

# War and politics in the Elizabethan counties



NEIL YOUNGER

War and politics  
in the Elizabethan counties



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## List of abbreviations

|  |  |
|--|--|
| APC  | J. R. Dasent (ed.), <i>Acts of the Privy Council of England</i> , new series vols I-XXXII (1890–1907).   |
| BIHR   | <i>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</i>  |
| BL   | British Library  |
| Add.   | Additional Manuscripts   |
| Harleian                                     | Harleian Manuscripts   |
| Lansdowne                                    | Lansdowne Manuscripts  |
| Boynton, <i>Militia</i>                      | Lindsay Boynton, <i>The Elizabethan Militia 1558–1638</i> (1971).  |
| Braddick,<br>'Upon this<br>instant'          | M. J. Braddick, "Upon this instant extraordinarie occasion": military mobilization in Yorkshire before and after the Armada', <i>Huntington Library Quarterly</i> 61 (1998), 429–55.     |
| Cambridgeshire<br>LL                         | E. J. Bourgeois (ed.), <i>A Cambridgeshire Lieutenancy Letterbook, 1595–1605</i> (Cambridgeshire Records Society, 12, 1997).   |
| Chamberlain<br>Letters                       | Sarah Williams (ed.), <i>Letters written by John Chamberlain During the Reign of Queen Elizabeth</i> (Camden old series 79, 1861).   |
| Cheshire LB                                  | Lieutenancy book of Sir Hugh Cholmondeley: Cheshire RO, DDX 358/1.   |
| Clark, <i>English<br/>Provincial Society</i> | Peter Clark, <i>English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution</i> (Hassocks, Sussex, 1977)   |
| CP   | Cecil Papers, Hatfield House   |
| CSPD   | <i>Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series of the Reign of Elizabeth I, 1547–1603</i> , ed. R. Lemon and M. A. E. Green (6 vols, 1856–70).   |
| CSPF   | <i>Calendar of State Papers preserved in the Public Record Office, Foreign Series. Elizabeth I. 1558–1589</i> (23 vols, 1863–1950).  |
| CSP Spanish                                  | <i>Calendar of Letters and State Papers relating to English Affairs Preserved in ... Simancas III: Elizabeth, 1580–1586</i> , ed. M. A. S. Hume (1896).                                  |
| 'Derbyshire'<br>Musters                      | W. A. Carrington (ed.), 'Papers relating to Derbyshire musters temp. Q. Elizabeth ...', <i>Journal of the Derbyshire Archaeological and Natural History Society</i> , XVII (1895), 1–48. |
| EHR  | <i>English Historical Review</i>   |
| FSL  | Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington DC  |
| Gloucester LB                                | Gloucester Lieutenancy Book: Gloucestershire RO, GBR H2/1  |
| Hammer,<br><i>Elizabeth's Wars</i>           | Paul E. J. Hammer, <i>Elizabeth's Wars. War, Government and Society in Tudor England, 1544–1604</i> (Basingstoke, 2003).   |
| Hasler,<br>Commons                           | P. W. Hasler (ed.), <i>The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1558–1603</i> (3 vols, 1981).   |
| Herts Musters                                | A. J. King (ed.), <i>Muster Books for North and East Hertfordshire</i>   |

*List of abbreviations*

- 1580–1605 (Hertfordshire Record Society 12, 1996).
- HEHL Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
- HMC Historical Manuscripts Commission
- L & A* *List and Analysis of State Papers, Foreign Series, Elizabeth I*, ed. R. B. Wernham (7 vols, 1969–2001).
- Lancashire* J. Harland (ed.), *The Lancashire Lieutenancy under the Tudors and*  
*Lieutenancy Stuarts* (2 vols, Chetham Society 49 and 50, 1859).
- Leveson Papers Staffordshire Record Office, papers of Sir John Leveson,  
D593/S/4
- Loseley Surrey History Centre, Loseley manuscripts
- LPL Lambeth Palace Library
- Nathaniel Bacon* *The Papers of Nathaniel Bacon of Stiffkey vols III, IV*, ed. A. H.  
*Papers* Smith *et al.* (Norfolk Record Society, 53 (1990), 64 (2000)).
- Northamptonshire* J. Goring and J. Wake (eds), *Northamptonshire Lieutenancy Papers*  
*LP* *and Other Documents 1580–1614* (Northamptonshire Record  
Society 27, 1975).
- ODNB Colin Matthew and Brian Harrison (eds), *The Oxford Dictionary*  
*of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).
- RO Record Office
- RS Record Society
- Smith, *County* A. Hassell Smith, *County and Court: Government and Politics in*  
*and Court Norfolk, 1558–1603* (Oxford, 1974).
- Smith, ‘Militia A. H. Smith, ‘Militia rates and militia statutes 1558–1663’ in P.  
rates and Clark, A. G. R. Smith and N. Tyacke (eds), *The English Common-*  
statutes’ *wealth 1547–1640. Essays in Politics and Society Presented to Joel*  
*Hurstfield* (Leicester, 1979).
- SP The National Archives, State Papers
- STC *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland and*  
*Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475–1640*, compiled  
by A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, revised and enlarged by W.  
A. Jackson, F. S. Ferguson and K. F. Pantzer (3 vols, 1986–91)
- Surrey LB Surrey History Centre, LM/2046
- TNA The National Archives of the UK (Public Record Office)
- TRHS *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society.*
- Tudor Royal* P. L. Hughes and J. F. Larkin (eds), *Tudor Royal Proclamations* (3  
*Proclamations* vols, New Haven and London, 1969).
- Twysden LP* G. Scott Thomson (ed.), *The Twysden Lieutenancy Papers 1583–*  
*1668* (Kent Records 10, 1926).
- Wernham, *After* R. B. Wernham, *After the Armada. Elizabethan England and the*  
*Struggle for Western Europe 1588–1595* (Oxford, 1984).
- Wernham, R. B. Wernham, *The Return of the Armadas. The Last Years of the*  
*Return Elizabethan Wars Against Spain, 1595–1603* (Oxford, 1994).
- Younger, Neil Younger, ‘William Lambarde on the politics of enforcement  
‘Lambarde’ in Elizabethan England’, *Historical Research*, 83 (2010), 69–82.

