ENGLISH NAVAL EXPANSION UNDER THE FRENCH THREAT, 1555-64[1]

Abstract

In the autumn of 1555, after almost a decade of decay, the Marian regime decided to rebuild the English navy. With the encouragement of her Spanish husband, Queen Mary supported the new construction of three large carracks that would assist in the kingdom's war against the substantial maritime forces of Henri II of France. Even with the potential insurance of Spanish military reinforcements from her husband, the French navy had expanded unprecedentedly under Henri II, forcing England's maritime resources to their limits. This article will argue that it was these conflicts with France between 1557 and 1564 that forced the Marian and early Elizabethan institutions to endorse a policy of naval expansion.

Keywords: Elizabethan navy, Marian navy, naval expansion, England, France, Henri II.

Elizabeth I's navy is widely upheld by historians as the tool that successfully defended England from the superior Spanish Armada. Infamous figures, including Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Hawkins, two of the queen's most celebrated sea dogs, are now renowned English heroes. Moreover, the expansion of the realm's maritime resources,

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and the series of naval feats during the Spanish War, have carved Elizabeth I (1533-1603) into history as the mother of the future Royal Navy, even if her willingness to use it was questioned at the time.[2]

This article however will not concern itself with this latter period of Elizabethan history, which has received wide attention since Sir Julian Corbett's two volume series published in 1898.[3] Instead, it covers a period that has drawn far less consideration both from scholarship and popular culture. The dramatic events at sea under the reign of Elizabeth I have generally overshadowed the accomplishments of her sister, Mary I (1516-58). Yet, it was the warships built under Mary and during the early years of Elizabeth's reign, between 1555 and 1564, which would become some of the principal vessels used in the 1588 campaign. There is some irony in the fact that the warships constructed by Mary would help to defeat her husband's armada. Indeed previous studies have given more attention to the periods both before and after these years, with Geoffrey Moorhouse and David Childs producing some of the most recent examples.[4] With this said, a study of English developments that considers naval expansion during the Marian and early Elizabethan regimes, and asks what the motivations behind these transformations were, will be fruitful in its results and will suggest an increased importance in these years.

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[2] N.A.M. Rodger, 'Queen Elizabeth and the Myth of Sea-Power in English History', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Sixth Series*, 14 (2004), 157.

[3] J.S. Corbett, *Drake and the Tudor Navy*, 2 Volumes (London, 1898).

[4] G. Moorhouse, *Great Harry's Navy: How Henry VIII Gave England Sea Power* (London, 2006); D. Childs, *Pirate Nation: Elizabeth I and her Royal Sea Rovers* (Barnsley, 2014).

Tom Glasgow Jnr's articles on the Marian and early Elizabethan wars for *The Mariner's Mirror* are a vital contribution to the period under investigation, despite being over fifty years old and requiring revision.[5] Glasgow was aware of the importance of the final years of Mary I's reign to English naval advancement, and identified the pressure that Mary's husband, Philip II of Spain, applied to the English Queen to develop her fleet for war against France.[6] Yet, this view has since been contested, with both David Loades and N.A.M. Rodger suggesting that claims of Philip being the architect of the force that defeated him in 1588 are unsubstantiated and exaggerated.[7] Rodger has equally acknowledged the importance of the years prior to 1558 for naval developments, for Elizabeth inherited 'a situation in which naval and maritime aggression were becoming identified with a heady combination of patriotism, Protestantism and private profit.'[8] Early-sixteenth century conceptions of English patriotism were connected to the long history of Anglo-French conflict; yet, it was not only anti-French sentiments, but also fear, that fuelled English naval expansion. Scholarship on this issue has largely overlooked the international pressures imposed by the expansion of the French fleet during the mid-sixteenth century, and needs to

[5] T. Glasgow Jnr, 'The Navy in Philip and Mary's War, 1557-1558', *The Mariner's Mirror*, 53, no. 4 (1967), 321-342; 'The Navy in the First Elizabethan Undeclared War, 1559-1560', *The Mariner's Mirror*, 54, no. 1 (1968), 23-37; 'The Navy in the French Wars of Mary and Elizabeth I; Part III. The Navy in the Le Havre Expedition, 1562-1564', *The Mariner's Mirror,* 54, no. 3 (1968), 281-96.
[6] Glasgow, 'Philip and Mary's War', 322-3.
[7] D. Loades, *The Tudor Navy: An Administrative, Political and Military History* (Cambridge, 1992), 7, 192-9, N.A.M. Rodger, *Safeguard of the Sea: A Naval History of Britain, 660-*1649 (London, 2004), 194-5.
[8] Rodger, *Safeguard of the Sea*, 195.

consider the impact of French naval strength in forcing the English kingdom to consolidate its own resources.

For England, the re-initiation of a naval construction scheme had become necessary after a decade of neglect. Since 1546, when the Tudor's navy reached its apogee with 58 warships, the navy had fallen into disuse, and its warships were poorly maintained. Edward VI (1537-53) sold his father's small rowbarges and several other vessels and failed to replace them.[9] On 25 August 1553, the flagship of Henry VIII (1491-1547), the *Henri Grace à Dieu* (since renamed the *Edward*), was accidentally destroyed in a fire, through the negligence of her keepers at Woolwich.[10] As a consequence, by the autumn of 1555, the Queen's warships numbered just 28, and many of these would have been unserviceable, including the *Peter* and the *George Hoy*.

The reduction in the English crown's warships was clear, and with escalating friction between England and France, it became imperative for England to improve its naval resources. By the mid-sixteenth century, although continuing to hire and equip vessels to bolster their fleets, both crowns knew of the advantages in owning warships. As well as representing status and prestige, warships of the state were tailor designed and armed, for war at sea.

