Hundred Years' War

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Vocabulary

- Intermittent adj \ ˌɪntərˈmɪtᵊnt \ — occurring at irregular intervals; not continuous or steady; прерывистый

  legitimate adj \ liˈjitəmət \ — conforming to the law or to rules; законный

  prestige n \prɛˈstiː(d)ʒ\ — standing or estimation in the eyes of people : weight or credit in general opinion; престиж

  integrated adj \ ˈɪntəˌgrātəd\ — with various parts or aspects linked or coordinated; объединенный

  exacerbate v \ igˈzasərˌbāt\ — to make more violent, bitter, or severe; усугубить

  rebellion n \ ri-ˈbel-yən\ — opposition to one in authority or dominance; восстание

  stalemate n \ ˈstāl-ˌmāt\ — a situation in which further action or progress by opposing or competing parties seems impossible; безвыходное положение

Date:1337 - 1453

Participants: France, England
Location: Europe, Flanders, France, Spain, Kingdom of Navarre

- Hundred Years' War, intermittent struggle between England and France in the 14th–15th century over a series of disputes, including the question of the legitimate succession to the French crown. The struggle involved several generations of English

- In the first half of the 14th century, France was the richest, largest, and most populous kingdom of western Europe. It had, moreover, derived immense prestige from the fame and exploits of its monarchs, especially Louis IX, and it had grown powerful through the loyal service given by its administrators and officials. England was the best organized and most closely integrated western European state and the most likely to rival France, because the Holy Roman Empire was paralyzed by deep divisions. In these circumstances, serious conflict between the two countries was perhaps inevitable, but its extreme bitterness and long duration were more surprising. The length of the conflict can be explained, however, by the fact that a basic struggle for supremacy was exacerbated by complicated problems, such as that of English territorial possessions in France and disputed succession to the French throne; it was also prolonged by bitter litigation, commercial rivalry, and greed for plunder.

Origins of the Hundred Years War

When Edward III of England came to blows with David Bruce of Scotland in the first half of the fourteenth century, France supported Bruce, raising tensions. These rose further as both Edward and Philip prepared for war, and Philip confiscated the Duchy of Aquitaine in May 1337 in order to try and reassert his control. This was the direct start of the Hundred Years War.

But what changed this conflict from the disputes over French land earlier was Edward III's reaction: in 1340 he claimed the throne of France for himself. He had a legitimate right claim—when Charles IV of France had died in 1328 he was childless, and the 15-year-old Edward was a potential heir through his mother's side, but a French Assembly chose Philip of Valois—but historians don't know whether he really meant to try for the throne or was just using it as a bargaining chip to either gain land or divide the French nobility. Probably the latter but, either way, he called himself the "King of France."

Edward III, the Black Prince and English Victories

- Edward III pursued a twofold attack on France. He worked to gain allies among disaffected French nobles, causing them to break with the Valois kings, or supported these nobles against their rivals. In addition, Edward, his nobles, and later his son—dubbed "The Black Prince"—led several great armed raids aimed at plundering, terrorizing and destroying French land, in order to enrich themselves and undermine the Valois king. These raids were called

- With France leaderless, with large parts in rebellion and the rest plagued by mercenary armies, Edward attempted to seize Paris and Rheims, perhaps for a royal coronation. He took neither but brought the "Dauphin"—the name for the French heir to the throne - to the negotiating table. The Treaty of

French Ascendance and a Pause

- Tensions rose again as England and France patronized opposing sides in a war for the Castilian crown. Debt from the conflict caused Britain to squeeze Aquitaine, whose nobles turned to France, who in turn confiscated Aquitaine again, and war erupted once more in 1369. The new Valois King of France, the intellectual Charles V, aided by an able guerrilla leader called Bertrand du Guesclin, reconquered much of the English gains while avoiding any large pitch battles with the attacking English forces. The Black Prince died in 1376, and Edward III in 1377, although the latter had been ineffectual in his last years. Even so, the English forces had managed to check the French gains and neither side sought a pitched battle;

By 1380, the year both Charles V and du Guesclin died, both sides were growing tired of the conflict, and there were only sporadic raids interspersed by truces. England and France were both ruled by minors, and when Richard II of England came of age he reasserted himself over pro-war nobles (and a pro-war nation), suing for peace. Charles VI and his advisors also sought peace, and some went on crusade. Richard then became too tyrannical for his subjects and was deposed, while Charles went insane.