*List of abbreviations*

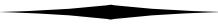
CONVENTIONS

Unless otherwise stated, all places of publication are London.

Quotations are given in the original spelling, but standard contractions are silently expanded, and the use of i/j, u/v and y are all modernised, as are capitalisation and (where necessary) punctuation.

## Introduction

### War and the Elizabethan state



From July 1585 until the end of Elizabeth I's reign, England was at war. These eighteen years of continual warfare dominated the final period of the Queen's reign, presenting one of the most severe political and governmental challenges faced by the regime, testing the Elizabethan state perhaps almost to its limits. This book argues that the impact of the wars is a vital component of our understanding of later Elizabethan England in several different contexts.

The wars of 1585–1603 were a complex, interlinked and multifaceted conflict involving all of the major powers of western Europe, yet they are not well known; they have never attained an overarching identity as a canonical 'war', have no all-encompassing name or an accepted decision as to who won. From the English point of view, they can be seen as turning on two primary conflicts. Firstly, this was a war with Spain, in which Elizabeth's regime sought to counter a Spanish threat to England. This was manifested most obviously in various Spanish invasion attempts (most famously in 1588), but it was also played out at sea and in English attacks on Spain itself. As an extension of this strategic imperative, England also sought to prevent Spanish control of territory within its immediate geopolitical region, from where attacks on England itself might be launched. To this end, England provided military support to the Dutch rebels, later the United Provinces, in their war for independence from the Spanish crown, and to Henry of Navarre, later Henry IV, in his successful bid to win the French throne against Spanish-backed ultra-Catholic forces.

English strategy on the Continent was at heart defensive, seeking primarily to guarantee its own security. It was also essentially reactive, driven by responses to Dutch or Huguenot crises, Spanish or Leaguer offensives, in an effort to prop up allies whilst limiting the extent of its commitment. This was never a strategy of conquest, but one of support to allies, and in particular of defending strategic points in allies' territory.<sup>1</sup> Thus the war was entered into largely to preserve the Dutch from collapse in 1585, and to prevent an aggressive Catholic regime being established throughout the Netherlands; the aid to Henry of Navarre, from 1589 to 1597, had the same aim with regard to France. The war-effort was always perceived in terms of immediate and short-term needs, rarely as a long-term commitment.<sup>2</sup> There was a continuing readiness

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on the English part to discuss peace – in 1588, 1593–94, 1598, 1599–1600 and 1602.<sup>3</sup>

The second conflict was an attempt to put down rebellion in Ireland, which began in response to the uprising led from 1595 by Hugh O'Neill, earl of Tyrone, supported at times by Spain. Here there was a more definite goal: the crushing of rebellion, the ejection of Spanish troops, and the pacifying of the whole island under restored English authority. This objective required the regime to take the initiative decisively, and by the climactic years of 1598–1602, with the commitment of what were by Elizabethan standards huge resources, this was done. These two conflicts were linked in several ways: firstly, by Spanish intervention in Ireland, notably at Kinsale in 1601–02; secondly, by the threat of other such landings, potentially as a first step to an attack on England itself; and, thirdly, by the belief that a comprehensive peace could not be made with Spain until Ireland was settled, something which deferred the end of the war until shortly after Elizabeth's own death in March 1603.

The essentially defensive aims of the war notwithstanding, Elizabeth was several times persuaded that the best form of defence lay in taking the war to the enemy. The various offensive operations against Spain – Drake's attack on Cadiz in 1587, the Portugal voyage of 1589, and the Cadiz and Islands voyages of 1596 and 1597 respectively – had a mixed record of success, but at their best were extremely good value for money.<sup>4</sup> Most of these demanded large numbers of troops. Aside from these ventures, the war was always played out with reference to the geopolitics of England's immediate surroundings, to prevent hostile powers from controlling territory from which England itself might be threatened or harried: primarily the north coast of France and the Netherlands. Although some, such as the second earl of Essex, favoured more aggressive strategies, even dreaming of bringing the Spanish monarchy to its knees, this view never commanded a majority of support on the council and certainly never persuaded the Queen.<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth never sought to defeat Spain – merely to fend it off. This was the very antithesis of strategic overreach.

To a large extent, these circumstances and tendencies dictated both the choices made in foreign policy and the domestic responses. This war was always a reluctant war, and there was always a hope that its end was on the horizon; in no sense did Elizabeth's regime plan in 1585 for eighteen years of warfare. Consequently there was little effort to prepare the country for a long conflict, nor was any point reached at which such a decision was made. Whereas rulers with consciously aggressive foreign policies such as Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden or Louis XIV of France, or rulers who, like Philip II of Spain, were resigned to effectively continual warfare, naturally sought to shape their states accordingly, the Elizabethan state's default mode was always peaceful. This goes a long way to explaining the nature of the domestic war effort, in the same way that the ongoing assumption that England's primary

defence was the navy dictated that body's professionalised organisation and central funding.