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[9] The National Archives, Kew [TNA], [Records of the Exchequer] E351/2194, (29 September 1548–24 October 1551); Printed in C.S. Knighton & D. Loades, ed., *The Navy of Edward VI and Mary I* (Cornwall, 2011), [referred to as NEM from here], 146-69.
[10] J.G. Nichols, ed., *The Diary of Henry Machyn, Citizen and Merchant-Taylor of London* (New York, 1963), 43.

Prior to his accidental death in July 1559, the notorious fleet of Henri II (1519-59) had been well established as a significant maritime fighting force. The naval reforms of Henri II even led Charles de La Roncière to refer to Henri as the 'précurseur de Colbert'.[11] Predominately consisting of galleys, whilst retaining several carracks as an auxiliary force, Henri's personal naval armament had proved its worth in its adolescence when successfully recovering St Andrews Castle in July 1547.[12] In this context, both the Marian and Elizabethan regimes realised that it was necessary to redevelop the English navy, if it were to compete on equal terms with its French equivalent.

Through firstly outlining how France's navy expanded during the mid-sixteenth century, and then subsequently considering how England's navy re-emerged between 1555-64, it will be shown that the war with France was a major influence in the development of the English crown's warships that would be celebrated for the victory of 1588. It was the French wars of the mid-sixteenth century that acted as the original stimulus for naval growth in England. Without this conflict, the history of the Elizabethan navy might have unfolded very differently.

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[11] C. de La Roncière, *Histoire de la marine française, III: Les guerres d'Italie, liberté des mers* (Paris, 1906), 479.

[12] E. Bonner, 'The Recovery of St Andrews Castle in 1547: French Naval Policy and Diplomacy in the British Isles', *The English Historical Review*, 111, no. 442 (June, 1996), 578-598.

French naval developments

For a sovereign who quickly developed imperial ambitions, Henri II inherited a rather unimpressive fleet. In spite of Martin du Bellay's memoirs declaring that the July 1545 French invasion fleet of the Solent consisted of 235 vessels, the King owned just a small fraction of these.[13] The invasion fleet was predominately a conglomeration of merchant and other private vessels from the coasts of Picardy to Bordeaux, Provence, and the Italian States. The improvised nature of the fleet is observable in its Levant squadron, which departed from Marseille to Normandy on 14 May 1545.[14] Under the command of Captain Paulin, *général des galères,* were 20-25 galleys, alongside a further 40 hired vessels of Biscayan, Genoese and French origin.[15] These additional hired vessels accompanied the fleet principally to transport soldiers for the invasion attempt, which relied upon the prospect of quickly reaching the English shoreline.

The warships that François I (1494-1547) actually owned were on the whole smaller than the Henrician equivalent. His largest warship, *la Carraquon* of 800 *tuns,* failed even to depart from Dieppe in July 1545, for a fire in her galley incapacitated the vessel prior to departure.[16] The largest warships that Henri II would inherit would be the aged and somewhat decayed *la Grande Maîtresse* and *la Cardinale,* and neither was

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[13] Martin du Bellay, *Les memoires de mess. Martin du Bellay, seigneur de Langey* (Paris, 1569), 338-9.

[14] TNA, [State Papers] SP 1/202, f. 30, (11 June 1545).

[15] TNA, SP 1/198, f. 71, (18 February 1545); TNA, SP 1/199, f. 195, (9 April 1545); Bibliothèque Nationale de France [BN], français 17329, f. 193, (22 January 1545).

[16] 'Tun' as opposed to the later sixteenth 'ton' measuring method is used here. W. Salisbury, 'Early Tonnage Measurement in England', *The Mariner's Mirror*, 52, no. 1 (1966), 41-51.

larger than 600 *tuns*.[17] With galleys and sailing vessels combined, the fleet that Henri inherited was inferior to that which Edward VI acquired on his accession. The French crown, thus, would have had little choice but to apply a greater reliance upon decentralised, privately owned ships. These vessels would not have necessarily been tailored for war in the same way that the bespoke warships of the Valois monarchy were constructed.

Soon after he came to the throne, Henri II addressed this maritime frailty by making the French state a major European threat at sea. With warfare being a regular occurrence during his short reign, Henri believed it to be important for France to establish itself with a powerful state navy. The recovery of St Andrews Castle in late July 1547 was the newly crowned King's first overt military activity of his twelve-year reign. Led by Leone Strozzi, *général des galères,* 20-22 galleys were armed for the expedition.[18] Henri's limited inheritance in the Ponant (Atlantic) fleet is reflected in his selection of oared vessels for this expedition, which had to be transported from Marseille to Nantes before their embarkation.[19] Galleys had long remained an integral component of the French naval war effort during the late medieval period, and the Italian Wars ensured their continued existence, with the relatively calm waters of the Mediterranean serving to accommodate the long-oared ship. Yet, their success in

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[17] BN, français 18153, f. 34, (6 March 1547); for a study of *la Grande Maîtresse* see M. Guérot & B. Liou, *La Grande Maîtresse nef de François Ier* (Paris, 2001).
[18] BN, français 20449, ff. 75-6, (11 August 1547).
[19] Archives Municipales de Nantes, [Impots et Comptabilité] CC384, f. 13, (1550).

northern waters in 1547 confirmed that the French King would retain them for his future activities both in northern and southern Europe.[20] His plans to recommence his father's war with the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V – which would resume in 1551 – resulted in a new galley construction scheme that started almost immediately upon his accession.

On 12 July 1548, Henri began a galley-building programme that intended to maintain a fleet of 40 galleys.[21] This oared fleet was to be predominantly located in the Levant (Mediterranean), where 30 vessels would be situated, whilst the remainder would be based in the Ponant region. Meanwhile, the French King also commissioned the construction of 20 rowbarges for the Mediterranean, which were presumably influenced by the earlier English design.[22] Given his plans to recommence the Italian Wars, Henri conceived southern Europe as a greater threat to national security, and so the larger proportion of his galleys were logically located there. Not only was Charles V a maritime threat in the Mediterranean, but there was also a fear of piracy from the North African corsairs.

