the Netherlands. The Duke of Alba established a Council of Troubles to persecute not only rebels but heretics. Hundreds were killed.



Activity

Look at Source B. What impact would pictures such as this have had on Elizabeth I and her Privy Council? Why might they be especially concerned in 1568?

Some Dutch rebels fled by taking to the water. Known as the Sea Beggars, they attacked Spanish ships in the English Channel that were carrying men and resources to Alba's armies in the Netherlands. In 1567, Elizabeth began allowing the Sea Beggars to shelter in English harbours.

In 1568, Spanish ships carrying gold to pay Alba's troops in the Netherlands also took refuge in English ports – from the Sea Beggars. The money was a loan to Philip II from bankers in the Italian city of Genoa. Elizabeth decided to take the gold herself, arguing that since it was a loan it didn't belong to Spain but to the Italian bankers. This event is known as the **Genoese Loan**. These developments greatly angered the Spanish.

What was Elizabeth trying to achieve?

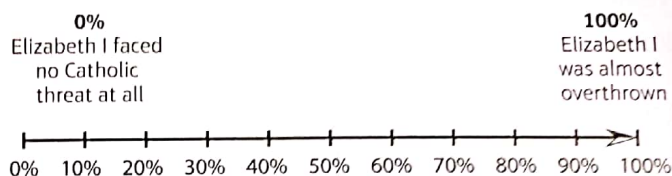
Elizabeth was trying to protect English interests without going to war. By making Spain's task in the Netherlands as difficult as possible, she hoped to encourage Spanish forces to leave and allow the Dutch to continue governing themselves as before. Her strategy of harassing Spain was risky and became riskier still in 1568–69, when the Catholic threat from within England became more serious. Two main factors were the cause of this threat.

- 1 In 1568, Mary, Queen of Scots, fled to England from Scotland. She had a stronger claim to the throne than Elizabeth I from the point-of-view of many Catholics.
- 2 In 1569, the Revolt of the Northern Earls had taken place. This was a revolt by senior Catholic, English earls in the north of England (see Chapter 2). There had been hope that some of Alba's troops would land in Hartlepool to support it. Although this had not happened, one of the consequences of the rebellion was to encourage Philip II and the pope to back further plots against Elizabeth I, again with the possibility of using Alba's army to topple the queen.

Activities

- 1 After reviewing the section 'The nature and extent of the Catholic challenge', draw a line down the centre of a piece of paper. This will be a timeline of Catholic threats to Elizabeth I. On one side of the line put threats from home, and on the other put foreign threats. What do you notice about the Catholic threat to Elizabeth I in the 1560s?
- 2 Two of the key foreign Catholic challenges to England in the 1560s came from France and the Spanish Netherlands. Which do you think was more of a serious threat to Elizabeth? Explain your reasons.
- 3 How serious was the Catholic challenge to Elizabeth I in England? Use a value continuum like

the one below, starting at 0% (Elizabeth I faced no threat at all) and going up to 100% (Elizabeth I was almost overthrown) to help you decide. The more serious you think the threat was, the higher the score will be. Discuss with a partner, then write a short paragraph explaining your decisions. Use any evidence, facts or figures from this chapter to support your explanation.



Summary

- Challenges to the religious settlement came from both at home and abroad.
- In England, the Catholic challenge to the religious settlement was limited until 1569.
- The Puritans challenged both the use of crucifixes and vestments.
- Elizabeth sent troops and financial assistance to deal with the Catholic challenge to Protestants in Scotland (1560) and France (1562) but did not do so for the Dutch (1566).
- England's relations with Spain got much worse after the Dutch Revolt began.
- The Dutch Revolt caused concern to England because of the large Spanish army sent to the Netherlands to put it down and crush Protestant heresy.
- By sheltering the Sea Beggars and seizing gold bullion from Philip II's ships, Elizabeth hoped to make it too difficult for Spanish forces to remain in the Netherlands.

Checkpoint

Strengthen

- S1 Describe the crucifix and vestments controversies and their outcomes.
- S2 Give two reasons why the Catholic threat in England was not serious until 1569.
- S3 What was the Dutch Revolt about and why was Spain involved?
- S4 Give two reasons why the Dutch Revolt worried Elizabeth so much.
- S5 Give two examples of things Elizabeth did that annoyed Spain.

Challenge

- C1 Explain why Elizabeth intervened to help Protestants in France but not in the Netherlands.
- C2 Explain how developments in England and the Netherlands combined during the 1560s to change England's relationship with Spain.

For these questions, it might be helpful to draw a timeline of events. Having a visual representation of the period may make things clearer when writing your answers.

1.4 The problem of Mary, Queen of Scots

Learning outcomes

- Understand why Mary, Queen of Scots, had a claim to the English throne.
- Understand the relationship between Mary, Queen of Scots, and Elizabeth I between 1568–69.
- Examine the evidence for and against Mary, Queen of Scots' accusation of murder.

Timeline

Mary, Queen of Scots

1559 The Scottish Protestant lords' rebellion begins in Scotland

1560 The Scottish Protestant lords' rebellion ends

King Francis II of France dies

1561 Mary returns to Scotland after the death of her husband, King Francis II of France

1565 Mary marries Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley

1566 Mary gives birth to a son, James

1568 Mary escapes and raises an army against the Scottish Protestant lords but is defeated. She flees to England

1567 Lord Darnley is murdered and Mary marries the Earl of Bothwell.

The Scottish Protestant lords rebel against Mary. She is forced to abdicate and is imprisoned

1569 Mary is implicated in a plot against Elizabeth I, and is placed under house arrest in England

Mary, Queen of Scots' claim to the English throne

As noted earlier, Mary, Queen of Scots, was a Catholic with a strong claim to the English throne. She was Henry VII's great granddaughter, Elizabeth I's second cousin, and there were no issues about her legitimacy. Born on 8 December 1542, she became queen of Scotland at six days old after her father, King James V, died. Her mother, Mary of Guise, was from a very powerful Catholic, French noble family.

The Treaty of Edinburgh, 1560

In 1560, Elizabeth I helped Scotland's Protestant lords defeat Mary of Guise, who had been ruling Scotland for her daughter, Mary, Queen of Scots, whilst she was in France with her husband, King Francis II.

The Scottish Protestant lords rebelled because they did not like the French, Catholic influence brought to Scotland by Mary of Guise. Although Elizabeth was wary of sending help to a rebellion which could see the deposing of an anointed* monarch, she was also under constant threat: with French help, Mary, Queen of Scots, could take her throne. With the encouragement of her advisers, Elizabeth secretly sent money to help the rebels, and eventually sent troops, too.

Key term

Anointed*

During a coronation, holy oil is applied to the monarch. This is known as 'anointing' and is the most important part of the coronation as it is when the person becomes the monarch.

The rebellion ended with the Treaty of Edinburgh in 1560. The treaty said that Mary, Queen of Scots, would give up her claim to the English throne. After the unexpected death of her husband, King Francis II of France, in December 1560, Mary returned to Scotland from France. Although she was queen, the Protestant lords controlled the Scottish government.

Mary herself never approved the treaty, and maintained that she had a claim to the English throne. She wanted to be named as Elizabeth's heir.

Elizabeth had no intention of naming any heir, however, and choosing Mary would divide England: she would be popular with Catholics, but not Protestants. Divisions would damage the kingdom and weaken Elizabeth's position.

Extend your knowledge

Decision to help the rebels

Elizabeth was only persuaded to help the Scottish Protestant lords' rebellion in 1560 because Sir William Cecil persuaded her. In fact, he threatened to resign if she didn't. It was important for England to have a friendly, Protestant, anti-French government in Scotland.

Key term

Abdicate*

A king or queen giving up their throne.

Mary, Queen of Scots' arrival in England, 1568

Mary married her second husband, Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, in 1565. She gave birth to their son, James, in 1566. In 1567, Darnley was murdered, probably by the Earl of Bothwell and Mary was suspected of being involved. In fact, she married Bothwell soon after Darnley's death, which for many was admission of her guilt.

The scandal led to the Protestant Scottish lords rebelling again. They forced Mary to abdicate* in favour of her baby son, James. She was imprisoned in a castle on an island in the middle of a loch (lake), but escaped in 1568 and raised an army in an attempt to win back her throne. Mary's forces were defeated at Langside, near Glasgow, and she fled to England, seeking Elizabeth I's help against the rebels.

Source A

A 16th-century Scottish painting of Mary, Queen of Scots (right), and her husband, Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley. Lord Darnley was Mary's distant cousin and also descended from King Henry VII, so he too had a claim to the English throne.



Relations between Elizabeth and Mary, 1568–69

What were Elizabeth's options?

Mary's arrival in England in May 1568 was a problem to which there was no good solution. Elizabeth did not approve of subjects overthrowing their rightful monarchs, but she was very aware of the potential threat Mary posed to her throne. Mary was held in comfort, but under guard, until Elizabeth decided what to do with her. The options were:

- 1 help Mary to regain her throne
- 2 hand Mary over to the Scottish lords
- 3 allow Mary to go abroad
- 4 keep Mary in England.

Activities



- 1 Imagine you are Elizabeth I. List the pros and cons of the four options concerning what to do with Mary.
- 2 If you were Elizabeth I, which option would you choose and why? Write a short letter to your Secretary of State, Sir William Cecil, explaining your decision. To do this, you will need to explain why you rejected the other options.
- 3 Split into two groups, with one group arguing for Mary being allowed to stay in England, and the other group against. Conduct a debate. Make sure you include all the information you listed in your pros and cons list.

The two queens never met, although they did exchange letters. Mary had asked for a meeting with Elizabeth to persuade her of her innocence in Darnley's murder, but her request was refused.

A court was convened to hear the case against her between October 1568 and January 1569. The Scottish lords brought letters with them apparently proving Mary's guilt. Mary said that the court had no right to try her because she was an anointed monarch and would not offer a plea unless Elizabeth guaranteed a verdict of innocent. Elizabeth refused.

Guilty or not guilty?

No verdict could solve the Mary, Queen of Scots, problem. If found guilty, she would be returned to the rebel Scottish lords as their prisoner, and Elizabeth would have been supporting the deposing of an anointed monarch, who was also her cousin. If found innocent, Mary would be free to raise an army, possibly with foreign Catholic support, which would pose too big a threat to Elizabeth's throne.

The court did not reach any conclusions. Mary therefore stayed in England, in captivity. She remained a threat to Elizabeth, as Interpretation 1 shows.

Interpretation 1

Historian Susan Brigden discusses the threat of Mary, Queen of Scots, in her book, *New Worlds, Lost Worlds* (2000).

Whether in England or in Scotland or in France, Mary posed a perpetual menace, for she always pressed her claim to the English throne, and sought by any means to free herself from a protection which became captivity.

Extend your knowledge

Why not make Mary heir to the throne?

It is often thought that Elizabeth's attitude to Mary, Queen of Scots, and her refusal to name her as heir, is at least partly explained by jealousy. Mary was considered a great beauty.

It is important to remember, however, that Elizabeth was a queen and an intelligent woman who understood politics very well. She was increasingly concerned about both the threat from foreign, Catholic powers and her own Catholic subjects. Naming a Catholic heir could make divisions in England worse, or encourage Catholics to put Mary on the throne instead. Many of her advisers and Privy Councillors were Protestants, and Mary was not popular with them. Naming her the heir to the English throne would increase her status and could damage Elizabeth's position, too.

Fragile history

Nothing that happens is inevitable. Sometimes things happen due to the actions of an individual or chance events that no one anticipated. Something could have altered or someone could have chosen differently, bringing about a very different outcome. What actually occurred in the past did happen, but it did not have to be like that.

Work on your own and answer the questions below. When you have answered the questions, discuss the answers in a group. Then have a class vote.

Perceived reasons why Elizabeth I successfully established her religious settlement

Elizabeth I's middle way strategy, acceptable to both Catholics and Protestants	Growth of Protestantism in England	Recusants were not treated harshly	Visitations to enforce Elizabeth's religious settlement	The decision to keep Mary, Queen of Scots in captivity in England	Catholic Spain and France did not unite against Protestant England	Elizabeth I not getting directly involved in the Dutch Revolt
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- Consider Elizabeth I's middle way strategy.
 - How did not treating recusants harshly affect the success of Elizabeth I's middle way strategy?
 - Had recusants been treated harshly, would the middle way strategy be relevant?
- Consider Elizabeth's motivations.
 - What might have happened if Elizabeth I had decided to take military action to support the Dutch rebels?
 - Would all the other causes still be relevant?
 - What might have happened if Spain and France had united against England?
 - How did keeping Mary, Queen of Scots in captivity in England affect the outcome?
- Write down any reasons why the Elizabethan religious settlement was successful that could be called 'chance events'. How important were these in the success of the Elizabethan religious settlement?
- Imagine you are alive in November 1558, when Elizabeth I became Protestant queen of a country that was still basically Roman Catholic. Write a paragraph explaining whether you think Elizabeth I will be able to establish her religion in England over the next 11 years. Remember not to use the benefit of hindsight!
- Have a class vote. Was the success of Elizabeth I's religious settlement inevitable? Be prepared to back up your decision.