Naturally, the war demanded considerable expenditure of resources. Some of these were raised in what is regarded as a 'modern' way, through imposing taxation granted by Parliament on the people, collecting the money and then disbursing it through professional royal officials. However several significant parts of the war effort, primarily the provision of troops to serve overseas and the defence of the realm by the militia, were entrusted to civilian-run methods of government, most notably the lord lieutenancies in the counties. Thus whilst much of the state's military machinery was professional, at the points where the demands of war touched the population, administration was local and amateur. The response to these tasks form the principal matter of this book. These are often regarded as being purely administrative, technocratic issues; yet such administration was deeply political. It was the stuff of parliamentary uproar, of protest and persuasion, and potentially the cause of rebellion; ultimately, under Elizabeth's successors, it contributed towards the breakdown of the relationship between crown and people which resulted in civil war. This book seeks to analyse these essentially military problems within the contexts of the wider political world in which they were played out and of the wider problems faced by the regime, especially the problem of religious division.

Thus [chapter 1](#) examines the regime's creation of structures for the running of the local war effort, notably the lord lieutenancies, whilst placing them within the broader context of the political, religious and governmental challenges faced by the regime. [Chapter 2](#) explores the issue of running the war as a political problem, primarily in terms of the need to maintain broad national support for the war, and examines the extent of resistance or opposition faced by the regime. In [chapters 3–5](#), these overarching themes are applied to the practical realities of the war effort, through case-studies of the three most important elements of the counties' contribution towards the war: the militia, troop levies and the funding of this work through local taxation.

The coverage, inevitably, is dictated primarily by the availability of sources. The sources for this study derive from two principal archives. The archives of central government contain tremendous amounts of material on local affairs: as well as the formal records of government, there are vast quantities of correspondence, reports and petitions from the counties. Secondly, the sources generated by local government itself have been explored as fully as possible, most importantly the records of the lord lieutenancies, the central institution used by the regime to run local military affairs and extract resources from the counties. However, the lieutenancies, like many of the local structures involved in the war effort, were very ad hoc in their operation, and had no formal record-keeping practices. The survival of records therefore depended

on the initiative of individual local governors (or, sometimes, towns), and consequently the survival of these records is patchy and uneven. Thus, while sources have been taken from wherever they are available, certain counties are covered more fully than others. Amongst these, Kent should be singled out; the archive of Sir John Leveson is uniquely full and rich both in the 'formal' records of local government – letters and warrants from Queen, council and lord lieutenant, muster rolls and certificates, accounts and so on – but also in the informal or semi-formal correspondence between local officials which is often much more revealing about the reality of government on the ground.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, whilst this study seeks to range as widely as possible, Kent is more fully represented than anywhere else.

### THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE ELIZABETHAN WARS

Although the later part of Elizabeth's reign has always tended to be neglected by comparison with the earlier, the war has been widely regarded as significant in several different historiographical contexts: those of both national and local politics and government; of military practice and development; of the development of the state; and of the long-term factors which led, in the seventeenth century, to the English Civil War.

Along with perennial problems over religion and the succession, the war was the most prominent issue in national politics from 1585 until the end of the reign. The decision about whether to intervene in the Netherlands at all had been a major debate for many years prior to 1585, and the Queen had almost been persuaded to approve a formal intervention in 1576; Lord Burghley, for one, knew that to enter the war would mean that England would have to 'sustayn a gretar warr, than ever in any memory of man it hath done'.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the decision as to whether to continue with war or make peace dominated much of the political debate of the period, more than ever during the ascendancy of the earl of Essex in the mid- to late 1590s. Ministers had to balance the demands of the international situation and the threats to England with the strain being placed on the nation's finances, its resources, and – above all, perhaps – its resolve to continue.

Yet the impact of the war was surely felt most heavily in the local context. During this period, military business was perhaps the most time-consuming and expensive aspect of county affairs, only rivalled by the maintenance of social order.<sup>8</sup> The war had a real impact on every level and every sector of society: nobility and gentry, yeomen and cottagers, clergy and lay; whether they served or commanded in the militia, were recruited to fight overseas, or merely contributed towards the costs. The military system affected more Elizabethan people than any other sphere of government, more than the taxation system, more even than the justice system. A reconstruction of how it did

so is therefore necessary to a complete picture of Elizabethan government and society.

As such, military administration is an important way into the world of governing the Elizabethan counties and presents important opportunities to assess local as well as national government and how well it worked. It is argued in this book that in most ways the local end of the war effort worked much better than it has usually been given credit for. A re-examination of these issues changes our picture of the period significantly and has relevance for ongoing debates concerning the nature of relations between the centre and the localities, the political culture of early modern local society and questions of localism and the county community, and the capability – even viability – of the English state, as we will see.

The military context of the war effort is also crucial; this was a very long period of warfare, by far the longest fought by a Tudor monarch, and it came in a period of rapid change in military practice, one which is sometimes regarded as a military revolution. England's engagement with these changes was always limited by its isolation from European land borders and its focus on the navy, but it could not ignore them entirely. The struggles of the regime to accommodate its military structures to these changes represented a major challenge.