Whether Henri II retained any considerable interest in naval expansion in the Ponant after the Scottish expedition of July 1547 is questionable. The Ponant was starved of naval armament when compared to its southern equivalent. In response to a

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[20] L. Sicking, 'Naval Warfare in Europe, *c*. 1330-*c*.1680' in F. Tallett & D.J.B. Trim, ed., *European Warfare, 1350-1750* (Cambridge, 2010), 244.
[21] BN, francais 18153, ff. 38r-40, (12 July 1548).
[22] BN, français 20008, ff. 12-3, (8 July 1582); J. Glete, *Warfare at Sea, 1500-1650: Maritime Conflicts and the Transformation of Europe* (London, 2000), 142-3.

report of January 1549 that eighteen galleys were being maintained in the Ponant, Henri ordered 'que le nombre de dix huict gallaires qu'il entretient de present en lad[ict] mer soit reduict à dix attend quelles sont de grand despense'.[23] In regulating naval strength and prioritising the Levant fleet, Henri was regressing French naval progress on the Atlantic front. This took place whilst galley construction in the Mediterranean continued into the final years of his reign.[24] In many ways this development was contrary to typical maritime progression at the time, for whilst England and the Netherlands were evolving northern Europe into a major frontier for sailing warships, Henri was focusing upon oared architecture in the Levant. This had short-term benefits for France, as it became a considerable military presence at sea, and Henri was able to devise elaborate schemes for the use of galleys in both northern and southern waters.[25] In the long term, however, the reliance upon the Levant galley fleet would serve to hinder France's sea power, when northern Europe was quickly emerging as a significant producer of sailing warships. Having experienced the might of Francis's galleys in the Solent in July 1545, England had no reason to question that France would not send them north again; little did Mary I know that Henri's galleys would be too preoccupied in the Mediterranean to entertain the English on the Channel. An early sign of France's northern maritime weakness would materialise in 1562, when English and Huguenot

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[23] BN, français 18153, f. 52, (6 January 1549).
[24] Archives Nationales, Paris [AN], [Extraits, copies et mémoires] U754, ff. 89-91, (4 January 1556).
[25] BN, français 3050, ff. 108-9, (1 August 1548).

troops captured Le Havre. Without Henri advocating a significant Ponant fleet, it would be difficult for such a force to develop in northern waters with his successors, whilst the political havoc of the Wars of Religion unfolded.[26]

This is not to suggest that the French crown possessed no sailing warships under Henri II. Although records are tenuous, François I's successor inherited - at the very least - seven such ships.[27] Amongst these were *la Grande Maîtresse* (600 *tuns*), *la Cardinale* (300 *tuns*) and several smaller vessels such as *le St. Jehan* (150 *tuns*). On account of their age and fragility, most of these were sold or abandoned in the opening years of his reign – *la Grande Maîtresse* was out of service before July 1557, when she was sold in Marseille – and Henri had a handful of new sailing warships constructed under his command.[28] According to the available records, the warship most regularly equipped for service was *la Grande Carraque* (*c*. 600-800 *tuns*) based at Dieppe. This warship was in service by July 1555 and was still being armed against the English in July 1563.[29] Her regular recording by name in accounts of armament – for the equipping of 'notre navire nommé *la grande Carraque* et autres navires et vaisseaux' – infers that the warship was the largest and most formidable within the fleet.

By 1555, Henri II controlled 40 galleys and a smaller collection of well-armed sailing warships – perhaps as many as 10 or 15 – alongside his rowbarges, which

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[26] A. James, *Navy and Government in Early Modern France, 1572-1661* (Woodbridge, 2004), 11-31.
[27] BN, français 18153, ff. 34-5r, (6 March 1547); BN, Moreau 737, ff. 169-73, (*c*. 1547).
[28] AN, [Parlement de Paris; parlement civil] X^{1A}8621, ff. 218-9, (7 July 1557).
[29] BN, français 21544, f. 28, (23 July 1563).

combined were more than capable of competing with the decayed and quantitatively inferior navy of Marian England.[30] For England as a maritime nation, it was necessary to initiate a naval expansion and maintenance scheme if it was to compete with Henri II's fleets. For if England was caught without an ally, the French crown's two fleets could easily combine and present themselves as a formidable foe in the Ponant.

England's expansion

Since 1551, no new warships had been constructed under the Tudor crown. The kingdom's internal fragility, which had arisen from the Reformation and succession crisis, had diverted the state's attention away from its decaying military resources at sea. This was reflected in the early Marian decision to sell the old hulls of her father's warships the *Grande Mistress*, *Hinde, Unicorn* and *Maidenhead* for a combined value of just £65.[31] At the same time, the sale of the crown's newest naval asset, the *Primrose* (constructed in 1551), for £1000 in 1554, is representative of Mary's general disinterest in her seaborne defences during the early years of her reign.[32] With no apparent intention to initiate a new construction or rebuilding scheme, the early Marian

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[30] Jan Glete has provided similar estimates for Henri II's fleet. J. Glete, *Navies and Nations: Warships, Navies and State Building in Europe and America, 1500-1860*, I, (Stockholm, 1993), 127; Glete, *Warfare at Sea*, 142.

[31] TNA, E351/2195, (29 September 1554-25 December 1555); NEM, 414-23.

[32] Following the *Primrose* being loaned to a group of London merchants in 1553 for an expedition to Guinea, the vessel is likely to have been returned to the monarch in need of repair, and her sale in December 1554 must have been connected to this.

institution appears to have held no ambition to engage in international conflicts, against neither France nor any other power.

