

History: Unit 2
Lesson 5 of 30

What challenges did Elizabeth face from abroad?



**What were the traditional
relationships in Europe in the
16th century?**



England's relations with France before 1558

England and France had been traditional enemies for hundreds of years. Between 1337 and 1450 they fought the Hundred Years' War over which kingdom had the right to rule France. By the beginning of the Tudor dynasty, the only area of France still controlled by England the port of **Calais**, an important trading post. Henry VIII fought several battles against France during his reign, and captured small areas in the north of the country. Much of this land was lost during **Edward VI's** reign (1557-1553). **Mary I** also fought a war against France in the 1550s and lost control of **Calais**.

By the time Elizabeth came to the throne in 1558, France were on the verge of a Civil War over religious issues. French Catholics and Huguenots (French Protestants) were fighting against each other for control.



England's relations with Scotland before 1558

Like France, Scotland had been a traditional enemy of the English. France and Scotland had a long history of friendship, which was known as the **Auld Alliance**. France would often support Scottish defense against the English, and there were several battles between England and Scotland during the Tudor period (especially under **Henry VIII**, 1509-1547).



England's relations with Spain before 1558

Tudor relations with Spain had been changeable. During the reign of **Henry VII**, Arthur Tudor, the heir to the English throne, had married **Catherine of Aragon**, a Spanish Princess. Arthur died at the age of 15 in 1502, so the heir to the throne was Prince Henry. When Prince Henry became King Henry VIII in 1509, he married Catherine of Aragon. The Queen of England was therefore Spanish. Henry and Catherine were married until, in 1533, he broke with the Roman Catholic church so he could divorce her. This put strain on England and Spain's relationship, due to the divorce but also because Spain was a Catholic country.

However, **Mary I** married **Philip II** of Spain in 1554. Mary supported Spain in their war against France, and after some heavy defeats, England lost the port of **Calais**.



England's relations with the Papal States before 1558

The **Papal States** were the areas of Italy where the **Pope** (head of the Roman Catholic Church) lived and still lives today. Spain had a lot of influence over the Papal States in the 1520s-1530s, so when Henry VIII asked permission to divorce the Spanish Queen of England, Catherine of Aragon, the Pope said no. This meant that Henry VIII broke with the Catholic Church to form a new **Church of England**. Therefore, the relationship between England and the Pope in the Papal states had been strained. As a result, Henry was **excommunicated** from the Catholic church. This meant he was exiled and Catholics in England now had permission from the Pope to reject their King's authority.



What challenges did Elizabeth face from abroad on her accession in 1558?



Elizabeth's challenges from abroad at the beginning of her reign

When Elizabeth became Queen in 1558, she made changes to the church. In summary, she reinstated (brought back) the Protestant leaning Church of England (created by Henry VIII, developed by Edward VI and reversed by Mary I) and herself as leader of the church.

It might have been expected that Catholic countries such as Spain, France and the Papal states would have reacted negatively to this. However, for about the first 8-10 years of Elizabeth's reign, their reaction was muted. They hoped that Elizabeth's changes would be temporary. Philip II was also particularly interested in being on good terms with Elizabeth at the beginning.



Elizabeth's challenges from abroad at the beginning of her reign

The issues began for Elizabeth when the Catholic Queen **Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots (Scotland)** arrived in England in 1568. She was Elizabeth's second cousin and was related to Henry VIII. Her arrival provided hope for many Catholics living in England and abroad that Mary Stuart could replace Elizabeth and reverse the Protestant changes that she had made. In the year after Mary's arrival in England there was a rebellion by two Northern Earls (you will learn about this in later lessons). Mary's presence in England therefore sparked potential rebellion. European countries also supported Mary in Catholic plots against Elizabeth.

Another concern of Elizabeth's was that Spain and France were no longer at war, and that Mary, although Queen of Scotland, was also half French. Elizabeth was worried that they might turn against her.



Glossary

Calais - a port in the North West of France that had been owned by England from 1347 until it was lost under Mary I in 1558.

Auld Alliance - A treaty between Scotland and France to support each other's defences against English invasion

Papal States - States in Italy that were controlled by the Pope

Pope - The head of the Roman Catholic church

Church of England - a new Christian church created by Henry VIII in 1533 that had Protestant leanings and rejected the authority of the Pope in England



Questions - let's test your understanding!

1. What was England's traditional relationship with France and Scotland before Elizabeth's reign?
2. What was England's relationship with the Papal States like before Elizabeth's reign?
3. What was England's relationship with Spain at the beginning of 1558?
4. How did European countries react to Elizabeth becoming Queen in 1558 and the religious changes she made?
5. Why was the arrival of Mary, Queen of Scots in 1568 a threat?

Challenge yourself: Historians often claim that England was not a big power in Europe during the 1500s. Do you agree or disagree?