These latter perspectives are both relevant in a further current of research, since the wars – indeed, war in general – is seen as a key driver of 'state formation', as a force pushing the state towards greater development, centralisation and 'modernisation'. This approach has an uneasy relationship with more avowedly political approaches to the period, particularly with reference to the problems of the early seventeenth century, but it has provided an important new way to examine the wider impact of warfare in early modern polities.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, it is above all in the integration of these national, local and military contexts that the impact of war is most relevant, since of course all three were in reality part of a single society, a single state, and a single political community. This book seeks to integrate the war into our understanding of all of these aspects.

It presents a less negative picture of the war than many historians have traditionally painted. Elizabethan military history (though not naval history) has until recently suffered from what Paul Hammer has called a 'small and consistently negative' literature, and the study of warfare remains a neglected and unfashionable topic, although not to the extent it once was.<sup>10</sup> This is especially the case with regard to those elements of the military machinery which were the responsibility of the counties. Thus Cruickshank, McGurk and Bradick have argued that troop levies for service overseas were almost invariably badly chosen and poorly equipped, composed of the dregs of the counties. Boynton and Hassell Smith painted a picture of a militia which, while not without some successes, notably through the creation of the trained bands,

was equally badly equipped, little trained and in Smith's words, a 'pathetically small achievement'. The overall military effort is regarded as having fallen short in almost every way.<sup>11</sup>

This picture of the military outcomes of the counties' efforts is matched and explained by assumptions about the nation's attitude to the war in general. These focus on the attitudes of county gentry, which, it is argued, were deeply hostile to the war, primarily because it forced the regime to lay heavy and expensive burdens on the counties for troop-raising, musters and so on. Thus, when the gentry, in their roles as local officials, were called upon to administer these duties, their responses were at best lacklustre, reluctant and penny-pinching. These attitudes are seen as growing more pronounced as the war continued and became, as the 1590s progressed, yet more demanding, such that war-weariness in the counties severely restricted the ability of the regime to prosecute its policies and the council found it increasingly difficult to manage the country. Such an argument is made with varying force and nuance, but, reflecting the interpretation presented in Hassell Smith's highly influential study of Elizabethan Norfolk, has for many years been taken to be the dominant note of the public's response to the war. Thus we read that in Kent 'grievances were now two-a-penny'; 'continuous requests for men to serve abroad drained the patience of deputy lieutenants'; 'the strain on the counties led to administrative breakdowns and opposition to central government's demands'.<sup>12</sup>

This interpretation can be traced to a confluence of several streams of historiography. One is the poor historical reputation of the Elizabethan armed forces. A second is the 'county community' school of early modern English historiography, which argued (especially with reference to the early seventeenth century) that the English gentry had intensely local political horizons and were little interested in national concerns; the demands of a foreign war, in this context, were irrelevant and unwelcome intrusions in the local communities of England, and the gentry's response focused on minimising the war's impact on their communities.<sup>13</sup>

A third is the influence of those who have looked at the late Elizabethan period in search of the origins of the civil war, an approach which is not necessarily very helpful for studying the Elizabethan polity on its own terms. Many historians have identified elements of breakdown in the functioning of the English state under James I and Charles I, so it is logical to see how far these have Elizabethan origins. This is especially the case since Hassell Smith, for example, saw the emergence of a divide within the Norfolk gentry between those who supported the court and those who sought to defend the county, with the latter employing arguments about the constitution to resist government demands.<sup>14</sup> Here, the 1590s provide an important point of comparison with periods of warfare in the 1620s and indeed the late 1630s and 1640s.

To an extent, these perspectives feed off each other; thus, if the county community school saw increasing alienation between court and country during the war, then this both explains and is supported by claims that English government was showing signs of incipient breakdown in the same period. Indeed, the war period is often seen as the beginnings of the breakdown of the early seventeenth century; historians have pointed to ‘the disintegration of the Elizabethan settlement, c. 1595–1612’, or ‘the breakdown of the Elizabethan system 1585–1642’.<sup>15</sup> In a different perspective again, Conrad Russell saw the 1590s as the beginnings of the impact of the ‘military revolution’ on England and in particular English government finance, in which Elizabeth ‘failed to get her income to keep up with new patterns of warfare ... two of her main sources of income, the crown lands and parliamentary subsidies, were near the point of collapse’, a problem which had a direct impact on the deeply problematic relationships of James I and Charles I with their Parliaments and on subsequent wartime political crises in the 1620s and 1640s.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, many of these streams come together in the notion, popularised by Peter Clark, of a ‘crisis of the 1590s’ in England (and indeed in Europe) caused by the stresses of war combined with social problems such as poverty, disease and dearth and political problems such as an ageing Queen and a government divided by faction.<sup>17</sup> This has all contributed to the tendency on the part of historians to regard the latter part of Elizabeth’s reign with a certain amount of distaste, as a confusing, troublesome and ill-tempered period of local, national and international strife. As twenty-five years of peace came to an end, taxes rose, ministers aged, wearied and died and Elizabeth herself grew old, the period has been seen as a twilit *fin-de-siècle*, overshadowed by factional struggle at court. That certain of these years (though by no means all of them) coincided with outbreaks of plague and deteriorating living standards brought on by poor harvests, whilst coincidental, has been conflated with political difficulties to create a myth of the ‘nasty nineties’. The occasionally melancholy writings and speeches of the Queen and certain of her ministers, notably Burghley, have provided plenty of meat for historians who choose to emphasise this aspect of the reign.