It soon became apparent, however, that a royal marriage with Charles V's only son, the future Philip II, was increasingly likely, and this marriage indicated – despite much resistance - that the English monarch was to re-emerge as an active ruler on the European scene. In spite of The Act for the Marriage of Queen Mary to Philip of April 1554 declaring that England was not obliged to provide military support for any of Philip and his father's wars, England's role in Europe was to expand. It had become apparent by as early as autumn 1554 that an alliance with Spain would create an adversary in France. The Anglo-Spanish marriage was a major concern for Henri II, who was fully aware of the ramifications that it could have on the European stage. For Henri, an Anglo-Spanish marriage would hinder his war efforts against Charles, because the possibility of an English threat would force France to stretch its land and sea forces across both northern and southern fronts. The last time France had done this, it surrendered Boulogne to Henry VIII. Although his attempts were futile, Henri II was desperate to prevent English involvement on the continent. He considered supporting the rebels in the Wyatt uprising of 1554, and welcomed into refuge several of its conspirators, once the rebellion had collapsed. The French King became increasingly willing to use all the resources at his disposal that did not ultimately constitute a declaration of war on England, in order to mitigate the capabilities of the royal couple.

This included encouraging piratical activities in the Channel, specifically supporting the work of the notorious English exiles Peter and Henry Killigrew.[33] By the summer of 1556, Peter Killigrew was commanding an insurgent squadron of between six and eight vessels, to England's dismay, along the Channel. One of the vessels, *la Sacrette*, was Henri II's own. Mary and her Council were displeased, and reacted with equal hostility by launching a royal squadron, which attacked and captured the majority of Killigrew's fleet in July 1556. *La Sacrette* was not returned to the French King, but instead integrated into Mary's navy, where it remained until 1559-60.[34] Once defeated, and in the hands of the English authorities, Killigrew claimed that Admiral Gaspard de Coligny had offered him the rank of captain in the French navy, if he could prove himself worthy through his actions in the Channel.[35] In light of Henri II allegedly breaking the peace treaty of 1546 through endorsing these actions, Mary's Privy Council deliberated on whether to declare war on France.[36]

It was in the context of this escalating French hostility that the decision was made to begin the construction of new English warships. There is no evidence to suggest that in the autumn of 1555, when the first timbers of two new warships were laid down, that England was intending to declare war on France because of external

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[33] D. Loades, *England's Maritime Empire: Seapower, Commerce and Policy 1490-1690* (London, 2000), 71-2; Glasgow, 'The Navy in Philip and Mary's War', 324.

[34] TNA, SP 69/9, f. 83, (8 October 1556); TNA, SP 12/3, f. 131, (24 March 1559). The *Sacrett* was most likely scrapped because of her severe decay, which was documented in 1559.

[35] TNA, SP 69/8, f. 182, (19 June 1556); TNA, SP 11/7, f. 106, (July 1556); TNA, SP 11/9, f. 51, (21 August 1556); TNA, SP 11/9, f. 45, (21 August 1556); TNA, SP 11/9, f. 68, (16 September 1556).

[36] The British Library [BL], Caligula EV, ff. 36-9, (*c*. 1556).

pressure from Philip. Indeed, having recovered from her early years of unrest that had witnessed a general neglect of the fleet, the crown now turned to its maritime defence, in light of the anticipated French opposition to the royal marriage. This was exacerbated by two recent events. Firstly, the fragile nature of her transition to the throne had heightened an awareness of the peril to England, should internal rebels be able to combine with international support, as had occurred with Killigrew. Secondly, an attempt to escort Philip to the continent from England in September 1555 had alerted the realm to its restricted state of provisions. The use of the English navy to accompany Philip, and the inadequacies of the old English vessels discovered through their use, would have been a factor in influencing the commission of the large warship frameworks that were constructed in the following months. It was important that their size was to reflect the stature of the monarchy; prestige was a vital trait to include in the construction of national warships. This was reflected in their choice of name: the *Philip and Mary* (450 *tuns*) and the *Mary Rose* (600 *tuns*) were constructed not only to revitalise the English navy with the possibility of conflict on the horizon, but also to celebrate English (and conceivably even Spanish) sea power.

The Queen and her Council were nonetheless aware of Henri's naval capabilities, and had reason to be fearful of them. As early as September 1555, the English Admiralty had realised how vulnerable England's shoreline was to attack, when considering the French fleet that was preparing in Dieppe and Le Havre on account of

Philip's presence in England.[37] It is no wonder that, at the same time, Philip was recommending that England's 'chief defence of the realm' be moved from its docks in London to Portsmouth, 'since their passage out of the River Thames is not easy, [so] the said ships ought to be at Portsmouth, so that from there they can the more easily go forth and serve.'[38] Although there is no evidence to suggest that the subsequent English naval reforms were made under Philip's orders, his presence in England surely had an influence on the decision. The soon to be King of Spain perceived England to be in danger of attack by France and, following the royal marriage, his recommendation to move the fleet to Portsmouth appears to have been designed to entice English naval activity against his enemy. Moreover, the departure of Philip from England later that year - when 15 of Mary's warships and 2800 men were employed for five weeks to transport the King to the Netherlands at a cost of at least £9600 to the English crown (total naval expenditure for 1555 reached £26,524) - and the immediate decision to commence a new naval construction scheme for the first time in almost five-years cannot be unconnected.[39] Philip's presence in England whilst his war with France was on-going, must have provided England with the reality check required to advance its military capabilities at sea.

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[37] BL, Otho EIX, f. 97, (24 September 1555).
[38] TNA, SP 11/6, f.26, (1555). Translated in TEM, 306-7.
[39] TNA, SP 11/6, f. 100, (18 November 1555); TNA, E351/2195, (29 September 1554-25 December 1555); TEM, 414-23.