Exam-style question, Section B

Explain why the Catholic threat to Elizabeth I increased after 1566.

You may use the following in your answer:

- The Dutch Revolt
- Mary, Queen of Scots' arrival in England in 1568.

You must also use information of your own. **12 marks**

Exam tip

Don't just describe events. You must focus on reasons for the Catholic threat against Elizabeth becoming more serious.

Activity



Create a spider diagram showing the reasons why Elizabeth was so cautious when making a decision about the fate of Mary, Queen of Scots.

Plot and rebellion, 1569

Not only would Elizabeth not name an heir, she refused to discuss marriage either. In 1569, a plot was hatched at court that seemed not only to deal with the problem of Mary, but also the succession. The plan was to marry Mary to the Duke of Norfolk, England's most senior noble. He was a Protestant so any children would be too. They would also have a strong claim to the throne. Mary liked the plot. Even some of Elizabeth's favourites, like the Earl of Leicester, were involved – at first. As the plan developed, however, he changed his mind.

The Earl of Leicester eventually told Elizabeth of the plan. It confirmed how dangerous Mary was, even in captivity. She was moved south to Coventry. Nevertheless, Elizabeth still refused to take any strong action against Mary.

Summary

- Mary, Queen of Scots (Elizabeth's second cousin), is **NOT** Queen Mary I (Elizabeth's sister).
- Mary, Queen of Scots' arrival in England was a huge problem for Elizabeth I.
- Mary had a strong claim to be next in line to the English throne after Elizabeth.
- Mary became the focus of a plot at court in 1569 to marry her to the Duke of Norfolk.
- The plot to marry Mary to the Duke of Norfolk was developed into a rebellion by the **Catholic** earls of Northumberland and Westmorland.
- Elizabeth did not want to take action against Mary because she was an anointed **monarch**.
- From 1568, Mary remained in captivity in England.

Checkpoint

Strengthen

- S1** Describe the chain of events that led Mary, Queen of Scots, to come to England.
- S2** Give two options Elizabeth had in dealing with Mary and say why she did not take them.
- S3** What was the aim of the plot concerning Mary that developed at court?

Challenge

- C1** Explain how changes in Scotland and France caused problems for Elizabeth I.
- C2** Explain why there was no ideal solution to the Mary problem for Elizabeth I, including holding her in captivity in England.

If you are not confident about constructing answers to these questions, write a list of all factors related to the problems described, using information from the chapter to help you. This will help to structure your answer.

Recap: Queen, government and religion, 1558–69

Recall quiz

- 1 What were the key features of the Privy Council?
- 2 What were the three key parts of Elizabeth's religious settlement?
- 3 Give two ways in which the religious settlement was enforced.
- 4 Which parts of England had the most Catholic support during Elizabeth's early reign?
- 5 Give three pieces of evidence that show the religious settlement wasn't accepted by everyone.
- 6 In what year did the Dutch Revolt begin?
- 7 Which treaty was signed in 1560? What was the main aim of the treaty?
- 8 Who was Mary, Queen of Scots, accused of murdering?
- 9 Give two reasons why Elizabeth needed to keep Mary, Queen of Scots, in captivity.
- 10 Who plotted to become Mary, Queen of Scots' husband?

Exam-style question, Section B

'Religion was Elizabeth's main problem in the years 1558–69'. How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

You may use the following in your answer:

- the settlement of religion
- Mary, Queen of Scots' arrival in England in 1568.

You must also use information of your own **16 marks**

Exam tip

This question is asking you to assess the significance of many different factors and come to a conclusion of which was the most important. You will need to discuss problems other than religion in your answer. Remember to come to a conclusion at the end of your answer which summarises all your points and makes a judgement about the statement.

Activities

?

- 1 Write Elizabeth I's report card. How successful was Elizabeth's first decade of rule?

This will come in three sections:

- a The Settlement of Religion
- b Religious Challenges
- c The problem of Mary, Queen of Scots.

In pairs, for each of these sections, work out what you think Elizabeth I's aims were. Then get together with another pair and compare your lists. Add any aims you are missing.

Now for each section you must give Elizabeth a score on the following scale:

- 1 = Complete failure. No aims met.
- 2 = Largely a failure. Majority of aims not met.
- 3 = Largely a success. Majority of aims met.
- 4 = Complete success. All aims met.

Under each heading, write the score you are giving Elizabeth and a short assessment of her performance. To do this, you should explain which of her aims were met and which weren't by referring to key events and outcomes.

- d Draw up a list of Elizabeth's strengths and weaknesses in 1569. How do they compare with the lists you drew up for the activity on page 14? Now identify her opportunities and threats.
- e What do you see as Elizabeth's greatest threat in the decade to come? Explain your decision.
- f What do you see as Elizabeth's greatest opportunity? Explain your decision.

02 | Challenges to Elizabeth at home and abroad, 1569–88

Elizabeth I faced many serious threats between 1569 and 1588, both from within England and from abroad. These threats were often linked.

In northern England, Elizabeth faced threats from members of the nobility who, increasingly sympathetic to Mary, Queen of Scots and her Catholic cause, revolted in 1569. Elizabeth faced many other plots against her rule (and her life) during this time.

Elsewhere, England's failing relationship with Spain prompted Philip II of Spain to offer support to English Catholics plotting to remove the Protestant Elizabeth from the English throne. Roman Catholic priests were smuggled in from Europe to keep the Catholic faith in England alive, resulting in more plots being hatched against the Protestant queen on English soil.

The rivalry between England and Spain was not just based on religion, but also trade and political power. In Europe, England's increasing involvement in the Netherlands angered Philip II, as the Netherlands was under Spanish rule.

Philip also ruled a large and expanding empire. Europeans had only been aware of the Americas, known as the 'New World', since 1492. By the time of Elizabeth's reign, Spain had established colonies, religious missions and trading outposts there. Sir Francis Drake, and others like him, did what they could to disrupt Spain's interests and establish English colonies in the New World, often resorting to attacking and robbing Spanish ships. Elizabeth backed and rewarded Drake for his efforts.

By the mid-1580s, England and Spain were at war, despite Elizabeth's efforts to avoid a conflict. Philip planned an invasion of England, and in 1588 he launched his Armada.

2.1 Plots and revolts at home

Learning objectives

- Understand the key points of the Revolt of the Northern Earls, including why they rebelled, the key players, and role of religion and politics.
- Understand the significance of the Ridolfi, Throckmorton and Babington plots.
- Understand the significance of Mary, Queen of Scots' execution.
- Know how Walsingham used spies.

By the end of the 1560s Elizabeth I faced a range of threats to her throne, both at home and from abroad. These threats culminated in Philip II sending the Spanish Armada to invade England in 1588. He hoped that English Catholics would rise up and join his forces

in deposing Elizabeth I. Philip believed that the many plots against Elizabeth were a sign of civil unrest in England. Figure 2.1 highlights the main threats Elizabeth faced at the beginning of the 1570s.

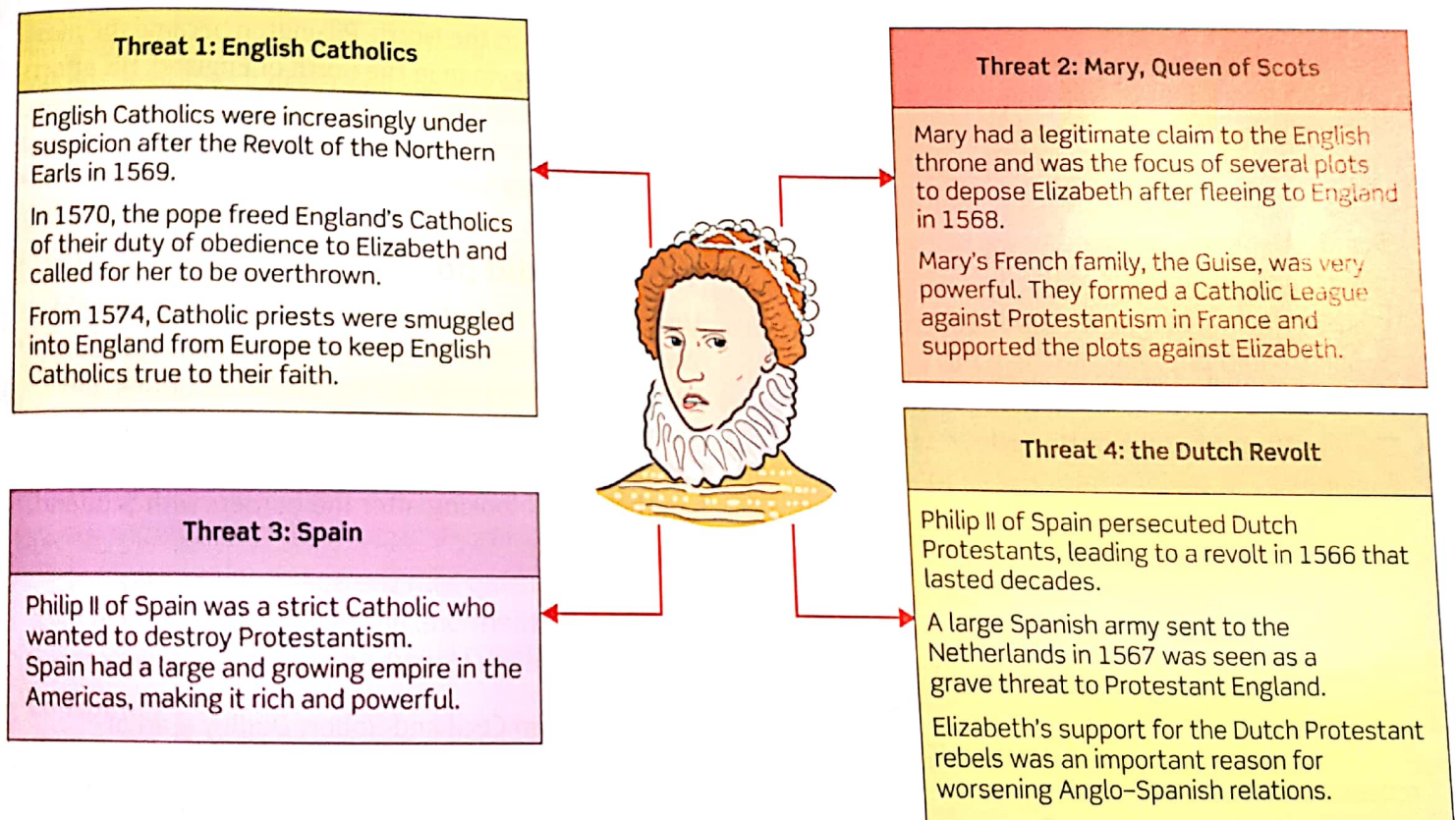


Figure 2.1 The threats faced by Elizabeth I at the start of the 1570s.

The Revolt of the Northern Earls, 1569

The north of England was far away from London, and therefore Elizabeth I and her court. The majority of people living in the north of England remained loyal to the old religion, Catholicism, and the ancient noble

families who had governed the north for centuries. Both came under threat during Elizabeth I's reign: she introduced Protestantism and promoted 'new men' from the gentry and lower ranks of the nobility to some of the most important government positions. In 1569, Elizabeth faced a serious threat when some northern earls led Catholic northerners against her.

Why did the northern earls revolt in 1569?

Several factors came together which led to the Revolt of the Northern Earls in 1569.

- The earls and their followers wanted Catholicism restored in England.
- The earls had lost a great deal of their influence at court since Elizabeth I became queen in 1558.
- Elizabeth refused to name an heir or to marry and have a child, creating uncertainty about England's future.
- Mary, Queen of Scots, in captivity in England, was a figurehead who could potentially replace Elizabeth and, in doing so, resolve the other issues the earls had.

Who were the key players in the Revolt of the Northern Earls?