Yet this is inevitably a caricature, and has always been difficult to reconcile with other important aspects of these years: the notable victories at home and abroad, the continuity of effective government, and above all the remarkable stability of the polity. Indeed many of these very negative assessments are in some ways problematic. They fit somewhat awkwardly with the fact that, in an age in which warfare prompted bankruptcy and governmental collapse all over Europe, Elizabethan England not only survived this remarkably long war intact, untroubled by rebellion and fiscally solvent, but emerged having achieved the various aims which drew it into the war in the first place. The insistence on an almost unremittingly negative attitude to the war is also

surprising, since historians of other periods have often seen foreign wars as occasioning patriotism and support for the government. Historians of the Elizabethan wars, however, emphasise instead the burdens of war and the weariness of the people. It is argued below that this is an incomplete picture of the national mood of the period.

In response to some of these difficulties, many of the perspectives described above have more recently shifted in significant ways. The 'county community' interpretation has been largely discredited by historians' recognition that early modern English people were in fact intensely interested in affairs beyond their own counties.<sup>18</sup> The reputation of Elizabethan military capacity has also improved, with recent historians often pointing out that shortcomings in the Elizabethan system, whilst glaring by modern standards, were often replicated in contemporary European armies.<sup>19</sup> The conclusions reached here find much to support these views. There is no doubt that the Elizabethan system had many flaws and often produced poor quality results, but equally, I argue, those shortcomings are often exaggerated or generalised. This book does not seek to claim that there were no complaints, no problems or no war-weariness in the counties; there clearly were. The question is whether the period was dominated by such problems, and it is argued here that they should not be taken to represent the whole story, either of popular attitudes to the war or of the work of the Elizabethan military system. Many of the achievements of the Elizabethan system were impressive, and indeed the picture described above begs the question of how, in the face of such supposed weakness, the council managed to keep the war effort running for so long without large-scale and widespread suspensions of cooperation, something which no historian has been able to identify. The time is ripe for a reassessment of the Elizabethan war effort more broadly.

Therefore, whilst this is fundamentally a study of processes which were carried out locally, on the level of county and below, this book aims to offer as complete and wide-ranging a picture of the domestic impact of the war as possible. To a large extent, this is intended to be an account of the Elizabethan war effort, and central to this account is the question of how the regime, as ramshackle, underdeveloped and underfunded as it often seemed, managed to conduct a war which was broadly successful in its objectives for so many years with so little domestic unrest. The ways in which Elizabeth's regime responded to these problems reveal a great deal about the regime itself: how it worked, how well it worked, and how the political nation operated in a context which involved all of the Queen's subjects.

## NOTES

- 1 See R. B. Wernham, 'Elizabethan war aims and strategy' in S. T. Bindoff, J. Hurstfield and C. H. Williams (eds), *Elizabethan Government and Society: Essays Presented to Sir John Neale* (1961), 340–68, at 340–7.
- 2 Cf. Penry Williams, *The Later Tudors: England 1547–1603* (Oxford, 1995), 329; Wallace T. MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth I: War and Politics 1588–1603* (Princeton, 1992), 568.
- 3 On 1588, see Wallace T. MacCaffrey, *Queen Elizabeth and the Making of Policy 1572–1588* (Princeton, 1981), 391–99; Conyers Read, *Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth* (1960), 396–407. On 1593–94: Wernham, *Return*, 8–15. On 1598: Read, *Burghley*, 542–5. On 1599–1600, Wernham, *Return*, chapter 20; Pauline Croft, 'Rex Pacificus, Robert Cecil, and the 1604 peace with Spain' in Glenn Burgess, Rowland Wymer and Jason Lawrence (eds), *The Accession of James I: Historical and Cultural Consequences* (Basingstoke, 2006). On 1602, H. S. Scott (ed.), 'The journal of Sir Roger Wilbraham, solicitor-general in Ireland and master of requests for the years 1593–1616', *Camden Miscellany* 10 (Camden 3rd series, 4, 1902), 49–50.
- 4 Wernham, 'Elizabethan war aims', 361–7.
- 5 Hammer, *Elizabeth's Wars*, 1–2.
- 6 Staffordshire RO, D593 and D868; the main section of lieutenantancy papers, D593/S/4, is referred to as 'Leveson Papers' throughout.
- 7 Simon Adams, 'Elizabeth I and the sovereignty of the Netherlands 1576–1585', *TRHS*, 6th series, 14 (2004), 309–319. SP 103/33/58, fol. 147r. (quote).
- 8 This is based on an admittedly impressionistic survey of the papers of officials closely involved in military business such as Leveson.
- 9 For these perspectives, see Michael J. Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England c.1550–1700* (Cambridge, 2000); Braddick, 'State formation and the historiography of early modern England', *History Compass* 2 (2004), 1–17; Jan Glete, *War and the State in Early Modern Europe: Spain, the Dutch Republic and Sweden as Fiscal-Military States, 1500–1660* (2002).
- 10 Hammer, *Elizabeth's Wars*, 7.
- 11 C. G. Cruickshank, *Elizabeth's Army* (2nd edn, Oxford, 1966); Smith, *County and Court*; John McGurk, *The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland: The 1590s Crisis* (Manchester, 1997); Braddick, *State Formation*, chapter 5; Boynton, *Militia*; Smith, 'Militia rates and statutes', 93 (quote). This is also reflected in broader surveys influenced by this research, such as Robert Ashton, *Reformation and Revolution 1558–1660* (1984), 127–33. These perspectives are also considered in more detail below.
- 12 F. C. Dietz, *English Public Finance 1558–1641* (2nd edn, 1964), 57–8, 65–6, 95–6; Smith, *County and Court*; Clark, *English Provincial Society*, 221–6 (first quote at 223), 249; Penry Williams, 'The crown and the counties' in Christopher Haigh (ed.), *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (Basingstoke, 1984), 129–31 (second quote at 130); John Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford, 1988), 387–8 (third quote at 388); MacCaffrey, *War and Politics*, 68; Wernham, *Return*, 207, 211; John Guy, 'Introduction. The 1590s: the second reign of Elizabeth I?' in Guy (ed.), *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade* (Oxford, 1995), 1; Williams, *Later Tudors*, 382–3; McGurk, *Elizabethan Conquest*, esp. 99–100. An assumption of the gentry's reluctance to implement government demands also underpins the analysis of the militia in Boynton, *Militia*.