Around the turn of 1555-56, Mary increased the number of warships commissioned for construction to three. The third, once completed, would be named the *Golden Lion* (500 *tuns*). There is little doubt that these warships would have been built under the pressure of impending war with France, which was officially declared in May 1557.[40] At this point, the navy's treasurer, Benjamin Gonson, was provided with a by-annual payment of £7000 for its ordinary upkeep.[41] Despite this reform, either war erupted earlier than the Council of Marine Causes anticipated, or Mary's new warships were delayed, because none of them were launched in time for the first campaign in the summer of 1557.[42] It was not until 29 December that the first of these warships, the *Philip and Mary,* is recorded as being prepared, alongside twelve additional royal vessels, to patrol the Narrow Seas.[43] Although her counterparts were all completed shortly after, it was not until May of the following year that they were first prepared together.[44] By this stage, a surprise land offensive at Calais in January ended England's continental possessions. With her new warships complete, in June, Mary and her Council planned to retaliate with a huge seaborne offensive on Brittany, that consisted

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[40] BL, Caligula EV, f. 40, (May 1557).
[41] TEM, 309-10.
[42] TNA, SP 11/10, f. 84, (29 May 1557); Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge [PL] 2875, ff. 13-4, (29 May 1557).
[43] TNA, SP 11/11, f. 141, (29 December 1557).
[44] TNA, SP 11/13, f. 19, (22 May 1558).

of 89 royal and privately owned vessels, and a further 60 smaller ships for victualing.[45]

Assembling this fleet would prove pointless, as it was eventually divided into squadrons in May, in accordance with French military operations that had dispersed to Dunkirk, Brest and the Channel.[46] The majority of the Queen's warships (including those three newly built) were ordered to return to Portsmouth and await further instructions.[47]

Altogether, the naval campaigns of Mary I achieved nothing of value. Unable to be forecast, Henri II's forces were too preoccupied with the Imperial conflict on land, and in the Mediterranean, to dedicate significant resources to counter Mary's developing maritime resources. France's response in the north, then, was one conducted largely through private warfare, and England failed to take advantage of this situation by taking the naval offensive. The war was, however, fundamentally important, for it acted as the stimulus for reviving the English navy, and although the fleet at Portsmouth in June 1558 would not have been as impressive as the English equivalent thirteen-years earlier, it nevertheless possessed new blood in the form of both its men and warships. Both the logistical programme for Elizabethan expansion and the strategic thinking that underpinned it had been adumbrated within the previous reign.

Before her death on 17 November 1558, Mary had introduced three large warships into her navy, alongside a handful of pinnaces. Moreover, sometime in her

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[45] TEM, 358-63; considering that a proportionate number of these vessels were present solely for victualing, David Loades is likely to be correct that this fleet in truth consisted of around 55 warships. Loades, *The Tudor Navy*, 173.

[46] TNA, SP 11/13, ff. 5, 14, 19, (11 May 1558-22 May 1558).

[47] TNA, SP 11/13, f. 17, (22 May 1558).

final months – possibly during the main campaigning season of 1558 – an additional vessel had begun its construction at Woolwich that when nearing completion would be recorded as 800 *tuns*.[48] This vessel – that was formerly to be named after her brother – continued in its production after Elizabeth's succession. When just months away from her launch, the Book of Sea Causes (a thorough report on the navy's existing condition) produced on 24 March 1559, declared that, as the largest warship of Elizabeth's early fleet, the new vessel would hold 550 men.[49] Elizabeth was to show through the Book of Sea Causes, that even during the opening years of her reign, she was willing to not only continue, but also expand on her sister's redevelopment programme. This detailed survey of the navy and its ordnance acknowledged that Elizabeth's predecessors had witnessed the decay of the English fleet, in spite of Mary's reforms surrounding the French war. It declared that only 22 of the Queen's warships – including the yet unfinished 800 *tun* unnamed ship at Woolwich – were serviceable and suitable 'to be kept and preserved for the service of Her Majesty'.[50] Meanwhile, a further ten including the *Sacrett* and the experienced and aged *Salamander* 'be very much worn and of no continuance without great repairations'. The extent of their damage appeared so extreme that it was recommended that they be sold for profit.

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[48] TNA, SP 12/3, f. 131, (24 March 1559).
[49] TNA, SP 12/3, ff. 131,133, (24 March 1559).
[50] TNA, SP 12/3, f. 131, (24 March 1559).

Elizabeth appears to have listened to this advice, for action was swiftly taken to improve the state of the navy, for along with the dismissal of several recommended warships in a poor condition, by 1561 seven new vessels had been integrated into her navy. This included the 800 *tun* warship that started its construction under Mary I. London merchant, Henry Machyn recorded in his diary how on 'the iij day of July [1559] (the) Quene('s) grace toke her barge at Grenwyche unto Wolwyche to her nuw shype, and ther yt was namyd Elesabeth Jon[as,] and after here grace had a goodly bankett, and ther was grett shutyng of gunes…for plesur.'[51] Although named after the new Queen, this warship was Mary I's final contribution to the navy. Mary's legacy for the English navy was to inspire her sister to continue constructing warships of a similar size to the *Elizabeth Jonas*: three further warships of around an equal size would be constructed for Elizabeth's navy before the signing of the Treaty of Troyes on 11 April 1564, which officially concluded Anglo-French hostilities.

Mary's overall contribution to the English navy was considerable, both through what she achieved in her final years, and through what she inspired her successor to continue. In less than three years, Mary reformed her navy's financial administration through providing it with a by-annual income. She also commenced the construction of four large warships and several pinnaces, and also began to rebuild the decaying fleet. The *Jennet* and the *Swallow*, both of 200 *tuns*, were reconstructed during the Marian

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[51] Nichols, ed., *The Diary of Henry Machyn*, 203.

French war.[52] Both Mary and her sister also integrated several captured French prizes into their fleets. Elizabeth's Book of Sea Causes, then, should not only be perceived as a reflection of the navy's deterioration prior to 1558; it should also serve as a reminder of the steps made under Mary I's reign for the navy's progression. After all, over one-quarter of the warships that were declared serviceable in 1559, had been newly made or repaired between 1555-58.

