

The relationship between king and minister was close, with John Guy arguing that 'It is true that Wolsey enjoyed exceptional favour and for a while his position was different. Between 1515 and 1525 it can be argued that Henry treated him more as a partner than a servant. Wolsey enjoyed a uniquely privileged access to the king. They walked arm-in-arm together and were intimate confidantes to the exclusion of others.' ('Wolsey, Cromwell and the Reform of Government', *ibid.*, page 36.) However, despite this, Wolsey was aware that his position and security depended upon pleasing the king. This was even more important given his humble background and the unpopularity of many of his policies with the nobility (see pages 64–5).

Activity

1 Using the information on pages 55–56, copy and complete the following chart to explain why Wolsey rose to power by 1514. You should:

- explain how each factor caused his rise
- award each a mark out of 10 for how important its role was in his rise; the higher the mark the more important the factor
- explain why you have given the factor this mark.

Factor	Explanation of role	Mark/10	Explanation of mark

2 Put the factors in order of importance and explain your order.

How successful was Henry VIII's foreign policy in the period to 1529?

In order to determine how successful Henry's foreign policy was it is important to determine his aims. Although these changed during his reign, there is little doubt that at the start of the period Henry wanted to assert himself, demonstrate that England was a major power and achieve glory and honour. The easiest way to do this was by war, and it is therefore not surprising that his early years were dominated by an aggressive policy (see pages 53–55). However, the means by which Henry showed his power changed, and some have argued that this reflected the influence of his advisor Thomas Wolsey. Scarisbrick, in his biography of Henry VIII, argued that Wolsey pursued a more peaceful policy because England simply could not afford war, as it did not have the resources of France or Spain. This interpretation argues that glory was to be achieved through a series of treaties and meetings which would allow Henry to establish his reputation as 'the most godliest prince that ever reigned'. Henry was also concerned to secure the succession and his dynasty. He believed that his early marriage to Catherine would help to secure the succession and that the marriage of his sister Mary to Louis XII of France would help secure the dynasty. However, unlike his father, Henry VIII was less concerned about trade, although he was concerned to maintain good relations with the Netherlands as the English cloth trade was dominated by Antwerp. Historians such as Pollard have argued that Henry also had imperial ambitions and wanted to unite England and Scotland, but this view has been largely discredited and it is more likely that he was more concerned to subdue Scotland so as to protect England from invasion through the 'backdoor' or 'postern gate'.

Charles I of Spain as Holy Roman Emperor in 1519. This shifted the balance of power dramatically and forced Wolsey to work even harder to maintain England's position in European affairs.

The Field of Cloth of Gold, 1520

Wolsey continued England's peaceful foreign policy, although both Francis and Charles were eager to secure England as an ally before war between the two broke out and this somewhat strengthened England's position. Charles visited England in May 1520 and then Henry met Francis just outside Calais in June. These meetings ensured Henry remained at the centre of the European stage and his desire for prestige was further enhanced by the meeting with Francis, just outside Calais, at what became known as the Field of Cloth of Gold. The magnificence of the occasion was most clearly represented by the palace that was constructed for Henry and his courtiers and described as one of the wonders of the age. However, it achieved nothing of diplomatic value, cost a year's income and was probably little more than a two-week jousting match. If the aim had been to reinforce the Treaty of London, that also failed, as within two years England and France were at war. The lack of significance of the meeting was even more obvious when Henry met Charles again and agreed not to make a separate peace with France. Moreover, Wolsey's attempt to act as a counterweight between Francis and Charles had failed as the two were at war as early as 1521, a clear sign that England was not strong enough either diplomatically or militarily.

War with France

The weakness of England became even more obvious in the period 1521–22. In 1521, under the terms of the Treaty of Bruges, Wolsey agreed with the emperor to invade France unless France made peace with Charles. If Wolsey genuinely believed that the threat of an English declaration of war would restore peace he was mistaken. England was forced to send an army to France in 1523. However, Charles soon abandoned his ally, as he was more concerned with recapturing Milan, and the English army returned in disarray. Not only was any prestige Henry had gained as a peace-maker lost, but it had cost £400,000 – a year's income. As a result, Wolsey was soon forced to seek peace.