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- 13 This interpretation is summarised and critiqued in Clive Holmes, 'The county community in Stuart historiography', *Journal of British Studies* 19 (1980), 54–73.
- 14 Smith, *County and Court*, esp. chapters 6, 13. Smith's 'country opposition' has, however, been treated with more scepticism than his overall assessment of the local responses to government policies: see Williams, 'The crown and the counties', 138–9; Guy, *Tudor England*, 388–9; Guy, *Reign of Elizabeth*, 10.
- 15 Chapter titles in Robert Ashton, *Reformation and Revolution 1558–1660* (1984) and Alan G. R. Smith, *The Emergence of a Nation State: The Commonwealth of England 1529–1660* (Harlow, 1984).
- 16 Conrad Russell, *James VI and I and His English Parliaments: The Trevelyan Lectures Delivered at the University of Cambridge 1995*, ed. Richard Cust and Andrew Thrush (Oxford, 2011), 2.
- 17 Clark, *English Provincial Society*, chapters 7–8; Clark (ed.), *The European Crisis of the 1590s* (1985); an essentially similar case is made in Guy (ed.), *Reign of Elizabeth*.
- 18 See Holmes, 'The county community'.
- 19 Hammer, *Elizabeth's Wars*; John S. Nolan, 'The militarization of the Elizabethan state', *Journal of Military History* 58 (1994), 391–420.

## Chapter 1

# Constructing a Protestant regime The machinery of the Elizabethan war effort in the counties

In December 1591, the privy council issued letters to the county commissioners responsible for detecting Jesuits and Catholic priests ‘coming of malicious purpose to seduce divers of her Majesty’s subjectes from their duties and due obedience to God and her Majestie, to renounce their alleageance, and to adhere to the Pope and King of Spaine’. The council asked whether any existing commissioners were ‘not so sownde in dutie and religion towards God and hir Majestie as is to be required’, and whether they could suggest others more suitable for the task.<sup>1</sup> Writing to a fellow JP in response to this, William Lambarde, the antiquary and Kent JP, laid out his views on the sort of people he thought would be appropriate commissioners. Such men, he said,

ought to be, not only no papistes, but no Libertines or Atheistes, whoe are (next to the papistes) the most daungerous; by cause as the Rommistes desyre a change, so these Epicureans care not for the present estate, persuading them selves that by that even hand which they beare, all mutations (I meane touching religion) will beare with them. They must be protestantes therfore, and the same so zelous, that may thynk them selves to be in daunger of squysing, by the ruine of the present government, if it should fall upon them.<sup>2</sup>

‘The ruine of the present government’ was an appalling prospect indeed: the collapse of the Elizabethan regime, potentially the extinction of English Protestantism – this was the fate Lambarde was referring to. As historians are increasingly becoming aware, the vulnerability of the political-religious dispensation in operation under Elizabeth I was a preoccupation of many within the higher levels of her regime.<sup>3</sup> As Lambarde makes clear here, these concerns were shared by many of the Elizabethan local elites too. It is easy to regard Lambarde as a quintessentially local figure: a diligent Kent JP, committed to the welfare of the local society which his papers reveal him to have known and supervised with extraordinary care and detail.<sup>4</sup> But Lambarde was also a part of a wider political community; a correspondent of Burghley and Archbishop

Parker, he held minor office within the central government and appeared in the London law courts. He straddled the gap between London and his county better than most, and his letters show how far he held similar views to those at the centre of the regime.<sup>5</sup>

As Lambarde knew, the Elizabethan regime was in a very deep sense a Protestant one; Patrick Collinson has referred to it as ‘the Protestant state’, ‘for that is what it was, and in a partisan and prejudicial rather than consensual sense’.<sup>6</sup> It operated on the assumption that its position was weak and its future far from secure. The country was deeply divided in religion, and the Elizabethan settlement was accepted by only a proportion of the population. In the wake of the collapse of two short-lived and ultimately unsuccessful regimes in 1553 and 1558, events which Elizabeth’s leading ministers had lived through and participated in, the possibility that the same fate could befall their regime hung over much of the period. The conditions for such an eventuality were essentially similar to those of the previous regimes: a childless, female monarch ruling over a country polarised in religion, with counsellors and a regime of the same brand, whose presumptive successor was liable to bring about a revolution in the policies and personnel of government. At any moment, it seemed, the death (or worse, the assassination) of Elizabeth could bring Protestant England to an immediate end, and return to Catholicism under Queen Mary II.<sup>7</sup>