- **Thomas Percy, Earl of Northumberland** was Catholic. He had held an important position at court under Mary I, but lost a lot of his influence under Elizabeth I, as she favoured new, Protestant gentry. He had also lost the rights to a valuable, newly discovered copper mine found on his lands to the queen in 1567.
- **Charles Neville, Earl of Westmorland**, was from an important Catholic family in the north of England. He was also the Duke of Norfolk's brother-in-law.
- **Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk**, was one of England's most senior nobles and a Protestant, although he had close links to old, northern Catholic families, too. Coming from an ancient noble family, he disliked the newcomers, such as William Cecil and Elizabeth's favourite, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. A central part of the revolt was a plot to marry the Duke of Norfolk to Mary, Queen of Scots. However, he later backed down and urged the earls to call off the rebellion.
- **Mary, Queen of Scots**, had met the Duke of Norfolk once, shortly after fleeing to England from Scotland in 1568. She supported the plan to marry him and perhaps even take the English throne.
- **Jane Neville** was the wife of Charles Neville and the Duke of Norfolk's sister. She was key in encouraging her husband to carry on with the rebellion. If the rebellion succeeded, she could be sister-in-law to the queen of England.
- **Ann Percy**, the wife of Thomas Percy, was also key in encouraging her husband in the rebellion.

Activity

Study the profiles of the key players in the Revolt of the Northern Earls. How many different reasons can you find to explain why they would want to rebel?

What role did religion play?

Much of the north of England, including the earls of Northumberland and Westmorland, held on to traditional Roman Catholic beliefs, despite Elizabeth's religious settlement in 1559. Although she did not want to persecute Catholics, Elizabeth did want their religion to die out eventually. She appointed James Pilkington, a committed Protestant, as archbishop of Durham in 1561. By doing this, Elizabeth hoped to lessen the influence of Catholicism in the North. Pilkington became the most important clergyman in the north of England. His efforts to impose Protestantism were very unpopular, however, and only succeeded in turning many northerners against him and against England's new religion.

What role did politics play?

Under Mary I, the Catholic earls of Northumberland and Westmorland had been very influential, both at court and locally in the north of England. Northumberland resented an up-and-coming rival northern family, the Forsters. Elizabeth I favoured Sir John Forster and gave him the task of looking after the borders with Scotland. Northumberland felt his own status was undermined and his relationship with the queen never really recovered. Furthermore, his religion made William Cecil (one of the queen's closest advisers) see him as a threat.

Men like William Cecil and Robert Dudley (Earl of Leicester) did not come from ancient noble families such as the Percys and Nevilles, but were very close to the queen. The northern earls resented these newcomers, and the influence they had over Elizabeth.

Mary, Queen of Scots, and the succession

Elizabeth I refused to name an heir. It was becoming clear that she had no desire to marry, and so would not give birth to the next king or queen.

If she were to die before she declared an heir to the throne, England could be thrown into confusion – possibly even civil war*.

Mary, Queen of Scots, had a strong claim to the English throne. The Revolt of the Northern Earls started as a wider court conspiracy* for her to marry the Duke of Norfolk, which meant many people at the court of Elizabeth knew of the plot. The marriage would solve the problem of what to do about Mary, and any children they had would provide heirs. Even though Mary was Catholic, Norfolk was Protestant and Elizabeth's courtiers assumed his heirs would be, too. With this in mind, some believed that if Mary married the Duke of Norfolk and Elizabeth named her as her heir, England would still have a Protestant monarch on Elizabeth's death.

Although the conspiracy to marry the Duke of Norfolk was not treason, as it developed some of Elizabeth's courtiers got cold feet for several reasons.

- The marriage of members of the nobility required the queen's consent.
- Elizabeth I had made it clear that the succession was a matter of royal prerogative.
- The Duke of Norfolk was sympathetic to Catholics and close to the Catholic earls of Northumberland and Westmorland, for whom Mary, Queen of Scots, would be a preferable monarch.

Key terms

Civil war*

A war between people of the same country.

Conspiracy*

A secret plan with the aim of doing something against the law.

Furthermore, Source A shows that Mary's motives were already more ambitious than just marrying Norfolk. It also shows that the Spanish ambassador to Elizabeth's court was involved in the plot. In fact, Mary had received word that Spain would provide troops to help with the rebellion.

Source A

A letter to Philip II written by Guerau de Spes, Spain's ambassador to Elizabeth's court, on 8 January 1569.

The Queen of Scotland told my servant to convey to me the following words: – 'Tell the ambassador that, if his master will help me, I shall be Queen of England in three months and mass shall be said all over the country'.

Eventually, in September 1569, Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, decided to inform Elizabeth I of the plot. By this time, it was far more developed than simply marrying Norfolk to Mary, as shown in Figure 2.2.

Plan for the Revolt of the Northern Earls, November–December, 1569

1. *The earls of Northumberland and Westmorland will raise rebel forces from their lands in the north of England and take control of Durham.*
2. *The rebels will then march south towards London to join with the Duke of Norfolk.*
3. *Several thousand Spanish troops will land in Hartlepool to support the rebel forces.*
4. *The Duke of Norfolk and the rebel forces will seize control of the government in London and overthrow Elizabeth I.*
5. *Any resistance will be overthrown by the Spanish troops.*
6. *Meanwhile, Mary, Queen of Scots, is to be freed, ready to marry the Duke of Norfolk and take the English throne.*

Figure 2.2 The plans made by northern earls for their revolt, 1569.

The key events of the revolt

Once Elizabeth knew about the plot, Norfolk was arrested. He was sent to the Tower of London on 1 November 1569. When they heard the news, the earls of Northumberland and Westmorland became desperate and, with their wives' support and urging, pushed ahead with the revolt. Heading for Durham, they took control of the cathedral from James Pilkington, who fled south. They destroyed any evidence of Protestantism and celebrated mass. In fact, mass was celebrated at churches across the north-east of England over the next fortnight.

The rebels then turned south, bearing banners with religious symbols. Mary, Queen of Scots, was moved south to Coventry on the orders of Elizabeth. Elizabeth did not want Mary to escape.

The rebellion ultimately failed: Spain's supporting troops never arrived and Elizabeth managed to raise an army of 14,000 men for her cause. However, as Figure 2.3 shows, the rebellion presented a real threat to Elizabeth.

After the revolt was crushed, approximately 450 rebels were executed throughout the towns and villages of northern England on Elizabeth's orders, with the aim of terrifying the population and preventing another rebellion. Westmorland escaped, but Northumberland was captured. He was executed in York in 1572, and his head was put on a spike above the city's gates. The Privy Council called for Norfolk's execution, too; however, Elizabeth released him. Meanwhile, Mary, Queen of Scots, remained in captivity for the next 14 years.

Although Elizabeth I acted harshly against many of the rebels, she hesitated when it came to the Duke of Norfolk and especially Mary, Queen of Scots. The Scots had overthrown their rightful queen and executing Mary would imply that Elizabeth accepted what they had done. Being an anointed monarch made you God's chosen ruler and subjects did not have the right to change that. However, Elizabeth's reluctance to deal with Mary frustrated her Privy Council and parliament, and the situation was also exploited by others: it was not long before another plot involving Mary was hatched.

The failed revolt led the pope to take action against Elizabeth I. In 1570, he issued a papal bull* that excommunicated Elizabeth and called on all loyal

Key term

Papal bull*

A written order issued by the pope.

Activity

Study Figure 2.3. Which three points in the revolt do you think would have given Elizabeth I most cause for concern? Why?

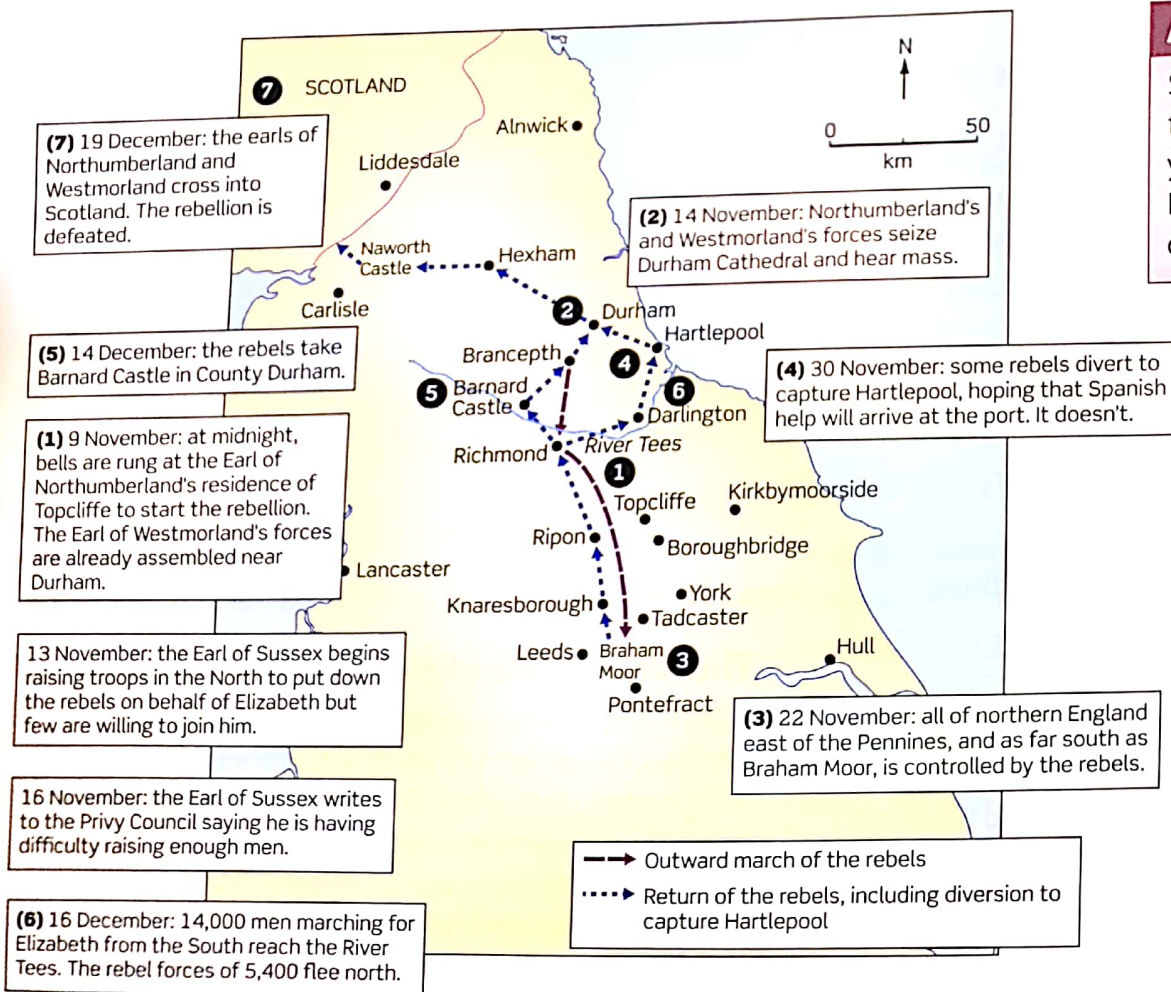


Figure 2.3 The Revolt of the Northern Earls, 1569.

Catholics to depose her, hoping that it would encourage another rebellion. Elizabeth struck back. She called for parliament to assemble. In April 1571, parliament passed Acts widening the definition of treason. It became treasonable to claim that Elizabeth I was a heretic, was not the queen and also to bring in, or print, papal bulls in England.

The significance of the Revolt of the Northern Earls

- It was the first, and most serious, rebellious act by English Catholics against Elizabeth I.
- The treason laws became harsher and the definition of treason was widened.
- It ended the power and influence of the Percy and Neville families in the north of England.
- It prompted harsher treatment of Catholics. For example, in 1572, Elizabeth sent the Earl of Huntingdon, a committed Protestant, to lead the Council of the North*. He implemented laws against Catholics and effectively suppressed Catholicism.
- Although Elizabeth's brutal revenge on the executed rebels indicates how seriously she saw the threat of the revolt to her rule, the majority of Catholics in northern England remained loyal. However, the revolt encouraged the pope, Pius V, to excommunicate Elizabeth I. His papal bull marked a turning point for English Catholics: their loyalty to Elizabeth was now always in doubt.

Key term

Council of the North*

The Council of the North was used to implement Elizabeth's laws and authority in the north of England, as it was far from London and Elizabeth's reach. The North was sometimes unstable and often under threat from Scottish raids. It was therefore necessary to have a Council with special powers that could take action in times of lawlessness and emergency.

The significance of the papal bull

The papal bull issued by the pope put England's Catholics in a difficult position: did they obey the head of their church or their queen? Now that a direct order had been issued by the pope, loyalty to both their spiritual and political leader was no longer possible, and so doubt was cast over the loyalty of all English Catholics.