The naval advancements coordinated during the first decade of Elizabeth's reign did not indicate a shift in policy from that of her sister, but instead suggest a continuation of it. The Book of Sea Causes serves as a mid-season report on the progression and restoration of England's military forces at sea within the continuing context of conflict with France. The Elizabethan naval developments initiated from 1559 were not a new phase in English construction, but were a consolidation of measures that were already in place, and were gradually gathering momentum.

As with the Marian commissioned *Elizabeth Jonas*, no definitive date has appeared that determines exactly when, under Elizabeth, the decision was made to commission the construction of a series of new warships for her navy. It is nevertheless a fair assumption that the intention to bolster the English fleet with new vessels had been well established with the Book of Sea Causes. This document declared that in selling the decayed warships within her fleet, 'with [these] charges being so saved,

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[52] Glasgow, 'The Navy in Philip and Mary's War', 328.

wilbe a great helpe towarde the making of the New Shipps.'[53] This concept of out with the old and in with the new was strictly followed. On 30 September 1562, Francis Lee of Rotherhithe paid £80 for the 140 *tun Jerfalcon*.[54] The very same day the annual Quarterly Accounts recorded the official launching of Elizabeth's first sister ships: the *Triumph* and the *Victory*.[55] Both warships were constructed at Deptford – the naval epicentre of the English fleet until Chatham later replaced Deptford in this role – and were a considerable burden to the year's revenue, when the annual total expenditure of the navy reached £25,951 16s 2d 'where of 12,000l is of the ordenary yerely assignment and the rest encreased by reson of the newe making of two greate shippes this yere and by provision of cordage and sayle canvas bought and provided for store.'[56] Considering that the *Triumph* was some 200 *tuns* larger than her sister ship, it is likely that a record dated 13 January 1561, stored at Hatfield House that reports the *Triumph*'s cost at £3788 – whilst excluding certain necessary amenities such as sails and other fittings – is conservative in its estimate.[57] Two years later, Elizabeth would also launch the *White Bear*, of a comparatively colossal size to the *Triumph*.[58] Without even considering the rebuilds, prizes or smaller ship constructions that were introduced from 1555-64, Mary

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[53] TNA, SP 12/3, f.131, (24 March 1559).
[54] TNA, E351/2199, (1 January 1563-31 December 1563); C.S. Knighton & D. Loades eds., *Elizabethan Naval Administration* (Cornwall, 2013) [referred to as ENA for here], 516-46; Bodleian Library, Oxford [referred to as Bodleian from here] MS Rawlinson A.200, f. 3, (30 September 1562).
[55] Bodleian MS Rawlinson A.200, f. 29, (30 September 1562).
[56] TNA, E351/2198, (1 January 1562-31 December 1562).
[57] *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. The Marquis of Salisbury,* I (London, 1883), 264. For this reason it is possible that this lower value sum may in fact be better suited to the *Victory*.
[58] TNA, E351/2200, (1 January 1564-31 December 1564).

and Elizabeth would oversee the introduction of seven, 450 *tun* or larger warships into the English navy during the French wars.

It is equally important to consider the Elizabethan naval developments within the context of the on-going French conflict. In a change of heart, Mary and her Council were considering opportunities for peace with France during the final months of her life, and Elizabeth I was eager to conclude her sister's regrettable conflict, especially if the restoration of Calais was on the negotiating table.[59] This is far from saying, however, that the relationship between England and France, from the signing of the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis in April 1559 to the Huguenot-English pact in September 1562, was one of complete harmony.[60] Secretly state-endorsed hostile actions, hidden behind a veil of deceit, would remain present during this period of supposed tranquillity, leaving both kingdoms with little reason to doubt that their neighbour across the Channel remained a threat to the state. This anxiety that animated Marian naval expansion, would continue to be the formative factor for the development of the fleet in early Elizabethan England. Of these instances, the most important to emphasise surrounds the marriage of the young Francis II to Mary Queen of Scots in April 1558. To England's dismay, the marriage that had strengthened the Auld Alliance permitted French garrisons to situate themselves in Scotland. Elizabeth and her Council notably felt considerable unease towards the French threat materialising north of the border, and on 16 December 1559

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[59] BL, Caligula EV, ff. 41-2, 44-5, 60-1, (23 November 1558-20 January 1559).
[60] BL, Stowe 132, ff. 51-5, (12 March 1558).

reacted by ordering William Winter to patrol the Firth of Forth.[61] Winter was to intercept French shipping with a fleet of 34 vessels, and was commanded to act 'as though on his own initiative', in doing so formally disassociating his actions from Elizabeth's command. If Winter's activity was officially state-endorsed it would serve to breach the peace, and would have provided France with the justification to use its forces stationed in Scotland, against England. By 22 January 1560, Winter's fleet was blockading the northern waters, preventing the communication of the French garrison stationed at Leith with Fife, which would quickly become a stronghold for the Lords of the Congregation.[62] Whilst situated there, Winter captured two of the French crown's galleys, which were integrated into the English fleet as the *Tryright* and the *Speedwell*.[63] It was with the knowledge of this English success, and the awareness of the possible French repercussions produced from English involvement, that the decision was made to begin the construction of the *Triumph* and the *Victory* in the spring-summer of that year.