However, the international situation soon changed. Charles not only captured Milan, but at the Battle of Pavia in February 1525, he captured Francis. This was a crushing victory and Henry saw it as the ideal opportunity to assert his claim to the French throne. Wolsey was ordered to raise the required funds, but the heavy taxation of the previous campaigns meant that he was unable to raise the taxes and the plan had to be abandoned (see page 63). Charles also refused to attack France and annulled the planned marriage between himself and Henry's daughter, Mary, as he no longer needed Henry's support. Once again, England's lack of financial muscle had shown that it simply lacked the resources to be anything more than a minor player in Europe.

A diplomatic revolution?

Henry's plans were in tatters and, just as importantly for Wolsey, he had failed to serve the king. The failure to secure support from Charles for an invasion of France resulted in a change of policy. In August 1525 England signed a treaty of friendship with France, the Treaty of the More. Wolsey now pursued an anti-Imperial alliance in northern Italy during 1526. The League of Cognac

To consider

How successful had Henry's foreign policy been by 1519?

Treaty of the More

The Treaty of the More was a series of agreements signed with France. Henry gave up his claim to the French throne in return for an annual pension. England worked with France to try to prevent Charles V's domination of Europe, seen in League of Cognac.

Early campaigns in France, 1512–14

The early years brought Henry limited success (see pages 54–55). However, the campaigns did satisfy the king's desire for military glory and valour. The peace treaty with France also allowed Wolsey to secure some gains, keeping the land Henry had captured, restoring the French pension and arranging the marriage of Mary to Louis. Despite this, it can be argued that it was the defeat of the Scots at the Battle of Flodden that was more impressive. England had been able to raise a second army and kill both the Scottish king and a large number of nobles while securing the northern border.

English policy, 1515–21

Although Henry still desired a policy that would bring glory, England's treasury was almost empty. However, Wolsey was aware that if he wanted to retain the king's favour he had to provide him with success and prestige. At first Wolsey was unable to achieve much and his position was made even more difficult due to a change in the European situation by 1519. Within four years, 1515–19, there was a new ruler in France, Francis I, and a new Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. Both of these rulers were, like Henry, young and wanted to assert themselves, but unlike Henry they had the resources and England would not be able to challenge them in battle. England's position was further weakened when Francis encouraged the Duke of Suffolk to marry Henry's sister, Mary, when he travelled to France to accompany her back to England following the death of her husband. This was a loss of face for Henry as the king's sister had married a non-royal without permission, a man Henry trusted, while also depriving him of the opportunity to use her in the marriage market. England's position was weakened still further in 1515 with the French victory at Marignano, which gave France control of Milan. In response, Henry ordered Wolsey to construct an anti-French alliance, but the death of Ferdinand of Aragon and the accession of Charles I resulted in a peace treaty between France and Spain, which was soon joined by the Emperor Maximilian, leaving England on the sidelines of European affairs. This forced England to seek peace with France and ultimately led to the Treaty of London.

Unable to enhance his reputation through war, Henry turned to peace-making. Although it is unclear who suggested this method of enhancing his reputation, there is little doubt that Wolsey exploited the opportunity, at least in the short term. Wolsey was able to hijack a papal initiative to raise troops to fight the Turks and turn it into an international peace treaty known as the Treaty of London. This was signed in London in October 1518, and Wolsey was able to make Henry appear to be the pivotal power as each country signed separately with England. This brought glory for Henry, as England was seen to be at the centre of diplomatic activity and appeared to be leading Europe towards peace, with over twenty European rulers signing it.

Historians have disagreed in their interpretations, with Crowson describing it as 'not an empty gesture of self-advertisement. It contained detailed agreements which implied serious intent and it was given the sort of sequel which a continuing struggle for peace might be expected to require'. However, T.A. Morris has challenged this view and argued that the Treaty was 'wholly at the mercy of great power politics over which England exercised no control'. Wolsey also sacrificed earlier gains by returning Tournai to the French as part of the deal. Moreover, the agreement was further undermined by the election of

Francis I, 1494–1547

Like Henry VIII he was a Renaissance prince who ran an extravagant court. He was involved in a life-long rivalry with Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, and this resulted in frequent wars in Italy.