The Ridolfi, Throckmorton and Babington plots

The Ridolfi plot, 1571

Roberto Ridolfi was an Italian banker from Florence living in England. He was also one of the pope's spies. In 1571, he arranged a plot to murder Elizabeth, launch a Spanish invasion and put Mary, Queen of Scots, on the throne. As with the Revolt of the Northern Earls, the plan was for Mary to be married to the Duke of Norfolk.

In March 1571, Ridolfi left England to discuss the plot with the pope, Philip II and the Duke of Alba, who was stationed in the Netherlands, a country under Spanish rule. Ridolfi had a letter signed by the Duke of Norfolk declaring he was Catholic and would lead the rebellion if Philip II would support it. Philip II told Alba to prepare 10,000 men to send to England if necessary. Sir William Cecil uncovered the plot and by autumn 1571 he had enough evidence (letters in code), to prove that Norfolk was guilty of plotting against Elizabeth I again. This was high treason. Ridolfi was abroad when his plot was uncovered and never returned to England.

When parliament met again in May 1572, it demanded the execution of both Norfolk and Mary. Elizabeth signed Norfolk's death warrant and he was executed in June 1572. However, Elizabeth would still not take action against Mary, even refusing to bar her from the succession.

Ridolfi's significance

- Coming so soon after the papal bull excommunicating Elizabeth, the Ridolfi plot reinforced the threat posed by Mary and Catholics, both at home and abroad.
- It also reinforced the threat to England from Spain. Already concerned by the Duke of Alba's presence in the Netherlands (as the persecution of Dutch Protestants was becoming more widespread) anxiety about Spain's intentions towards Elizabeth increased.
- Because of the threat from Spain, Elizabeth focused on improving relations with France.

Priests and priest holes

In order to keep Catholicism alive in England and strengthen English Catholics' resistance to Elizabeth and her Protestant Church, Catholic priests were smuggled into England from 1574. They travelled undercover, staying with well-to-do Catholic families, celebrating mass and hearing confessions. This was highly dangerous. Government agents increasingly kept English Catholics under surveillance. Homes where priests were suspected to be staying were raided. Those priests caught risked being hanged, drawn and quartered*, although not all were. In many homes, secret hiding places called priest holes were made. Source B describes a raid on a Catholic house.

Key term

Hanged, drawn and quartered*

A type of punishment used when the accused was found guilty of high treason. The accused would be hanged until near dead, cut open, have their intestines removed, and were finally chopped into four pieces.

Source B

A raid on a Catholic house in Northamptonshire, described by a Catholic priest, John Gerard, who was staying there. He managed to hide in the priest hole without being caught.

There they were, straining and shouting to get through and search the house, yet they halted in an unlocked room just long enough to allow us to reach the hiding-place and shut ourselves safely in. Then they... burst into the lady's apartment while others raged round the remaining rooms.

In 1581, parliament passed two laws against Catholics.

- Recusants would now be fined £20 – an enormous sum that would bankrupt most families.
- Attempting to convert people to Catholicism was now treason.

Measures against English Catholics were becoming harsh, but the plots against Elizabeth continued.

The Throckmorton plot, 1583

The Throckmorton plot planned for the French Duke of Guise, the cousin of Mary, Queen of Scots, to invade England, free Mary, overthrow Elizabeth and restore Catholicism in England. Philip II would provide financial support. A young Englishman, Francis Throckmorton, was to act as a go-between with Mary. The pope also knew, and approved, of the plans.

Sir Francis Walsingham, Elizabeth's Secretary of State from 1573, uncovered the plot. His agents found incriminating papers at Throckmorton's house. Throckmorton was arrested in November 1583, tortured, confessed, and was executed in May 1584. The Throckmorton plot again emphasised the threat of foreign, Catholic powers, English Catholics and Mary, Queen of Scots. It also showed the potential threat if the forces of Spain and France were to combine in future.

Throckmorton's significance

- Throckmorton's papers included a list of Catholic sympathisers in England, suggesting that the government's fear of English Catholics as 'the enemy within' was real.
- Life became harder for Catholics and they were treated with great suspicion by the government. Many important Catholics fled England after the plot, and up to 11,000 were imprisoned or kept under surveillance or house arrest. Another Act of Parliament was passed in 1585 that made helping or sheltering Catholic priests punishable with death.

The Babington plot, 1586

The Babington plot once again centred on the murder of Elizabeth I, and also encouraged English Catholics to rebel. It was similar to the Throckmorton plot: the Duke of Guise would invade England with 60,000 men and put Mary on the throne. Both Philip II of Spain and the pope supported this plot.

Anthony Babington, a Catholic with links to the French, wrote to Mary, Queen of Scots, in July 1586 about the proposed plot. However, Mary was being closely watched and her letters were being intercepted and read by Sir Francis Walsingham. Once he had sufficient details about the plot, including the names of six Catholics prepared to assassinate Elizabeth, all involved were arrested.

Babington and his accomplices were convicted and hanged, drawn and quartered. In October 1586, Mary was finally tried by the Privy Council. There had now been too many plots surrounding her to believe she was innocent of any wrongdoing. Found guilty, she was sentenced to death. Elizabeth, again hesitating, did not sign the warrant for Mary's death until February 1587. The sentence was carried out on 8 February.

Babington's significance

- This plot was especially significant because, by 1585, relations between England and Spain had broken down and the English were aiding the Dutch Protestants in a rebellion against the Spanish. Thus Elizabeth's situation was even more dangerous than had been the case with previous plots.
- Elizabeth's government became determined to crush Catholicism. There were mass arrests of recusants in England, with over 300 in north London alone and 31 priests were executed.
- Mary's execution ended any hope of replacing Elizabeth with a Catholic heir.

Exam-style question, section B

Describe **two** features of the plots against Elizabeth I in the years 1571–86. **4 marks**

Exam tip

This question is worth only 4 out of a possible 32 marks. Although 4 marks can make a difference to your overall result, you should only spend about 4–6 minutes on it. This means you must be very clear and concise.

Mary, Queen of Scots' execution

Why was Mary, Queen of Scots, executed?

Mary, Queen of Scots, had been involved in plots before, so why was she executed in 1587? The answer lies partly in a new Act of Parliament that had been passed in 1585: the Act for the Preservation of the Queen's Safety.

The act stated that, in the event of Elizabeth's assassination, Mary, Queen of Scots, was to be barred from the succession. Also, any action against Mary, Queen of Scots should only be taken once a commission has investigated her role in the plot, held a trial and found her guilty.

Source C

Painted c1613. The execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, at Fotheringhay Castle on 8 February 1587.



The evidence gathered by Walsingham against Mary, Queen of Scots, was enough to ensure her trial and conviction in October 1586 under the Act for the Preservation of the Queen's Safety. Elizabeth I finally, but reluctantly, signed her death warrant in February 1587.

Another reason why Mary, Queen of Scots, was executed was that by the start of 1587, it was clear to Elizabeth and her Privy Council that Philip II was planning a major attack against England. In January 1587, there were rumours that Spanish troops had landed in Wales and that Mary had escaped. These rumours reinforced the threat Mary's continued existence posed to England.

What was the significance of Mary, Queen of Scots' execution?

- The execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, removed an important threat to Elizabeth I.
- Philip II had been planning to invade England since 1585. The execution of Mary gave him one more reason to remove Elizabeth from the English throne. Mary also left her claim to the English throne to Philip II upon her death.

Activity



Review the plots against Elizabeth I. Draw and fill in a table with five columns: **Plot name and date**; **Context** (recent events); **Who was involved?**; **The basic plan**; and **Outcomes**.

Walsingham's use of spies

In 1573, Sir Francis Walsingham became Elizabeth I's Secretary of State. In this role, he developed a network of spies and informers, both in England and abroad. He played a crucial role in uncovering plots against Elizabeth I.

Walsingham's spy network

The extent of Walsingham's spy network was impressive. Throughout England, Walsingham had a range of spies and informants in every county and important town. Some were specially trained agents, but many were ordinary people who were paid for useful information. This turned ordinary people into spies on their neighbours. By 1580, Walsingham also had agents in 12 towns in France, nine in Germany, four in Spain, three in Italy and others in Algiers, Tripoli and Istanbul. Walsingham also used ciphers* in written communications to hide his plans to catch those plotting against Elizabeth.

Another source of informants were those few Catholic priests captured after having been smuggled into England, such as John Hart. Held in the Tower in 1581, he offered his services as a spy in return for a pardon. Given that in 1580, at least six priests had been arrested, taken to the Tower, tortured, convicted and executed, Hart's decision is not surprising. Walsingham also used *agents provocateurs** to plot and discover traitors. No one was above suspicion and even members of the nobility were routinely spied upon.

Key terms

Cipher*

A secret way of writing in code.

Agents provocateurs*

French term referring to agents who become a part of groups suspected of wrongdoing, and encourage other members to break the law so that potential threats can be identified and arrested.

Walsingham did not approve of torture being used against Catholic priests caught in England. He believed it would make people sympathetic towards them. Evidence suggests he only used torture in the most serious of cases, but Source D also gives an interesting insight into Walsingham.

Source D

Sir Francis Walsingham in a letter to Lord Burghley (William Cecil) in 1575. He was writing about trying to stop the plots surrounding Mary, Queen of Scots.

Without torture I know we shall not prevail.

Not all priests who were captured were executed. A special prison was built for them and the conditions were not harsh. Nevertheless, during Elizabeth I's reign, 130 priests and 60 of their supporters were executed.

Activity



Work in pairs. Discuss the following statement: 'Francis Walsingham is one of England's unknown heroes.'

- One person is to list evidence for this statement and the other against. Write up your evidence together in one paragraph. The aim is to produce a persuasive argument.
- Join with another pair. Each person is to read out their argument and listen carefully to everyone else's. Take a vote on whether you agree with the statement or not.

Cause and Consequence (3a&b)

The might of human agency

1 'Our lack of control'. Work in pairs.

Describe to your partner a situation where things did not work out as you had intended. Then explain how you would have done things differently to make the situation as you would have wanted. Your partner will then tell the group about that situation and whether they think that your alternative actions would have had the desired effect.

2 'The tyranny of failed actions'. Work individually.

The Duke of Norfolk's plans to marry Mary, Queen of Scots in 1569

a Write down what the Duke of Norfolk's aims were.

b Write down what the Duke of Norfolk's actions were.

c To what extent were the Duke of Norfolk's actions successful in achieving their aims?

d Make a spider diagram: write the Duke of Norfolk's actions in the middle and then add as many consequences of his actions as possible around them. Think about the long-term consequences as well as the immediate ones.

e How important were the consequences of the Duke of Norfolk's actions for the future lives of English Catholics?

3 To what extent are historical individuals in control of the history they helped to create? Explain your answer in a paragraph, with reference to specific historical examples from this topic and others you have studied.

Summary

- The Revolt of the Northern Earls in 1569 was a serious rebellion focused on overthrowing Elizabeth I and restoring Catholicism.
- Elizabeth I's excommunication in 1570 put English Catholics in a difficult position between loyalty to their political leader, Elizabeth I, or their spiritual leader, the pope.
- Plots against Elizabeth were encouraged by Spain and the pope.
- Three other plots aiming to replace Elizabeth I with Mary, Queen of Scots, were Ridolfi (1571); Throckmorton (1583); and Babington (1586).
- Mary, Queen of Scots, was executed in 1587 after the Babington Plot.
- Plots against Elizabeth failed because Sir Francis Walsingham had an extensive network of spies and informers.
- Catholic priests were smuggled into England to support English Catholics.

Checkpoint

Strengthen

- S1** Give two pieces of evidence of each of the following factors in the Revolt of the Northern Earls in 1569.
- a** Political factors **b** Religious factors
- S2** Give one important outcome for each of the plots against Elizabeth I: the Revolt of the Northern Earls; the Ridolfi, Throckmorton and Babington plots.
- S3** Give three reasons why Sir Francis Walsingham's spy network was so effective.

Challenge

- C1** Give three reasons why the Revolt of the Northern Earls in 1569 was such a major threat to Elizabeth I.
- C2** Compare the threats to Elizabeth I from 1571–86. Which was the most serious and why?
- C3** Explain why Mary, Queen of Scots, was executed in 1587 and not earlier.

If you are not confident about any of these questions, your teacher can give you some hints.