Nor were Elizabeth's new warships limited to her three giants: the *Triumph, Victory* and *White Bear*. On 6 October 1562, the 300 *tun Aid* was launched at Deptford, and was victualed for service by the end of the year.[64] The *Aid* would accompany the 400 *tun Hope* produced in 1560, alongside a number of short-lived smaller brigantines,

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[61] TNA, SP 12/7, f. 171, (16 December 1559); BL, Caligula BX, ff. 65-6, (16 December 1559).
[62] J. E. A. Dawson, 'William Cecil and the British Dimension of Early Elizabethan Foreign Policy', *The Journal of the Historical Association*, 74, no. 241 (1989), 209-11.
[63] TNA, E351/2358, (1 January 1559-1 January 1561).
[64] TNA, SP 12/26, f.27, (17 December 1562).

and pinnaces, such as the *Post* and the *Makeshift*. The new energy represented by this expansion was necessary with a French war on the horizon. By the end of September 1562, Elizabeth had signed the Treaty of Hampton Court with the Huguenot leader, the Prince of Condé. In exchange for economic aid and 3000 English troops, the Huguenots supplied the port town of Le Havre to the Queen as a pledge for the return of Calais. This pact had repercussions for the English when, on 19 March 1563, the Edict of Amboise was signed concluding the first French War of Religion, and leaving English troops stranded, and in a very difficult position in northern France. With French internal hostilities temporarily resolved, Catherine de Medici was free to apply the French military's attention to the unwelcome English presence that occupied Le Havre. The Queen Mother ordered an army to assemble around Le Havre, and requested that the inhabitants of Dieppe 'armer et equipper ung bon nombre de navires et à se mectre en mer pour deffendre les subjectz du Roy'.[65] Meanwhile, the Channel was experiencing a particularly foul bout of weather, causing the English navy a number of difficulties in sustaining the Le Havre expedition. In April, whilst sailing to Portsmouth, a tempest caused the *Greyhound* to founder off the coast of Rye, along with most of her 120-man crew, including her captain John Malyn.[66] This was just one sign that it was time for the English to retreat from Le Havre and, by the spring, an army of 16,000 French, German

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[65] AN, Marine G193, ff. 53-4, 55-6, (13 May 1563-1 June 1563); BN, français 17832, ff. 4r-5r, 24r-5, (13 May 1563-6 October 1563).
[66] Bodl. MS Rawlinson A.200, ff.330v, 334, 340, (1 January 1562-31 December 1563); ENA, 464-5, 471, 481; Glasgow, 'The Navy in the Le Havre expedition', 288.

and Swiss mercenaries had surrounded the town, putting the English garrison placed there in a complex position, given that the Queen's warships could not compete against the forces on land. The decision was made, therefore, on 28 July 1563, to abandon the French town, and eagerly await the signing of the Treaty of Troyes of April 1564.[67] Despite the navy's preparations, the Le Havre expedition was a conflict that 'could not be won at sea', for it was land forces, not ship-power, that caused the ultimate failure of Elizabeth's exploits in France.[68]

Elizabeth's large warships, that played such a prominent role during her early construction programme, found limited use during the Le Havre expedition beyond patrolling the Narrow Seas. In fact, perhaps the only occasion when they could have served to relieve the Le Havre garrison came in July 1563; at which point it was too late. When a relief fleet assembled consisting of three galleys, three brigantines, the *Elizabethan Jonas, Victory, Lion* and the *Philip and Mary,* it arrived at Le Havre to discover that Ambrose Dudley, the Earl of Warwick and commander of the Le Havre expedition, had already surrendered.[69] Instead, with the narrow waterways of northern France preventing the use of the largest of the Tudor warships, it was the smaller sailing and oared vessels of Elizabeth's fleet that would be of greater use in complementing the English war effort. Yet, Elizabeth and Mary controlled a very small number of oared

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[67] BL, Caligula EV, ff. 216-20, (27 April 1564).
[68] Loades, *The Tudor Navy*, 215.
[69] Glasgow, 'The Navy in the Le Havre Expedition', 291-2.

vessels when compared to the French competition. These were restricted to the *Red Galley* – the renamed *Galley Subtle* constructed in July 1543 – which had fallen into disuse under the two queens and was decommissioned prior to 1564, and the *Black Galley*, which was a French prize captured in late 1548.[70] The *Black Galley* was also last recorded as a part of the English fleet in 1564.[71] Finally, there were the French prizes collected under Elizabeth; these included the *Speedwell,* the *Tryright*, and the *Galley Eleanor*, which was received in 1562 from the Prince of Condé as part of the Treaty of Hampton Court.[72] Additionally, both Elizabeth and her sister constructed several smaller brigantines and pinnaces that could have used oars for more effective manoeuvrability in the narrow channels of northern France. These included the *Post*, the *Search,* the *Guide* and the *Makeshift,* and all of which were designed for travel in the French waters, and were considered expendable, for none would be in the service of the Queen by 1570. Although the navy was not the pivotal military resource that the Marian and early Elizabethan regimes desired, there is little doubt that the French wars bolstered the number of vessels that England possessed, even if several of these vessels served only for a short-time.

It is important to emphasise that, by expanding the fleet to include an increased number of smaller vessels that could use oars, England was adapting to the enemy that

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[70] TNA, SP 1/180, f. 57, (11 July 1543); C.S. Knighton & D. Loades, eds., *The Anthony Roll of Henry VIII's Navy* (Cambridge, 2000), 73.
[71] TNA, SP 10/7, f.37, (12 May 1549).
[72] The *Galley Eleanor* was retained by the English in the following year on account of the Huguenots dishonouring the treaty.

it was encountering. Henri II's expansion of his galley fleet and his employment of rowbarges, forced England to alter its fleet so that it could compete on similar terms. By focusing its offensive efforts upon France's northern coast, and in particular upon Le Havre from 1562-63, England also designed several vessels that were sleek, nimble, cost-effective and highly manoeuvrable to navigate the narrow waterways.[73] This restricted the larger warships constructed, including the *Elizabeth Jonas* and the *Victory* to patrolling and defending the Narrow Seas, and to transporting goods between England and the garrison at Le Havre.