This was an outcome which, the regime knew, was deeply desired by many Englishmen; some even worked to engineer it. Even those loyal to the presently constituted government of Henry VIII’s daughter would, it was feared, flock to the next rightful heir – surely Mary Stuart – after Elizabeth’s death, just as they had done in 1553. In many ways, the regime’s future depended on averting a repeat of 1553, and to do so the regime needed both loyalty in the present and loyalty to their version of the future. It needed, as Lambarde pointed out, representatives who ‘may thynk them selves to be in daunger of squysing, by the ruine of the present government, if it should fall upon them’. And as Lambarde wrote in 1587, the regime did not fully trust the mass of the people for this reason, either within the elite or the populace as a whole:

The daies (my good Lord) be nowe thought verye dangerous: and her Majesty (next the protection of Thalmightie) shall find her naturall subjectes her most assured strength: and (of all her subjectes) those that love the present state of religione and pollicye, and that desyre to be dissolved [i.e. to die] with the determination of the same: the which, whether they be the greater numbre or noe, I dare not define, but I suspect they be not.<sup>8</sup>

This book is a study of government: of the institutions, practicalities, aspirations and realities of the exercise of political power. In early modern England, as Lambarde’s words make clear, the choice of local governors was an issue of great importance, and because of the regime’s fears for its future, it was of more than usual significance for the Elizabethan regime. Throughout the

period, the regime struggled with twin problems in local government: on the one hand the question of effectiveness and compliance, on the other that of trustworthiness. Traditionally, historians have highlighted the former, functional problem, and seen the lord lieutenancy, on which much of this book focuses, as a response to it. There is no doubt that this was a major problem. The context of the Elizabethan state's war-making was such that local elites were crucial to success. National defence was dependent on the militia, which was run by local nobility and gentry. Troops for service overseas were raised by the same men, and the local taxes to pay for these functions were rated, levied and spent by them. Nothing could be achieved without the cooperation of the county elites. Furthermore, this cooperation was not a simple binary question of 'yea or nay': local elites usually sought to appear cooperative and willing, a symptom of the habits of deference to monarchical and conciliar authority deeply ingrained in the mindset of early modern people, so an outright refusal to comply with demands was rare. Success or failure was a matter of degree, not of absolutes. It mattered deeply how much effort local elites put into the discharge of their duties. A recruit for the wars (for example) could be young, strong, able, well-clothed, well-armed and well-equipped, ready to serve his Queen; alternatively, he could be a troublemaker taken from the county gaol, with second-hand or broken equipment, a cheap coat and no shoes, of very little use to the regime. Local compliance was required not only in letter, but in spirit. For this reason, a good working relationship with leading members of local society was vital to the regime: the more willing and responsive local elites were, the more likely they were to live up to the council's aspirations in the conduct of local government.

There is, however, a second important context here, and that is the ideological. The work of local government, especially during wartime, was not politically neutral. The Elizabethan wars were driven by religious motivations, and those with a personal stake in England's success in war had more cause to be motivated into action. Furthermore, the unsettled succession meant that an English religious conflict like those occurring in Ireland, Scotland, France or the Netherlands was always perceived as possible – in such circumstances the control of force by supporters of the regime might be crucial. Thus those institutions responsible for mobilising and deploying the use of force, notably the lieutenancy, were politically highly charged.

A Protestant regime seeking to rule a religiously polarised population and to safeguard its future had an obvious interest in seeking to appoint local representatives as sympathetic as possible to their objectives. As Lambarde suggests, the central motivating fact was that 'the present government' might 'fall upon them' at any time, so loyalty to the presently constituted state was not enough: loyalty to the Protestant cause both present and future was called for. It was not sufficient to passively accept the state, to not oppose it – one

had to be actively in favour of it. Any Catholic in local office was a problem, a danger, a threat, and any local governor without firm Protestant views was problematic. The regime employed a tripartite classification of allies, opponents and those indifferent – something very much in evidence in, for example, the 1564 reports by the bishops on JPs, which tended to divide gentry into ‘earnest’ or ‘favourers’, ‘indifferent’, and ‘enemies’ of true religion.<sup>9</sup> Thus not only did conservatives or Catholics need to be removed from positions of authority, they needed to be replaced with Protestants, and preferably with active, zealous supporters of the regime. The regime and its local allies actively sought to institute a national Protestant regime, in which Catholics or conservatives would be removed from power and the threat they posed neutralised, and keen Protestants brought forward into positions of power.

Thus this chapter deals with the council’s response to these two problems: the functional and the ideological. Much of the focus is on the institution which was developed specifically to deal with the problems of warfare, the lord lieutenancy, and the men who filled the offices of lord lieutenant and deputy lieutenant. This can only be properly understood, however, with reference to the wider picture of Elizabethan local government, and so later in the chapter a broader focus is used.

#### THE REVIVAL OF THE LIEUTENANCIES IN 1585

On 3 July 1585, chancery issued ten commissions of lieutenancy to senior members of the peerage and privy council. The earl of Bedford was made lieutenant of Cornwall, Devon and Dorset; the earl of Pembroke lieutenant of Somerset and Wiltshire; the marquess of Winchester and the earl of Sussex joint lieutenants of Hampshire; Lord Howard of Effingham lieutenant of Sussex and Surrey; Lord Cobham lieutenant of Kent; the earl of Leicester of Hertfordshire and Essex; Lord Hunsdon of Suffolk and Norfolk; the earl of Rutland of Lincolnshire; the earl of Derby of Lancashire and Cheshire; and the earl of Shrewsbury of Derbyshire and Staffordshire.<sup>10</sup> These commissions were never rescinded: all of these men continued to hold their lieutenancies for the rest of their lives, and when they died, most were replaced. Unplanned, almost accidentally, the office of lord lieutenant became in effect a permanent element of the English constitution.