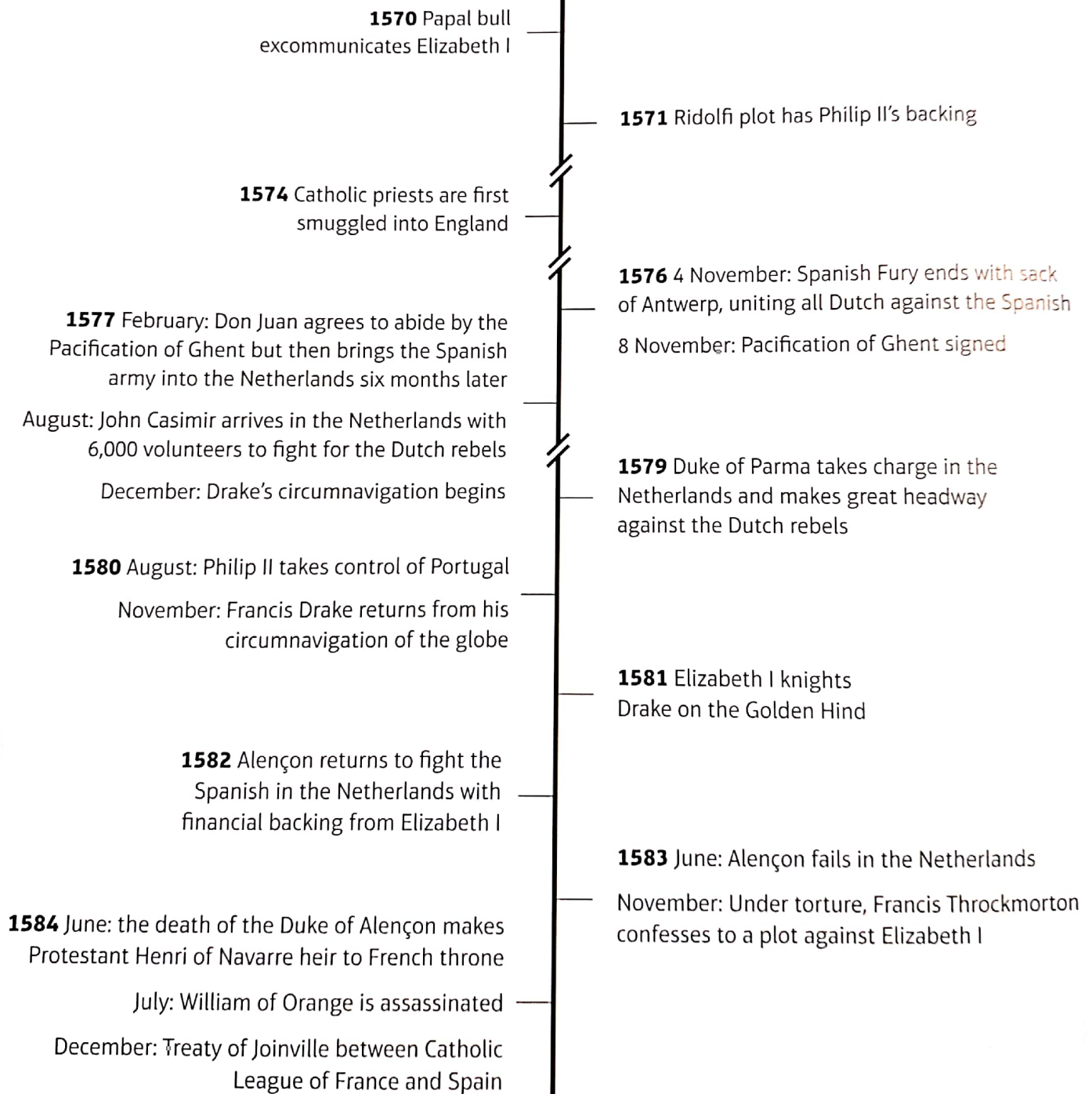
2.2 Relations with Spain

Learning objectives

- Understand Elizabeth I's foreign policy aims, and how that affected relations with Spain.

Timeline

The decline in Anglo-Spanish relations, 1570-84



Elizabeth I's foreign policy aims

For Elizabeth I, the pressures of ruling England influenced much of her foreign policy*. These pressures came from a lack of resources (England was far less wealthy and had a much smaller population than Spain or France) and England's religious divisions.

Elizabeth's foreign policy aims can be summarised as:

- developing and improving trade to benefit the English economy
- protecting England's borders
- protecting the English throne
- avoiding war, which would cost a lot of money and could potentially lead to Elizabeth being overthrown, if English rebels supported the enemy.

Commercial rivalry: the New World*, privateers* and Drake

During Elizabeth I's reign, English merchants began to explore new markets and trading partners. They went to Hamburg, Russia, China, India, Persia and Turkey. There were also huge profits to be made in the New World. However, English merchants faced problems in developing trade.

- Spain controlled the Netherlands, England's main route into European markets. Antwerp was particularly important to English trade in the Netherlands.
- Spain controlled much of the New World where there were valuable, new trading opportunities.

Spain claimed much of the Americas as its own, including Florida, the Caribbean, Mexico, Panama, Chile and Peru. The profits to be made in the New World were potentially enormous. There were valuable crops such as tobacco and sugar cane and huge supplies of silver. However, anyone who wanted to trade there needed a licence from Spain, which were very hard to come by. Many English merchants ignored Spain's rules and traded illegally, without licences. Some of them even attacked Spanish ports and shipping. Philip II could not ignore this challenge to Spain's interests in the New World.

Key terms

Foreign policy*

The aims and objectives that guide a nation's relations with other states. The general aim is to benefit the nation. Objectives can include: trade, expanding into more territory and / or gaining more economic resources and building alliances. Foreign policy can focus on defending what a country has (a defensive policy) or conquering other lands (an aggressive policy).

New World*

North and South America. Europeans were only aware of their existence from 1492.

Privateer*

Historically, individuals (usually merchants or explorers) with their own armed ships that capture other ships for their cargoes, often with the authorisation or support of their government.

Activities



Francis Drake features strongly in the following sections of this book. As you find out more about him, consider Interpretation 1. You could do some more research on Drake and New World trade, too. For example, at this time, Europeans, including Drake, began exploiting the African slave trade.

- 1 List evidence for and against Drake as an English hero.
- 2 Why would the Elizabethans have seen Drake as a hero?
- 3 Why do some modern historians not see Drake as a hero?

Interpretation 1

Historian Angus Konstam talks about Francis Drake in *The Great Expedition* (2011).

... in 1586 England had a national hero who seemed capable of achieving anything he wanted. The boost to national morale was incalculable. As the prospects of war loomed ever larger, at least England could count on men like Sir Francis Drake to protect them from the wrath of the Spanish. The irony ... is that if anyone helped bring about this war, it was Drake himself.

Francis Drake

Francis Drake was an English merchant who made his name and fortune trading in the New World. He also made huge sums of money for people who invested in his voyages, including Elizabeth I. However, much of what he did could be considered as piracy. During an expedition to the West Indies in 1570–71, for example, he captured numerous Spanish ships, and seized their cargoes.

In 1572, Elizabeth I hired Drake as a privateer. She got a good return on the money she invested in his voyage. Drake went to Panama, where he captured £40,000

of Spanish silver. However, Elizabeth's decision to back him was risky as it could have provoked further conflict with Spain. This was only avoided because by 1573, when Drake returned to England, both Philip II and Elizabeth were trying to improve Anglo-Spanish relations. Philip's anger at what he saw as English piracy meant that Elizabeth did not publicly welcome Drake home. Privately, however, she was impressed with his achievements.

In November 1577, Drake again set off for the New World. Elizabeth I's official plan was for him to sail around the tip of South America to its Pacific coastline. He was to bring gold, silver, spices and any other valuables back to England.

However, Elizabeth I also issued Drake with secret orders to attack Spain's colonies in the New World. By 1577, Anglo-Spanish relations were again getting worse and there were more fears of a Spanish invasion. Elizabeth, therefore, wanted to enrich England and disrupt Spain's valuable trade with its colonies (see Source A). It could also send a message of defiance to Philip II: Elizabeth I would not allow England to be dominated by Spain.

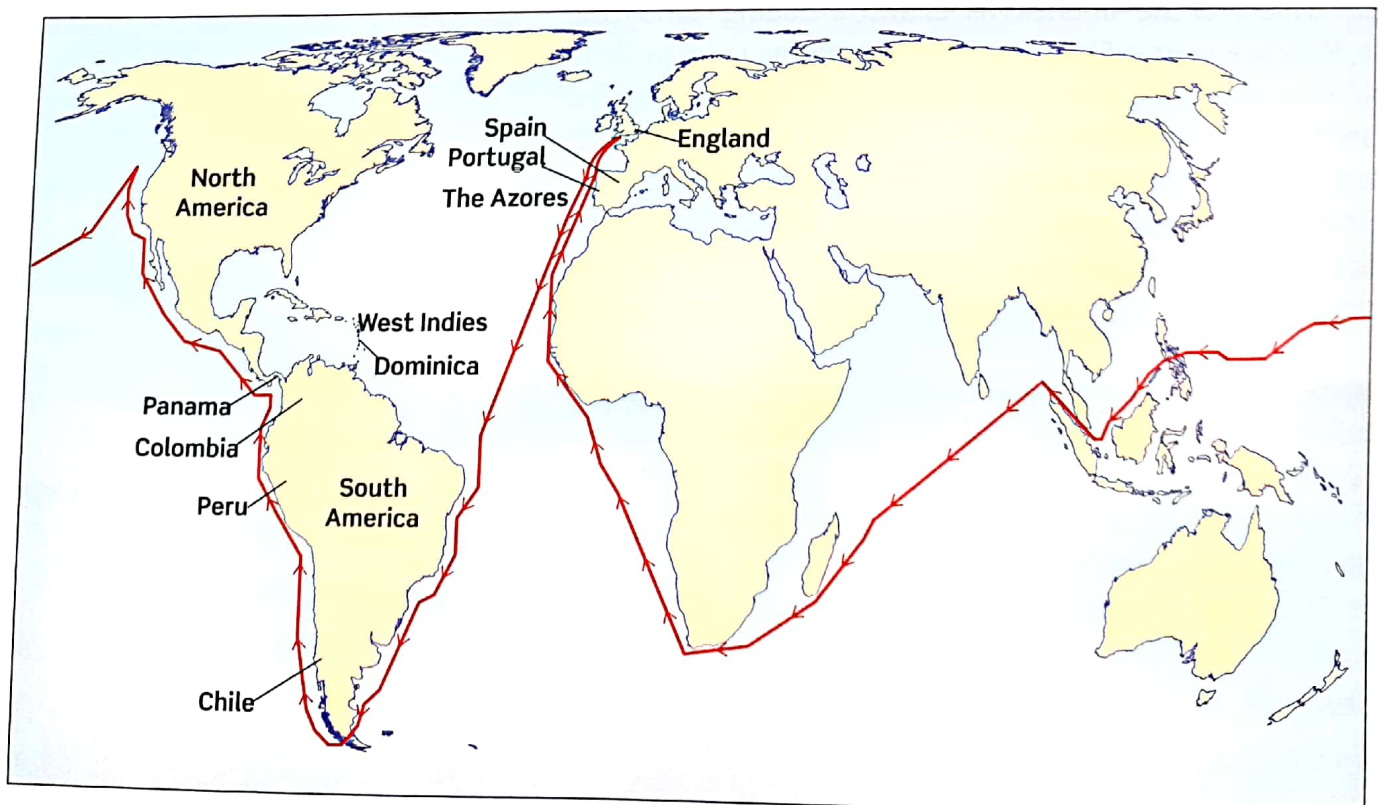


Figure 2.4 Drake's circumnavigation of the globe.

Drake's 1577–80 voyage became very famous because his actual route home led him to circumnavigate* the globe. He was the first Englishman to do so (and only the second person in history at that time). This was a major achievement as long sea voyages were exceptionally dangerous. Drake survived against the odds. He set off with five ships and only had one left, the **Golden Hind**, by the time he reached the Pacific Ocean.

Key term

Circumnavigate*

To travel all the way around the world.

Source A

From an account of Elizabeth I's meeting with Francis Drake before he set sail in 1577.

I would gladly be avenged on the King of Spain for diverse injuries that I have received.

Activities



- 1 Create a timeline of events for Drake, 1570-80.
- 2 Examine the significance of Drake's actions. Discuss with a partner which you think is the most significant for Elizabeth's relations with Spain.
- 3 Write a short paragraph explaining your answer.

The outcome of Drake's voyage

Once in the Pacific, Drake successfully plundered Spanish ports and ships along the coastline of Chile and Peru. He also claimed a region of north California in Elizabeth's name, calling it **New Albion**. It is estimated that when Drake returned to England in 1580, he brought £400,000 of Spanish treasure with

him. Although some of this went to the investors who had funded the voyage, it brought a great sum to the English Crown. Elizabeth was so impressed by his achievements that she knighted Drake on the deck of the Golden Hind. Philip II was outraged by this public display: to him Sir Francis Drake was nothing more than a pirate.