For the aspiring English dream of continental power, the French wars were a total failure. The loss of Calais and the retreat from Le Havre caused Elizabethan England to begin to accept its status as an island state that held no land on the continent. In terms of naval power, however, the years 1555-64 were pivotal in reminding the realm that, as an island, it was also a sea power. Writing to the Queen on 28 April 1560, Nicholas Throckmorton summarised this developing attitude most appropriately:

> The greatest defence you have is the sea, which being the wall of your
> Realme is cheefely to be gardyd. And therfor seing your Majeste hathe no
> sure meanes for landing on this syde [France]… great regard is to be had to
> kepe them from landing in your Realme whereunto nothing can so well

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[73] T. Glasgow Jnr, 'Oared Vessels in the Elizabethan Navy', *The Mariner's Mirror*, 52, no. 4 (1966), 371-77.

serve, as to contynewe your navye strong and by the advise of the wise, and

experienced men of your Realme, to devise means how the same may be

maintayned and increasyd.[74]

Concluding remarks

Although the Spanish War and the celebrated 1588 Armada is often claimed to have

witnessed the emergence of England as a naval power, this article has argued that it was

during the years that surrounded the French wars from 1555-64, that the English navy

truly came into its own. The French wars were without doubt a total failure for the

kingdom's continental ambitions, yet they encouraged the redevelopment of the English

fleet. Although under Mary, the English navy's revival was in reaction to the French

threat, during the early years of Elizabeth's reign its purpose was refined as a deliberate,

and permanent, form of defence. Many of the warships constructed in these years would

act as a vital component of the English fleet of 1588. Mary I's three large warships, the

Philip and Mary, the *Mary Rose* and the *Golden Lion*, were evidently well constructed,

for all three were in service in 1588; the *Mary Rose* may not have required refitting until

as late as 1589.[75]

By the end of the Tudor dynasty, the crown and kingdom could praise its royal

warships, which included five vessels that were estimated at 800 *tons* or more. Four of

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[74] TNA, SP 70/13, f. 229v, (28 April 1560); Rodger, *Safeguard of the Seas*, 196.
[75] BL, Egerton MS2541, f. 1, (*c*.1588).

these – the *Triumph,* the *Elizabeth* [Jonas], the *White Bear* and the *Victory* – were built prior to 1564, whilst the fifth, the *Ark Royal*, was purchased from Sir Walter Raleigh in 1587.[76] This suggests that, after 1564, Elizabeth I's desire for large and imposing warships began to fade, as defence became her strategic priority.[77] This was likely influenced by two factors. Firstly, 1564 marked the end of the Anglo-French wars, and France ceased to be a major threat to English defence thereafter because of its own internal instability. With England's traditional adversary impaired and distracted, Elizabethan England entered a twenty-year period where its presence in continental conflicts remained minimal. Secondly, the influence of Sir John Hawkins in the Council of Marine Causes from 1570, resulted in the backing of the smaller and sleeker race-built galleon model, which caused a natural reduction in the size of warships integrated into the Elizabethan navy.[78]

It is important to take into account that, although the early modern spectator was unlikely to have been aware of it at the time, England was consolidating its naval forces from the late 1550s, whilst the French navy was gradually declining. Despite Henri II's naval resources being superior to the English equivalent in 1555, by 1564 this balance had been reversed. It is likely that the quantitative demise of the French navy occurred in the years after Henri death, when the French navy encountered both civil and

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[76] BL, Otho EIX, f. 94, (*c*.1603).

[77] Rodger, *Safeguard of the Seas*, 197.

[78] Although Hawkins was not appointed treasurer of the council until 1577, he had an influence on naval affairs several years prior to this.

international warfare. By 1566, France's naval resources in the Ponant were insignificant; the King's warships may have totalled as little as five.[79] Even in the Levant, where Henri II's fleet had been proportionately superior, it is unlikely that the crown's galleys amounted to more than ten.[80] With the French kingdom experiencing a bloody civil war, and with its navy impaired, the French state would not be a threat to the English at sea for some time to come. This decline in France does not serve to disprove that English naval advancement was a product of the French threat, for the initial stimulus that triggered English developments in the mid-sixteenth century had already transpired before the reduction in French naval strength was obvious for contemporary statesmen to observe.

France's naval weakness after 1564 does correlate with an English decline in the use of oared vessels. The reduced presence of oared vessels in northern waters, following France's naval deterioration, diminished the necessity for English galleys to be maintained. Only the *Eleanor* was used after 1564, and it was not until the final years of Elizabeth's reign that the questionable decision was made to construct five galleys for the English fleet again. After the Le Havre expedition, English galleys found little purpose in a maritime world where the theatre of war was placed at a substantial distance from the English shoreline. Galleys were designed to travel short distances, and to manoeuvre in tricky waterways. Once France was no longer England's adversary,

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[79] AN, Marine C^{1}193, f. 3, (1566).
[80] AN, Marine B^{6}1, ff. 10-12, (13 August 1564).

they became largely obsolete along the Channel. As travel across the Atlantic became more regular, and a new emerging enemy was found in southern rather than northern Europe, it became increasingly necessary for the English navy to incorporate more effective sailing warships into its fleet.

The relationship between England and France was fundamental in shaping England's navy. Declaring war against France in 1557, Mary I and her Council were aware of the improvements that were required to the Queen's ships, if they were to compete against the might of Henri II's warships. Equally, the early Elizabethan policy for the navy was to continue Mary's design by ensuring a permanent force was maintained. Both monarchs, then, constructed both large and small warships, whilst rebuilding older vessels, and also integrating French prizes such as the *Sacrett* into the fleet. This was important, for it meant that, when peace with France was concluded with the Treaty of Troyes, the Elizabethan navy did not have to be completely rebuilt from scratch, but instead by looking beyond the horizon as opposed to the other side of the Channel, it could be gradually remodelled and improved. Consequently, without the French wars of 1557-64, it is unlikely that the fighting strength of the English navy would have been up to the task of facing the might of Spain at sea.