Nor was there ever a formal declaration of war between England and Spain, but it became clear at almost exactly the same time that this had taken place. The year 1584 had seen the termination of diplomatic relations, and increasing concern in England over the situation in the Netherlands. The Dutch rebels seemed in danger of collapse, threatening to leave the entire Netherlands in the hands of an aggressive Catholic government, whose next target would surely be England. After the death in 1584 of both the duke of Anjou and the

prince of Orange, the Dutch offered their sovereignty to Henry III of France. He refused, and from early March 1585, it became clear that Elizabeth would take on the protection, if not the sovereignty, of the Dutch: she would, in fact, send an army to Philip II's sovereign territory to assist his rebels. In April 1585, Elizabeth suspended English trade with the Spanish Netherlands. In May, Philip embargoed foreign ships in his ports, an action aimed at the Dutch but interpreted by the English as a move against them. In response, several aggressive moves were taken in England against Spanish interests. By a warrant of 1 July 1585, Sir Francis Drake was given permission to attack Spanish possessions around the North Atlantic; on 8 July, the vacancy in the lord admiralship of England was filled by Charles, Lord Howard of Effingham. As a result of negotiations with the Dutch, an English army was despatched to the Netherlands; the Queen's orders to raise troops were dated 18 July. In August and September, the various elements of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of Nonsuch were agreed.<sup>11</sup> The cumulative outcome of these moves was the beginning of open hostilities with Spain, and the commissions appointing lieutenants were issued in the midst of these developments.

The year 1585 has often been regarded as a landmark moment, for several reasons. It brought to an end nearly thirty years of peace. In recent historiography it has been seen as marking a break in the history of Elizabeth's reign, between her so-called 'first' and 'second' reigns.<sup>12</sup> In the history of English government, the lieutenancy's coming of age as a permanent institution has also been regarded as a significant turning-point. In this context, the chronological coincidence between the decision to go to war and the commissioning of lieutenants seems to suggest unavoidably that there was a causal link between the two: the lieutenancy, quintessentially a military institution, was a natural recourse for the state in time of war. But in the context of a state in transition from 'medieval' to 'modern' forms of warfare, the decision to revive the lieutenancy system at this juncture merits some closer consideration to assess exactly what the lieutenants were expected to do, what they were for, and how 1585 fits into the development of this institution and into the wider picture of the regime's efforts to prepare the country for war.

The office of lieutenant was a Tudor creation, but it had a long pedigree; there was nothing new about monarchs delegating power to trusted subordinates in the counties, often noblemen.<sup>13</sup> There is an obvious parallel in English administration in the office of sheriff. This said, the two major reasons why monarchs should wish to delegate power in this way are substantially distinct in nature. One was to mobilise resources such as troops or sometimes taxes or loans. This was always a potentially tricky task, which was often made easier if the local representative of the state had close contacts with both the centre and the localities – hence the choice of noblemen. Historically, these resources had been mobilised by the nobility through feudal or bastard feudal approaches,

but this approach was in decline by the sixteenth century: Henry VIII, for example, found it increasingly unequal to his needs.<sup>14</sup> The second reason was to provide leadership within the county: keeping order in a crisis, either internal (rebellion or unrest) or external (the threat of foreign invasion). Early modern monarchies were seldom certain of their support in the provinces, and the presence of a representative of the centre tended to ease their concerns.

These two linked but separate functions can be traced throughout the early history of the lieutenancy, back into the reign of Henry VIII. Henry made use of a number of systems similar to the lieutenancy, issuing commissions to senior nobles as 'king's lieutenant' and as 'captain general'. These were used primarily for maintaining order, for example during the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536, when commissions of lieutenancy were issued to noblemen to keep order in the localities. Troops to combat the rebels were raised separately, however, by royal letters to nobles, clergy and gentry.<sup>15</sup> This was clearly an unsystematic approach, with two approaches operating side-by-side. There was a similar degree of flexibility during the first years of Edward VI's reign. For the purposes of the Scottish campaigns of 1547, two 'lieutenants and captains general' were appointed, dividing the entire country between them, whilst at the same time other nobles were commissioned to levy men and supervise defences in smaller groups of counties.<sup>16</sup>

These moves were very ad hoc, with considerable variation in the titles used, in the powers conferred, and in the areas covered. The lieutenancy moved much closer towards a recognisable form later in Edward VI's reign, as the unstable regimes of the dukes of Somerset and Northumberland made use of trusted supporters as lord lieutenants to supervise the counties, maintain central control and preserve order. There is a reference in June 1548 to the appointment by Protector Somerset of lieutenants 'for the repulse of thennemies and defence and good order of the country' (although it is unclear whether these took office in any real sense), and lieutenants were appointed in response to the 1549 risings.<sup>17</sup> In the wake of the disturbances, Parliament recognised the status of the lieutenancies: a 1549–50 act 'for the punishment of unlawful assemblies' stated that 'if the king shall by his letters patent make any lieutenant in any county or counties', they were to have authority over JPs and other officers.<sup>18</sup> This was significant, and emphasises the lieutenancies' role in maintaining public order and even administering justice, functions expressed at length in the lieutenancy commissions of those years and which clearly recommended the office to the wider political community.<sup>19</sup> For the remaining years of Edward's reign, in 1550–53, lieutenants were appointed annually to conduct musters across the country, and as necessary to suppress threatened rebellion.<sup>20</sup> Thus the lieutenants seemed set to become a permanent part of the roster of local officials, as agents of the centre to maintain order in the counties.