The significance of Drake's actions

- Drake's actions against Spain and her colonies, along with his claim to land in north California, made it clear that England did not accept Spain's domination of the Americas.
- Only one other sailor had successfully circumnavigated the globe, so Drake's success gave England a national hero and said something about England's strength as a seafaring nation.
- Drake boosted the Crown's finances at a time of growing concern over Spain's threat to England.
- Elizabeth's public knighting of Drake also sent a strong message of defiance to Spain.

Political and religious rivalry

In the 1500s, the nations of Europe were rivals. They competed for more territory. More territory meant more people, wealth and power. This rivalry often resulted in foreign policy that led to war. Religion was another source of conflict. Catholics saw Protestantism as something dangerous that had to be stamped out. Protestants saw Catholicism as an evil that wanted to destroy the 'true religion'. Philip II of Spain opposed Elizabeth's religious settlement in 1559.

Alliances were also part of foreign policy. They would be made according to what suited each country at the time. They would also be broken when they were no longer helpful. Spain and England had traditionally been allies. Once England became Protestant, however, that began to change.

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In the 1500s, England was not as wealthy or powerful as Spain and France. Luckily, Spain and France competed to be the greatest European power and this rivalry was helpful to Elizabeth I. It meant that Spain and France each valued England as an ally against the other.

- France wanted to be allied to England because France was surrounded by Spanish territory except to the north (see Figure 1.8).
- Spain wanted to be allied to England because Elizabeth's fleet could help protect its ships sailing in the Channel to the Netherlands. Spain had controlled the Netherlands since the 15th century.

From 1567, however, Spanish ships were sailing to the Netherlands with troops and resources for the Duke of Alba's army. Its brutal campaign to stamp out Protestantism in the Netherlands caused great alarm to English Protestants. Elizabeth's leading Privy Councillors were Protestant, and they put pressure on her to help the Dutch Protestant rebels.

What did Elizabeth I do about the Netherlands?

Elizabeth I was reluctant to help Dutch Protestant rebels in the Netherlands. She wanted to avoid anything that could lead to war with Spain (see Figure 2.5).

Instead, she hoped to apply pressure on the Spanish to encourage them to agree to return the Netherlands to how they had been governed under an agreement

made in 1548. This had given the Dutch a great deal of autonomy*, which Philip II had challenged, sparking the initial revolt in 1566.

Key term

Autonomy*

The right to self-government, so people of one country can manage its own affairs.

Elizabeth I applied pressure on Philip II in several ways.

- By indirectly (and unofficially) helping Dutch Protestants resist the Spanish
- By allowing Spanish shipping and colonies to come under attack from English privateers
- By pursuing friendly relations with France
- By encouraging others to fight the Spanish in the Netherlands.

In the 1570s, Elizabeth offered the promise of a marriage alliance with the heir to the French throne, the Duke of Alençon. She hoped to alarm Philip II of Spain enough to give the Dutch their independence back. When it didn't, she used her influence with the Duke of Alençon to encourage him to fight the Spanish in the Netherlands. This was a risky strategy, however, because Elizabeth did not want the French to be too successful in case they took control of the Netherlands themselves.

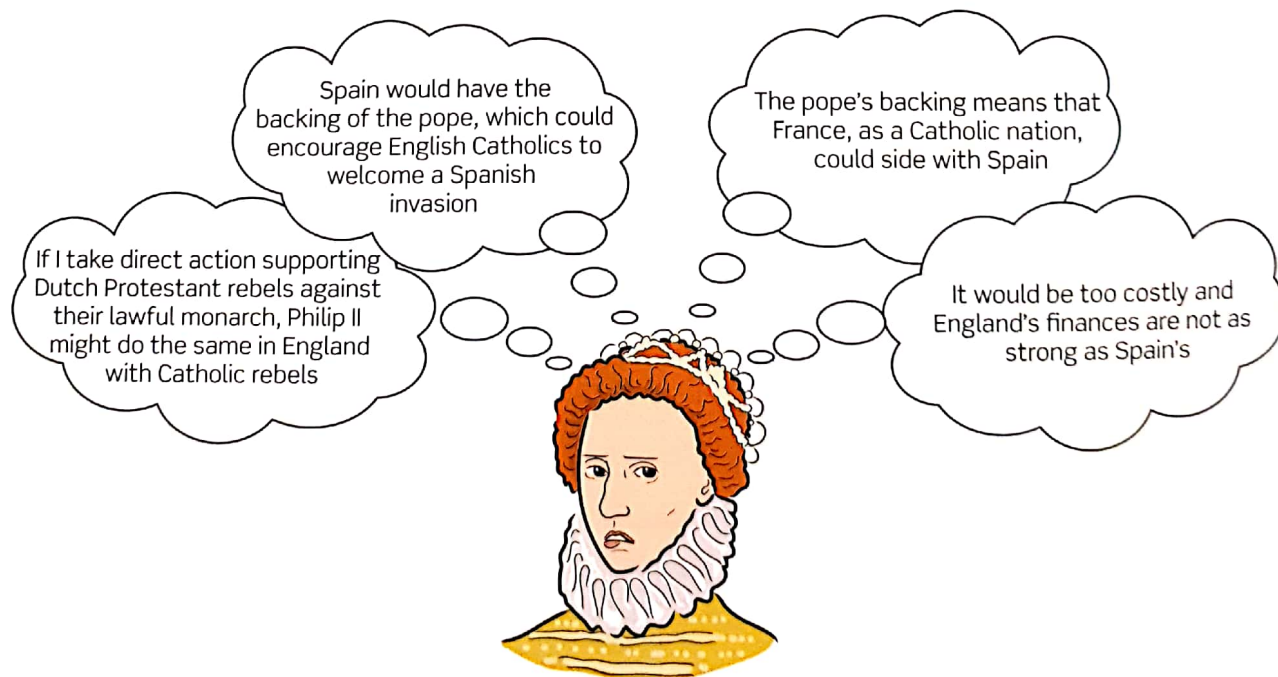


Figure 2.5 Reasons why Elizabeth I was reluctant to help Dutch Protestant rebels.

The Spanish Fury and the Pacification of Ghent, 1576

By 1576, the Spanish government in the Netherlands was all but bankrupt. Despite the silver and riches being brought in from the New World, the cost of war was too great for Spain to continue at the same pace.

Spain's forces in the Netherlands finally mutinied after months without pay, rampaging through Dutch provinces and finally sacking* Antwerp in November 1576. This was known as the Spanish Fury. The violence in Antwerp united all 17 Dutch provinces, Protestant and Catholic, together against Spain. They drew up the **Pacification of Ghent**, which demanded:

- all Spanish troops were to be expelled from the Netherlands
- the restoration of political autonomy
- an end to religious persecution.

Elizabeth sent a loan of £100,000 to the Dutch rebels and agreed (at some point in the future) to send an expeditionary force* to the Netherlands to help ensure that the Pacification of Ghent was carried out. In February 1577, Philip II's brother, Don Juan, arrived in the Netherlands and agreed to all the terms of the 17 united provinces. It must have seemed to Elizabeth that she had achieved her goals.

Key terms

Sacking*

To rob a town or city using violence, causing a lot of damage, usually in wartime.

Expeditionary force*

An armed force sent to a foreign country to achieve a specific function or objective.

Source B

Engraving showing mutinying Spanish troops sacking Antwerp in 1576. It was made by the Dutch artist Franz Hogenberg in 1576.



A missed opportunity?

Despite Elizabeth's optimism, less than six months after agreeing terms, Philip II sent a new army to attack the Dutch. This dashed any hopes that Elizabeth I had achieved her aims in the Netherlands. She hired a mercenary*, John Casimir, and financed him to raise an army of 6,000 English and Scottish volunteers to help the Dutch. The fact that it was volunteers led by a mercenary was important. It meant that Elizabeth was not officially sending an English army to fight the Spanish in her name. Spain and England were therefore not officially at war. The plan, however, backfired. Casimir's forces devastated Dutch Catholic churches, helping to persuade Dutch Catholics to make peace with Spain.

Key term

Mercenary*

A soldier who fights for money rather than a nation or cause.

Privy Councillors, like the Earl of Leicester, urged Elizabeth to intervene in the Netherlands directly. In 1578, the situation there was potentially promising enough for a complete Dutch victory. An independent Netherlands would be a strong, Protestant ally for England against Spain. Elizabeth, however, hesitated. Disappointed at her lack of commitment to their cause, the Dutch asked France for help. The Duke of Alençon agreed and came with an army to fight the Spanish.

By 1579, the situation in the Netherlands had changed. The Duke of Parma, who had been sent to the Netherlands by Philip II, was a far more effective military leader than Don Juan and the Spanish soon had the upper hand.

The international situation in 1578

- Spain was financially weak.
- France and England were allies.
- Don Juan's army was not very successful.
- The Dutch leader, William of Orange, was popular and able to rally all the Dutch states against the Spanish, uniting Catholics and Protestants.
- The Duke of Alençon led an army into the Netherlands to fight the Spanish.

The international situation in 1579

- Spain was still financially weak.
- France and England were still allies.
- Don Juan was replaced by the Duke of Parma as governor of the Netherlands.
- Spain's armies began making headway against the Dutch.
- John Casimir's troops violently attacked Catholic churches in the Netherlands.
- The southern Dutch Catholic provinces made peace with the Spanish.
- Alençon withdrew from the Netherlands.

Activity

Work in pairs. One of you must decide how far Spain's improving position in the Netherlands in 1579 was a result of Elizabeth I's mistakes. The other must decide how far it was down to factors beyond her control. Compare findings. Make a joint decision about how far Elizabeth I was to blame. Use a value continuum like the one below to illustrate your answer.

100% Elizabeth's mistakes

100% beyond her control

Spain's fortunes restored, 1580–84

The Duke of Alençon came to England in October 1581. Elizabeth agreed to give him £70,000 for support in the Netherlands (with the promise of more later). In 1580, Philip II gained Portugal, along with its empire and naval forces. Spain's new strength and wealth alarmed Elizabeth. Perhaps this is why she still refused to intervene in the Netherlands: the odds against England were now even greater. Instead, Elizabeth once more turned to France. Alençon returned to the Netherlands in 1582, but again failed. He returned to France in 1583.

Interpretation 2 sees Elizabeth herself as the key reason for her foreign policy's failure.

Interpretation 2

An extract about Elizabeth's involvement in the Netherlands from *Elizabeth I: Meeting the Challenge, England 1541–1603* (2008) by John Warren.

... nothing Elizabeth had done had contributed towards a successful resolution [in the Netherlands] in line with English interests. Instead, she had managed to alienate Spain without earning the trust of the Netherlands. The unhappy prospect of a complete Spanish victory loomed.

1584: a turning point in Anglo–Spanish relations

Circumstances beyond Elizabeth's control made England's situation even more hazardous by the end of 1584: on 10 June, the Duke of Alençon died. Only one month later, on 10 July, William of Orange, the leader of the Dutch Protestant rebels, was assassinated.

Should England help the Dutch? Despite the change in circumstances, Elizabeth I still preferred a cautious approach. Cecil agreed. Others, led by the Earl of Leicester, urged Elizabeth to intervene in the Netherlands. The Privy Council debated the issue long and hard from autumn 1584 until summer 1585. As it turned out, the decision was all but made for them.

At the end of 1584, the French Catholic League signed the **Treaty of Joinville** with Philip II to secure his help against French Protestants. In 1585, the King of France signed up to the Catholic League's aim of ridding France of heresy. Effectively this meant that Catholic France and Spain were now allies against Protestantism.

Duke of Alençon
Died 10 June 1584



William of Orange
Assassinated 10 July 1584



The deaths of the Duke of Alençon and William of Orange cause problems for Elizabeth's foreign policy because:

- he could no longer fight the Spanish in the Netherlands
- although France's new heir to the throne was Henri of Navarre, a Protestant, leading French Catholics formed a Catholic League to stop him
- it led to a religious war in France, meaning it was too unstable to be a useful ally to England.
- it showed how easy it was for a leader like Elizabeth to be assassinated
- Dutch Protestants needed a leader and looked to Elizabeth. She did not want this role as she could be seen as trying to overthrow Philip II.
- without a leader, the Dutch rebels could be defeated by Spain, leaving England as Philip II's next target.

Figure 2.6 The impact of the deaths of the Duke of Alençon and William of Orange on Elizabeth I's foreign policy.