French Division and Henry V

In the early decades of the fifteenth-century tensions rose again, but this time between two noble houses in France — Burgundy and Orléans — over the right to govern on behalf of the mad king. This division led to civil war in 1407 after the head of Orléans was assassinated; the Orléans

After a misstep where a treaty was signed between the rebels and England, only for peace to break out in France when the English attacked, in 1415 a new English king seized the opportunity to intervene. This was Henry V, and his first campaign culminated in the most famous battle in English history: Agincourt. Critics might attack Henry for poor decisions which forced him to fight a larger pursing French force, but he won the battle. While this had little immediate effect on his plans for conquering France, the massive boost to his reputation allowed Henry to raise

The Treaty of Troyes and an English King of France

The struggles between the houses of Burgundy and Orléans continued, and even when a meeting was agreed to decide upon anti-English action, they fell out once more. This time John, Duke of Burgundy, was assassinated by one of the Dauphin's party, and his heir allied with Henry, coming to terms in the Treaty of Troyes in 1420. Henry V of England would marry the daughter of the Valois King, become his heir and act as his regent. In return, England would continue the war against Orléans and their allies, which included the Dauphin. Decades later, a monk commenting upon the skull of Duke John said: "This is the hole through which the English entered France."

- The Treaty was accepted in English and Burgundian held lands—largely the north of France—but not in the south, where the Valois heir to France was allied with the Orléans faction. However, in August 1422 Henry died, and the mad French King Charles VI followed soon after. Consequently, Henry's nine-month-old son became king of both England and France, albeit with

Joan of Arc

Henry VI's regents won several victories as they readied for a push into the Orléans heartland, although their relationship with the Burgundians had grown fractious. By September 1428 they were besieging the town of Orléans itself, but they suffered a setback when the commanding Earl of Salisbury was killed observing the city.

Then a new personality emerged: Joan of Arc. This peasant girl arrived at the Dauphin's court claiming mystic voices had told her she was on a mission to free France from English forces. Her impact revitalized the moribund opposition, and they broke the siege around Orléans, defeated the English several times and were able to crown the Dauphin in Rheims cathedral. Joan was captured and executed by her enemies, but opposition in France now had a new king to rally around. After a few years of stalemate, they rallied around the new king when the Duke of Burgundy broke with the English in 1435. After the Congress of Arras, they recognized Charles VII as king. Many believe the Duke had decided England could never truly win France.

French and Valois Victory

- The unification of Orléans and Burgundy under the Valois crown made an English victory all but impossible, but the war continued. The fighting was halted temporarily in 1444 with a truce and a marriage between Henry VI of England and a French princess. This, and the English government ceding Maine to achieve the truce caused an outcry in England.

- War soon began again when the English broke the truce. Charles VII had used the peace to reform the French army, and this new model made great advances against English lands on the continent and won the Battle of Formigny in 1450. By the end of 1453, after all, English land bar Calais had been retaken and feared English commander John Talbot had been killed at the Battle of Castillon, the war was effectively over.

Significance of the Hundred Years' War

- The Hundred Years' War, begun on the pretext of an English claim to the French throne, was later renewed and perpetuated in an attempt to establish in reality Henry V's grandiose conception of a dual monarchy by which the English king should rule two kingdoms on either side of the Channel. It demonstrated, however, that English authority could not become effective in a hostile France and that the French were not strong enough to make the English kings recognize the utter folly and impracticability of their pretensions. In fact, during the 14th and 15th centuries, behind the facade of claims and counterclaims, behind the battles and political maneuvers, two nations were being forged whose natural development and juxtaposition were bound to lead to warfare.

- The initial claim to the French throne can be explained only by Edward III's strong ties with France and by a feeling for his Capetian ancestry as strong as his manifest pride in his English kingdom. By the 15th century, however, this feeling was virtually dead in the Lancastrian and Yorkist kings who challenged Charles VII and Louis XI. During the previous three or four generations, the English had acquired a taste for profitable expeditions to the Continent, from which they always hoped to return laden with spoil and with prisoners for ransom, so that France was ravaged and wasted as it had been when the Vikings and Northmen raided the Carolingian empire. Apparently unable to remedy this state of affairs, the French sought instead to alleviate their sufferings by reforming the monarchy—a reform which took effect, after the Paris revolution of 1356–58, in the reigns of John II and Charles V. The weakening of the monarchy by the minority and the insanity of Charles VI left the greed of the princes and favorite ministers unbridled and the country prey to extortion. Public disgust at these abuses was expressed more and more frequently, with ever-increasing violence but with less and less effect.

The 14th and 15th centuries marked, both in France and in England, a prolonged struggle for power between the crown, the nobility, and various reforming elements. Similarities in political and constitutional development and the common experience of social upheaval might well have resulted in alliances between parallel parties on either side of the Channel. As it happened, when one group was in the ascendant in France, the other was frequently ruling in England, so that, far from bringing the two countries closer together, their similar experiences divided them more bitterly. National consciousness, born and nurtured in the long struggle, grew in the end so strong that any project of union—even a merely personal union of the crowns as envisaged by Henry V—was doomed to failure. The most obvious result of the Hundred Years' War was to make both France and England determined to avoid the revival of such a struggle, in which both sides had squandered their manpower and resources utterly without profit. In both countries rulers and populace alike avidly turned their energies to other projects.

Thank you for attention!

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