Charles V, 1500–58

Charles V became King of Spain in 1517, but was also elected Holy Roman Emperor in 1519. This made him the most powerful ruler in Europe, controlling not only Spain, but the Netherlands and much of modern-day Germany, Italy, Austria and Hungary. He was also the uncle of Catherine of Aragon.

Charles I
power dr:
England's

The Fie

Wolsey co
and Char
two brok
visited Br
Calais in
the Euro
meeting
Field of C
represent
and desc
of diplom
a two-we
London,
The lack
met Cha
Moreove
Charles I
England

War w

The weal
In 1521,
emperor
genuinel
restore p
in 1523.
with reca
was any
£400,000

Howev
captured
Francis.
opportu
raise the
meant th
abandon
the plan
no longe
muscle h
than a r

A diplc

Henry's p
to serve t
France re
of friend
anti-imp

was established to try to reverse the French defeat at Pavia and England joined the League as a 'protector'. The alliance with France was reinforced in 1527 with the signing of the Anglo-French Treaty of Westminster and was soon followed by the Treaty of Amiens, an Anglo-French agreement to attack Charles. An English declaration of war against Spain followed in 1528, but no army was raised and care was taken to make a separate agreement to protect English trade in the Netherlands. It appeared as if England was playing a more significant role in European affairs. However, the war between Francis and Charles ended in 1529 with the Treaty of Cambrai and it was only at the last minute that England was invited to join these peace negotiations, suggesting that in reality English influence was limited.

Foreign policy and the king's 'Great Matter'

The change of direction in English foreign policy was badly timed. At the very moment England moved to a pro-French policy, the king's 'Great Matter' – securing an **annulment** of his marriage from Catherine of Aragon – began to dominate policy (see pages 66–69). Although it appeared to be a domestic issue, its outcome was determined by events in Europe. Catherine of Aragon was Charles' aunt and in 1527 his army had sacked Rome and captured the pope. This meant that the pope, who in normal circumstances might have agreed to the annulment, was not free to make a decision and was under pressure from Charles to decline the request. The only way to change the situation was through the alliance with France and military victory. However, the policy was a failure. At home it provoked protests from the cloth industry because of the suspension of trade with the Netherlands. Despite early French victories in 1528, they were defeated at the Battle of Landriano and the pope and Francis made peace with Charles at the treaties of Barcelona and Cambrai respectively. This meant that Henry was isolated diplomatically and the chance of gaining the support of the pope was gone. The international situation meant that Wolsey faced an impossible task.

Who was responsible for English foreign policy?

There has been much debate among historians as to who was responsible for the direction and conduct of foreign policy in this period. Some have argued that it was Wolsey who directed affairs, forcing a peace policy on a reluctant monarch and using this peace to try to forward his own cause and be appointed pope. However, even if Henry did not have a great interest in the day-to-day running of the kingdom, he was interested in ships, war and foreign affairs, particularly when it came to his divorce. Although the two men discussed foreign affairs, it was Henry who was the creator of foreign policy and wanted war against France, abandoning it reluctantly only when there was a lack of money, but still demanding that his prestige remained. Wolsey had to provide the details and ensure that the ultimate goals were achieved, which has given the impression to some historians that he was in charge. Wolsey may have gained prestige from the policy, but there is little doubt that he had to do as Henry wanted, hence the diplomatic revolution after Charles' victory at Pavia.

Activi

- 1 How In or which judg Use com glori aim – ar

Air

Mil

- 2 Nov

- 3 In o succ con This

Event

Truce

First F

Treaty

Field

Treaty

Secor

Pavia

Diplo

Divor

How

Wolsey historic in this because person: domest not it is to sugg noticea ■ lega ■ fina ■ soci ■ adn ■ rela