

Foreign policy

Aims:

What were Wolsey's motives and aims in foreign policy? Three arguments are put forward:

- Pollard argued that Wolsey's personal ambition in the Church affected foreign policy
 - He 'aimed to hitch England to the Holy See'
 - He would become first cardinal, then legate and then pope
 - However this failed as Henry paid close attention to the details of diplomacy, so Wolsey could not control policy to his advantage
- Scarisbrick argues that Wolsey sought peace for two reasons: 'war was the quickest way to lose money' and he was influenced by human principles.
 - 1518 Treaty of London, tripartite conference at Calais and meeting with Charles V is evidence of peaceful intentions
 - England went to war twice, but the situation had made war inevitable – it wasn't Wolsey's choice.
- Bernard, Gywn and Doran object to Scarisbrick, saying Wolsey conducted an opportunistic foreign policy and shared Henry's aims. He wanted to bring 'glory and honour to his master'. It veered between peace and war depending on:
 - European situation
 - Reliability of allies
 - Ability to raise an army

This view is supported by:

- Wolsey was actively trying to check French power in Italy and in 1520 to secure an Imperial alliance
- He was only trying to win time, and not peace, but delaying war at Bruges and tripartite conference at Calais
- He was actively involved in military preparations

Peace 1514 – 1522

Henry and Wolsey practised a foreign policy aimed at keeping peace in Europe, which they saw to be of advantage to England:

- 1415: Louis XII of France died, ending entente between France and England
 - Succeeded by Francis I
 - He quickly showed his strength at Milan 1515 defeating the Swiss
- Henry was keen to build up a coalition against France
 - However, Charles of Burgundy and Spain signed Treaty of Noyon with France (1516)
 - Maximillian signed Peace of Cambrai with France (1517)
- England was isolated and Wolsey was forced into negotiations with Francis
- In October 1518, Wolsey and Henry organised a European peace with Treaty of London and guaranteed peace with Francis on favourable terms:
 - Henry's daughter, Mary, was to marry the dauphin
 - Francis promised not to stir trouble in Scotland.

- Charles won Imperial election, becoming the most powerful European ruler
 - Francis felt challenged and prepared for war
 - Both Francis and Charles wanted to ensure Henry would support them against the other
 - June 1520: Henry met with Francis at the Field of Cloth of Gold
 - July 1520: Henry met with Charles and promised not to ally with Francis
- 1521: War between Francis and Charles
 - Henry offered to act as an arbiter between the two warring kings
 - August 1521: conference at Calais with French
 - However, Wolsey negotiated a treaty with Charles with joined England to the Imperial camp against Francis

Three reasons for Henry's alliance with Charles against France have been put forward:

- Wernham suggests that Henry was anxious to marry his daughter to Charles and cement England to the most powerful country in Europe
- Neutrality did not appeal to Henry and Charles looked most likely to win the war
 - Henry might gain new lands in France and increase his prestige
- The pope encouraged an Anglo-Imperial alliance
 - Henry would be seen as the saviour of Christendom and gain favour with the pope
 - Wolsey would increase his standing in the Church

War 1522 – 1524

- May 1522: war declared on France
 - Surrey invaded northern France with 15,000
 - However, he was unsupported by Charles and had little success
 - Henry began to lose confidence in the Imperial alliance
- However, 1523 Bourbon rebellion against Francis reopened chance for invasion of France
 - A new treaty was signed with Charles and massive combined invasion was planned
- 1523: Suffolk invaded with 11,000 men from Calais
 - However, the campaign was disastrous:
 - Bourbon failed to deliver a revolt
 - Charles did not open an offensive
 - The severe weather hampered the invasion
- 1524: Henry began looking for peace with France
- However, Francis was defeated by Charles at Pavia
 - Wolsey drew up new plans for invasion of France
 - But this plan was abandoned when the funds couldn't be raised (failure of Amicable Grant)

A change of alliance 1525

- 1525: Henry was ready to make peace with France:
 - England was having no success in the fighting
 - Charles refused to share the gains he made of Pavia and would not marry Mary
- Wolsey and Henry started negotiations in August
 - England signed Treaty of More with France
 - 1527 Treaty of Westminster ensured peace
- 1526: England, France and Italian states formed anti-Imperial League of Cognac
 - Henry did not want to see Imperial dominance of Europe and a marginalised England

The Divorce 1527

Summer 1527, Henry had a new priority, to secure a divorce with Catherine of Aragon:

- However, Pope Clement VII was a prisoner of Charles following the sack of Rome in May 1527
 - Henry needed to break Imperial stranglehold of Italy to win favour with the pope
 - August 1527 he entered a military alliance with France against Charles at Amiens
- However, France was defeated at Landriano in 1529, and the chance of England being successful disappeared
- Treaty of Cambrai (August 1529) was signed between Francis, Charles and the pope
 - England was left isolated
 - This failure arguably led to Wolsey's downfall in October 1529