Activities

- 1 Explain the importance of the following events.
 - a The Spanish Fury and Pacification of Ghent.
 - b Spain's position strengthened after taking control of Portugal.
 - c The deaths of Alençon and William of Orange.
- 2 Why was there so much uncertainty between 1584–5 over whether to help the Dutch? Explain the different points-of-view with reference to the events and changing circumstances from 1580. You could write this as a script or dialogue with Lord Burghley and the Earl of Leicester trying to persuade Elizabeth I of their case. It is important for you to show you can understand the situation England was in and the different points-of-view about what to do.

Exam-style question, Section B

'The decline in Anglo-Spanish relations in the years 1569–85 was caused by Elizabeth I'. How far do you agree?

You may use the following in your answer:

- Drake's voyages to the New World
- The Netherlands.

You **must** also use information of your own.

16 marks

Exam tip

Planning your answers is a very important part of exam success.

This question tests your ability not only to explain why something happened but also to analyse Elizabeth I's role. It is important to deal with **at least** three factors in total. You may use the information provided by the question, but to gain a top mark, you **must** provide information of your own. To do this, you **must** take time to plan.

Summary

- Relations with Spain worsened between 1569 and 1585.
- Elizabeth I's foreign policy was defensive – she wanted to avoid war.
- The Dutch Revolt led to a large Spanish military force being sent to the Netherlands. It was *seen as very* threatening to England.
- English support for Dutch rebels was limited and indirect until 1585.
- Elizabeth I used friendship with France as well as mercenaries to support the Dutch rebels.
- Sir Francis Drake provoked Philip II's anger with his actions in the New World.
- Members of Elizabeth I's Privy Council were frustrated by her hesitation, especially in 1578.
- In 1584, circumstances beyond Elizabeth I's control finally led to her intervening directly in the Netherlands in 1585.

Checkpoint

Strengthen

- S1** Give two aims of Elizabeth I's foreign policy.
- S2** Write a sentence explaining the importance of the following events in worsening Anglo-Spanish relations 1569–84.
- a** Francis Drake's expeditions to the New World.
 - b** The Dutch Revolt in the Netherlands (including the Pacification of Ghent in 1576).
 - c** The Treaty of Joinville in 1584.
- S3** Elizabeth I tried to avoid direct conflict with Spain but still indirectly put pressure on Spain to leave the Netherlands alone. Describe, and give examples, of two ways in which she did this.

Challenge

- C1** Identify one turning point in the deterioration of Anglo-Spanish relations in the 1570s and explain its importance.
- C2** Write a paragraph, with examples from the 1570s and 1580s, explaining how Elizabeth I caused the deterioration in Anglo-Spanish relations?
- C3** Write a paragraph, with examples from the 1570s and 1580s, explaining how Philip II caused the deterioration in Anglo-Spanish relations?
- C4** Why was the death of the Duke of Alençon in 1584 so important for Elizabeth I?
- C5** Explain why Elizabeth I knighted Francis Drake in 1581. You must refer to both what he had achieved, and the circumstances the queen faced, by 1581.

To help with these questions, you might find it useful to draw a timeline dating the important moments in Anglo-Spanish relations in the 1570s and 1580s.

2.3 Outbreak of war with Spain, 1585–88

Learning objectives

- Understand how England's involvement in the Netherlands encouraged war with Spain.

England's direct involvement in the Netherlands 1585–88

How and why did Elizabeth I change her foreign policy?

After the Treaty of Joinville was signed in 1584, Elizabeth could no longer avoid direct intervention in the Netherlands.

Elizabeth takes direct action, 1585

In June 1585, Dutch Protestant representatives came to England offering Elizabeth I the sovereignty of the Netherlands. She refused, as it would mean deposing King Philip II, something she was still unwilling to do: Elizabeth refused to depose an anointed monarch. Instead, on 10 August 1585, Elizabeth I signed the **Treaty of Nonsuch** with the Dutch Protestants. It effectively put England and Spain at war: Elizabeth had agreed to intervene directly in the Netherlands on the side of the rebels. Philip II thought the English should stay out of the Netherlands as they belonged to Spain. England would finance an army of 7,400 English troops under a commander of her choosing, who would work with the rebels' government, the Council of State. The man she chose was her long-time favourite, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester.

In October 1585, Elizabeth also sent Sir Francis Drake to raid Spanish New World settlements, with the aim of disrupting Philip II's flow of resource and finances. However, rather than deterring Philip, Drake only succeeded in angering him. Philip told the pope he intended to invade England at the end of 1585.

Extend your knowledge

The Treaty of Berwick

In 1586, England and Scotland signed the Treaty of Berwick. This made England's northern borders much more secure, enabling Elizabeth to focus on the Netherlands. The terms of the treaty were:

- Elizabeth I and James VI agreed to maintain Protestantism as their countries' religion
- Elizabeth I and James VI agreed to help each other if invaded.

Robert Dudley in the Netherlands, 1585–87

Source A

A picture of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, painted in 1585.



England's intervention in the Netherlands was not a great success. Elizabeth did not want to take the initiative: she was still hoping to negotiate with Spain. Leicester was therefore not given enough money for men or supplies to mount a large campaign.

The campaign started badly. In January 1586, Leicester accepted the title of **Governor General of the Netherlands** on Elizabeth's behalf. Elizabeth was furious: this implied she was deposing Philip II as king of the Netherlands.

In the summer of 1586, English forces only managed to slow the Duke of Parma's advance through the Netherlands. In September, they did take some forts outside the Spanish controlled town of Zutphen. In January 1587, however, they lost one, Zutphen Fort, when it was handed over by an English captain, Rowland York. He defected to the Spanish along with Sir William Stanley. Stanley had been the governor of the town Deventer and gave it to the Spanish. After this, the Dutch found it hard to trust Leicester, especially because he had appointed Stanley.

Leicester was called back to England in November 1586 but returned to the Netherlands in June 1587. He still didn't have enough men or supplies. However, he managed to cause the Duke of Parma enough problems to prevent him from taking the major, deep-water port of Ostend. Parma's failure to capture any deep-water ports proved important in the failure of the Armada in 1588 (see page 62). Elizabeth recalled Leicester from the Netherlands for good at the end of 1587.

The English campaign in the Netherlands was not successful between 1586 and 1588 for three main reasons.

- 1 Elizabeth was never fully behind the rebels. She still hoped to negotiate with Spain and did not give Leicester the funds necessary to mount a large campaign.
- 2 Leicester and Elizabeth had different aims in the Netherlands. Leicester wanted to liberate the Netherlands from the Spanish, making it independent. Elizabeth wanted a return to how the Netherlands had been governed in 1548.
- 3 Relations between the English and Dutch leaders were poor because of Elizabeth's lack of commitment.

Drake sings the King of Spain's beard, 1587

Since January 1586, Spain had been preparing the Armada, Philip II's mighty invasion fleet. In March 1587, Elizabeth ordered Francis Drake to attack Spain's navy. On 19 April, he sailed into Cadiz harbour, Spain's most important Atlantic port, and over three days destroyed 30 ships as well as a great deal of the fleet's provisions. The attack on Cadiz is known as the '**singeing of the King of Spain's beard**'.

Drake then spent several weeks attacking the coast of Portugal before heading to the Azores. His aim was to capture Spanish treasure ships bringing silver from Spain's New World colonies. Although he only captured one, Spain had to break off from building the Armada to defend itself against Drake. The disruption Drake caused did not stop the Armada but it was delayed by a year. This bought England more time to prepare.

Activity

Draw a table with three columns. The column headings are: 'Politics', 'Religion' and 'Role of the Individual'. In each column list as much evidence as you can to show how each of the three factors led to the decline in Anglo-Spanish relations 1585-88.

Summary

- Elizabeth I promised to help the Dutch and signed the Treaty of Nonsuch in 1585.
- However, England's intervention in the Netherlands was not very successful.
- The Earl of Leicester made little progress in the Netherlands as he did not have enough men or resources and so did not get on well with the Dutch.
- Elizabeth sent Sir Francis Drake to raid Spanish New World settlements in 1585.
- In 1587, Drake 'singed the King of Spain's beard' and delayed the launch of the Armada.

Checkpoint

Strengthen

- S1 Give one term from the Treaty of Nonsuch and one reason Elizabeth I agreed to the treaty.
- S2 Give two reasons why the Earl of Leicester failed in the Netherlands.
- S3 Give two examples when Francis Drake angered Philip II and two examples in which he helped England after 1585.

Challenge

- C1 Explain how a combination of two factors led to the outbreak of war between England and Spain. Factors could include religion, the Dutch Revolt, politics, or the role of the individual, such as Elizabeth I, Philip II, or Francis Drake.
 - C2 Explain why Elizabeth was partly to blame for the Earl of Leicester's failure in the Netherlands.
- These questions ask you to take into consideration not just things in this section, but everything you have learned in Chapter 2 so far. If you are struggling, review your notes from the previous sections of this chapter.

2.4 The Armada

Learning objectives

- Understand why Philip II launched the Armada.
- Understand the reasons why the Armada was defeated, and consequences of this English victory.

Why did Philip II launch the Spanish Armada?

Mary, Queen of Scots' execution in 1587 is often mistakenly thought to be the cause of the launch of the Spanish Armada. The actual decision, however, had been taken as early as October 1585.

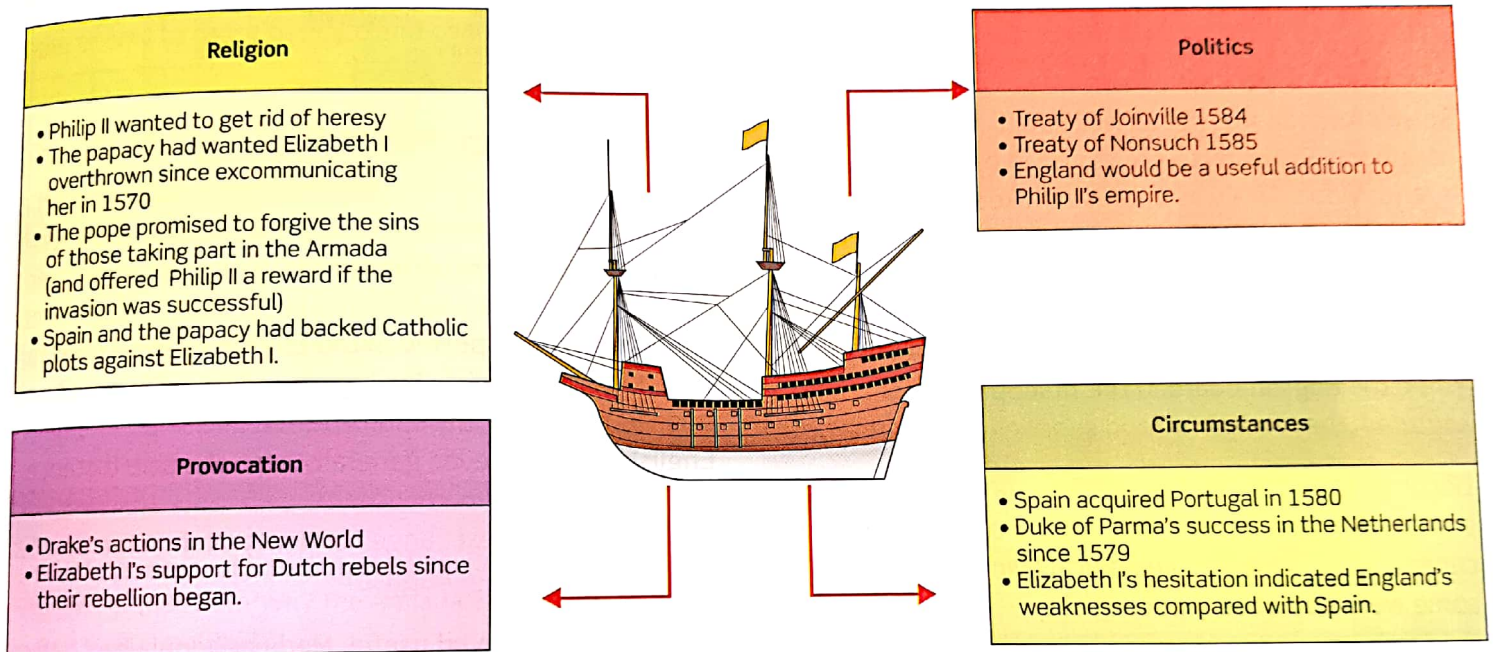


Figure 2.7 Why did Philip II launch the Armada against England in 1588?

Philip's strategy

With 130 ships, 2,431 guns and around 30,000 men, Philip II's Armada was the largest fleet Europe had ever seen. Under the command of the Duke of Medina-Sidonia, it was ordered to sail along the English Channel to the Netherlands. There it would join up with the Duke of Parma. Together they would transport 27,000 troops to Kent and then Parma would march on London, depose Elizabeth and impose a new, Catholic government in England.

How did England defeat the Spanish Armada?

English ship design

One reason for English victory was its **ships**. Another was **long term planning**. The treasurer of the navy, John Hawkins, had advised Elizabeth years before that English warships needed to be fast and easily manoeuvrable so they could turn their guns on the enemy quicker.

New ships, known as **galleons**, were built from the early 1570s. They were designed to be easier and faster to manoeuvre.

In English ships, the cannons were mounted on smaller gun carriages than on Spanish ships. When a cannon is fired it recoils quite a long way. The decks on English ships had enough space for cannon to recoil, be quickly reloaded by a small team of men and then pushed back through the gun port. This meant that English ships could fire more cannon balls at the Spanish with more speed.

However, although galleons were some of the best warships in the world, by 1588 England had only 24 of these new ships. Therefore, galleons alone cannot explain Spain's defeat.

Spanish supplies

Spain's Armada was not as well supplied as it might have been. Provisions were stored in barrels made of inferior wood. This was because Drake's raid on Cadiz had destroyed so many barrels that new ones had to be made quickly. Delays in setting sail and bad weather meant that by the time the English engaged the Armada, it had already been at sea for over ten weeks. When the English boarded the first Spanish ship they captured, they found its food supplies already rotting.

Documents written by Medina-Sidonia also indicate that the Armada was low on supplies of the necessary cannon balls, while archaeological evidence suggests some were also of very poor quality.

Planning and communications issues

Philip II's plan required Medina-Sidonia to join with Parma, who was to command a fleet from the Netherlands. This was a weakness for two reasons.

- 1 The Duke of Parma did not control any deep-sea ports (which large war ships needed) in the Netherlands. Instead he had to use lots of small ships. This meant it would take 48 hours to load, man and set sail once word came from the Duke of Medina-Sidonia to join his fleet.
- 2 Communications between Medina-Sidonia and Parma had to go by sea and were therefore unreliable. It took a week for word to reach Parma that Medina-Sidonia was in the Channel. By this time, Medina-Sidonia was off Calais waiting to engage the English. Although his message got through to Parma eventually, it was too late.

His fleet would not be ready to set sail for another 48 hours and the English were ready to attack.

English tactics

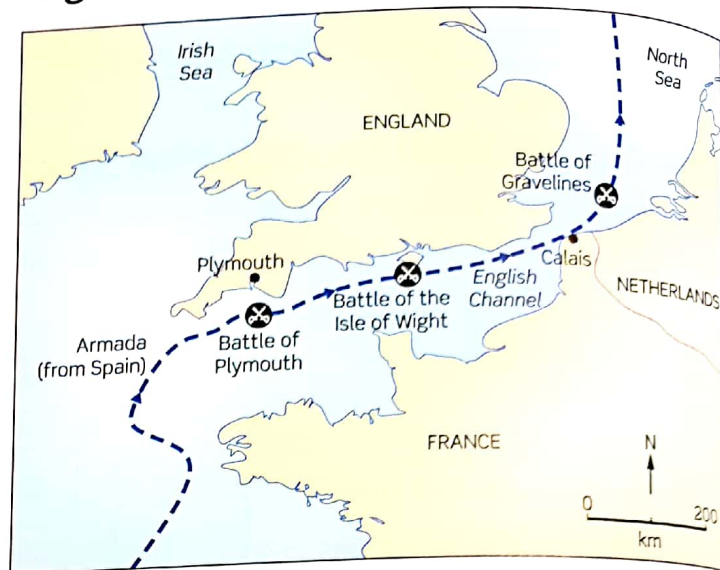


Figure 2.8 The course of the Armada.

The Armada was spotted in the English Channel on 29 July 1588. The English, having set sail from Plymouth, opened fire on 31 July and captured two ships. The English fleet, however, generally kept at a safe distance and chased the Armada down the Channel. However, there were some exchanges of heavy cannon fire off the Isle of Wight on 3–4 August.

This exchange proved useful. Medina-Sidonia had hoped to anchor safely off the Isle of Wight. Stopping for a couple of days might have meant that Parma received Medina-Sidonia's messages in enough time to get the Dutch fleet ready for his arrival.

During the engagement off the Isle of Wight, the English were able to fire as many as six times more cannon balls than the Spanish and from further away. The Earl of Nottingham, a commander of the English fleet, realised the advantage this gave England and decided to conserve cannon balls for the decisive battle.

The Battle of Gravelines, 8 August 1588

On the night of 6 August, the English sent fireships* amongst the Spanish fleet. Although they did very little actual damage to the Spanish ships, they created havoc by scattering the Armada. When it regrouped on 8 August, the English engaged the Spanish in the Battle of Gravelines.

Medina-Sidonia had to fight without Parma's ships, which were not ready. Up against faster, more mobile English ships with cannons that were easier to load, the Armada was defeated and scattered by the winds. In fact, most of the destruction was done by the gales that wrecked Spanish ships as they tried to return home through the treacherous waters off the Scottish and Irish coasts. Thousands were killed.

Key term

Fireships*

Empty ships set on fire and sent in the direction of the enemy to cause damage and confusion.

Should Philip II take the blame for defeat?

Although Philip II had consulted his military commanders before the Armada sailed, he seems to have ignored their suggestions, their criticisms and their concerns. On the other hand, Elizabeth I left the key decisions to her commanders: Francis Drake, the Earl of Nottingham and Lord Seymour. Interpretation 1 is very clear about Philip II's role in the defeat of the Armada.

Interpretation 1

One interpretation discussing why Philip II failed to invade England in 1588 from 'Why The Armada Failed' in *History Today Magazine* (1988).

Here, then, lay Philip's true error: he was not only an armchair strategist, but an armchair tactician too ... the final version [of his plans] depended for success upon a tactical edge which Spain's ships simply did not possess. In this disharmony between strategy and tactics, therefore, lies the true explanation of the Armada's fate.

What were the consequences of the English victory over the Spanish Armada?

After the Battle of Gravelines, Elizabeth I addressed her troops at Tilbury, where they were still assembled ready to defend England from a possible invasion from the Netherlands by the Duke of Parma. Source A is an extract from this famous speech.

Source A

Excerpt from Elizabeth I's speech to her troops at Tilbury, August 1588.

Let tyrants fear ... I am come amongst you, ... being resolved, in the midst and heat of the battle, to live and die amongst you all; to lay down for my God, and for my kingdom, and my people, my honour and my blood, even in the dust.

I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm.

Victory over the Armada gave Elizabeth I a great propaganda* victory. A new portrait was commissioned (see Source B), the queen was the centre of a great parade in London and a special commemorative medal was struck. It said 'God blew, and they were scattered'. This was an important point: God clearly seemed to favour Protestantism, and Elizabeth was eager to emphasise this.

Key term

Propaganda*

Biased information used to promote a point-of-view.

Source B

The Armada portrait of Elizabeth I, painted in 1588 by George Gower.



England itself had survived an attack by a more powerful foe. This helped nurture a feeling of English pride. It also encouraged the Dutch rebels to renew their fight against the Spanish. Had Philip II been successful, any English support for Dutch Protestants would have ended. As it was, the Anglo-Dutch alliance became stronger than ever before.

The defeat of the Armada also showed the strength of the English navy. After 1588, it also gave England the confidence to trade and explore more widely on the open sea.

Nevertheless, Philip II did not give up. The battle was won but the war continued for the remainder of Elizabeth's reign. The failure of the Armada might have been a setback, but his belief that Catholicism was the true religion was unshaken. However, the defeat cost Spain dearly, both financially and in terms of its power. The Armada marked the beginning of a long decline in Spanish fortunes.

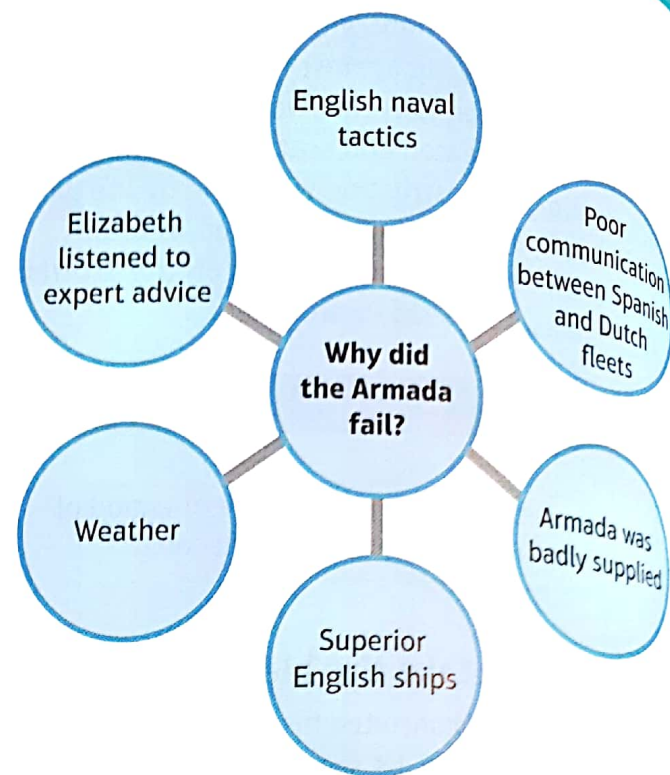


Figure 2.9 Reasons for the defeat of the Armada in 1588.

Summary

- The Armada was the Spanish fleet sent to invade England in 1588.
- The English fleet set out from Plymouth and followed the Armada to Calais.
- The Armada had problems with supplies and communications.
- The English had faster ships that could fire more cannon balls from a greater distance.
- The Battle of Gravelines did substantial damage to the Armada.
- After Gravelines, the Armada headed north and thousands lost their lives in shipwrecks.
- The defeat of the Armada was a great propaganda boost for Elizabeth I, England and Protestantism in Europe.

Checkpoint

Strengthen

- S1** Describe the key features of Philip II's plan to invade England.
- S2** Give two advantages English ships had over Spanish ships.
- S3** Give one example in which the Armada benefitted Elizabeth I.

Challenge

- C1** Identify a key turning point in the events that lead to the defeat of the Spanish Armada and explain your choice.
- C2** Explain the importance of each of the following in the defeat of the Armada.
 - Philip II
 - John Hawkins
 - English cannon
- C3** Explain the significance of the Spanish Armada on Anglo-Spanish relations.

If you are not confident about any of these questions, form a group with other students, discuss the answers and then record your conclusions. Your teacher can give you some hints.

Recall quiz

- 1 What and when were the four key plots against Elizabeth I?
- 2 Give two reasons why the northern earls revolted in 1569.
- 3 Give one reason why the 1570 papal bull of excommunication was so significant.
- 4 Who was John Hart and what did he do?
- 5 Supply two items stated by the Act for the Preservation of the Queen's Safety, 1585.
- 6 Why was the New World so important to Spain?
- 7 Between which years did Sir Francis Drake circumnavigate the globe?
- 8 Give two examples when Elizabeth I indirectly supported the Dutch Rebellion.
- 9 When was the Battle of Gravelines?
- 10 Give two reasons why the Spanish Armada failed.

Activity

Make a timeline of the key events of the Armada from 31 July to 8 August 1588.

Activities

- 1 Work in groups of four. Study Figure 2.7 on page 61. Each take one factor explaining why Philip II used the Armada in 1588. Explain and provide evidence for your factor.
- 2 Once you have done your research, feedback to each other. Pick one factor. Now make as many links as you can to other factors. Do this with the other three factors.
- 3 Which factor includes the most links to other factors?

Activities

- 1 Work in pairs to make a bar chart showing how the level of threat faced by Elizabeth I changed from 1569–1588. You will need a horizontal axis on which you can mark all 20 years. The vertical axis will show the level of threat faced by Elizabeth I. Use a scale of 0–10. Decide how the threat to Elizabeth I developed year-on-year. A score of 10 would mean that England was invaded or Elizabeth I was overthrown. A score of 0 would mean no threat to Elizabeth I, at home or abroad.

You must remember that although there are some years when nothing important happens, it does not mean that there was no threat. In 1575, for example, the Spanish were still in the Netherlands and Catholic priests had started arriving in England. If you wish, you could research years for which you have no information.

- 2 Compare the events of 1569 and 1588. Would Elizabeth I have felt more under threat at the end of 1569 or 1588? Write a paragraph explaining your answer.
- 3 Write two paragraphs comparing the similarities and differences in the threats Elizabeth I faced in 1558–69 with those of 1570–88.
- 4 Why was Elizabeth I able to survive the challenges she faced during 1569–88? Write one paragraph on how she survived domestic challenges, and one on foreign challenges.