The Foreign Policy of Edward IV, 1475-1483 and The Anglo-Breton Marriage Alliance of 1481

BRIAN D. WILLIAMS

The Foreign policy of Edward IV between 1475 and 1483 has generally been viewed as weak and inactive. Contemporaries and modern historians alike have suggested that this was due to Edward’s character. They emphasize his love of easy living and near obsession with money. The central thrust of these criticisms is against Edward’s relations with Louis XI of France. While these depictions of Edward are accurate in the main, they colour the picture of his foreign policy too heavily and leave untouched aspects of this policy which deserve more attention and credit. The most significant example is the agreement with Brittany, a system of marriage and military alliances ratified in May and June of 1481.

The Anglo-Breton accords were a major achievement for Edward and a significant building block in the West European and North Sea diplomacy of the time. Nevertheless, they generally appear in modern historiography as an insignificant side issue. More correctly, I suggest they reflect the unfulfilled potential of Edward’s foreign policy toward France from 1475 to 1483. These treaties were part of a well-thought-out plan to limit the power and influence of Louis XI on the continent. The main reason Edward IV’s strategy did not come to fruition is because it was cut short by a series of unforeseeable deaths, including his own, between 1482 and 1483.

Before proceeding, it is essential to mention the main states and leaders who were involved in Edward’s foreign policy. The states which were allied with Edward IV were the duchy of Brittany and the Flemish duchy of Burgundy. Throughout the period to be discussed, Brittany was led by Duke Francis II. In Burgundy, leadership changed hands from Charles the Bold, who ruled until his death in 1477, to Maximilian of Austria. The key antagonist during this time frame was Louis XI of France.
In the ten year period from 1465 to 1475, the relations between England and France were characterized by open hostility. There were attempts on both sides to unseat or significantly reduce the power of the opposition. By 1468 Edward IV was leading an alliance of England, Brittany and Burgundy against Louis XI and the French. The goals of this triple alliance were twofold. First, to prevent Louis from expanding French control over the duchies of Brittany and Burgundy. Second, to allow Edward to reestablish English authority on the continent. In response to this threat, Louis XI conspired with the Warwick group of the Lancastrians. This conspiracy eventually led to ousting Edward IV from his throne in September of 1470. As it turned out, this was only a temporary setback and Edward was able to regain his crown in March of 1471. When Edward IV returned, he wasted no time in resurrecting the triple alliance against Louis XI.

The result was the English invasion of France in July of 1475. The aggressiveness of this assault was short-lived. The critical problem which undermined the success of the attack was the lack of support given to the English by the Duke of Burgundy, Charles the Bold. Of Edward's continental allies, Burgundy was the stronger and more dependable of the two. When Charles the Bold failed to provide troops to fight against Louis XI, when he even refused to give shelter to the English in Burgundian towns, and when Duke Francis II offered no help, Edward IV was left with little choice. He decided to settle with Louis and on 29 August 1475 the Treaty of Picquigny was signed. The specific agreements of this treaty were as follows:
1. A truce between the two kings and their allies to last for seven years.
2. Freedom of mercantile intercourse for the merchants of each realm in the other's countries, with the abolition of tolls and charges imposed upon the English during the previous twelve years, and similar privileges for the French.
3. Edward was to depart peacefully from France as soon as he had received the 75,000 crowns, promised by Louis XI.
4. Any differences between the two countries were to be referred to special arbitrators.
5. A treaty of amity and marriage. Neither king should enter into any league with any ally of the other without his knowledge. As soon as they reached marriageable age, the Dauphin Charles should marry Elizabeth of York, with a jointure of 60,000 crowns yearly provided by Louis XI. Further, if either king found himself confronted by armed rebellion, the other would be obliged to lend support.
6. An understanding by King Louis to pay Edward 50,000 gold crowns each year and a guarantee for the payment of this pension in the form of a bond by the Medici bank or a papal bull imposing interdict on his realm if he defaulted.

The strongest criticism of Edward's foreign policy and diplomacy leading up to and including the Treaty of Picquigny comes from Professor Charles Ross, the late biographer of Edward IV. Ross made two critical assertions about Edward's invasion of France. The first was that although the Treaty of Picquigny turned out to be profitable, this did not represent great statesmanship on the part of Edward, rather it was simply the result of fortunate
circumstances. The second assertion was that the King of England showed poor judgment by attempting to make continental conquests. This would have been too expensive and France was too strong.

These criticisms are too severe and not well substantiated. By declaring that the advantages obtained through the Treaty of Picquigny were more the result of good luck than good strategy, Professor Ross failed fully to consider a crucial point. It is that Edward made the best of a very difficult situation. As Edward’s other modern biographer, Cora Scofield pointed out, after three years of preparation and taxation, the people of England would not have allowed Edward to abandon the invasion. Without any significant support from his allies, Edward was in no position to conquer the French and yet he could not easily turn back. Therefore, Edward IV went on with the invasion and sued for peace when his allies failed him as he knew they would. Ross claimed that Edward IV’s move for peace represented “discretion rather than valour.” In this instance, a decision to carry on the war would have been foolish rather than courageous. Considering, the advantages of the French, that is their numbers, access to supplies and adequate shelter, and that there was no sign that either the Burgundians or the Bretons would offer any useful assistance in the near future, it does not seem likely that the English troops would do more than achieve a stalemate. It is also quite possible that the English would have suffered humiliating losses. In either case, Edward would have been in a position too weak to gain any significant concessions from Louis XI. Therefore, Edward’s decision to sue for peace was indeed prudent and the advantages gained from the Treaty of Picquigny were the result of perceptive leadership rather than mere luck.

The claim that undertaking this campaign showed poor judgement by Edward ignores the fact that by the spring of 1475, Edward was painfully aware that he could not rely on Charles or Francis II for adequate support and would have aborted the invasion if not for the strong sentiments of his people. If Professor Ross meant to suggest that the campaign should never have been organized from the start, I would suggest that he was mistaken. Edward IV had organized a powerful army and with the help of Burgundy and Brittany, he had reason to believe that his assault would be successful. It was not until after the invasion had been planned that Edward’s allies began to falter.

This leads to the main body of criticisms which concern Edward IV’s foreign policy after 1475. The Scholars most critical of Edward’s diplomacy in this period include: Antoine Dupuy, Histoire de la Réunion de la Bretagne à la France; B. A. Pocquet du Haut-Jussé, François II Duc de Bretagne et l’Angleterre; Charles Ross, Edward IV; and Cora Scofield, The Life and Reign of Edward the Fourth. The analyses of these historians were built around two propositions. The first was that Edward’s foreign policy after 1475 was characterized by Edward’s extreme avarice and was solely concerned with obtaining dynastic marriages for all his children. This is the thesis asserted by Dupuy and Pocquet du Haut-Jussé.

The second assertion was that the agreements of Picquigny, particularly the marriage alliance and the pension severely limited Edward IV’s freedom of diplomatic manoeuvre from 1475-1483 and thereby doomed his overall foreign policy to failure. One of the major condemnations of this proposal was that
Edward IV allowed himself to be duped by Louis XI. This is the picture presented by Ross and Scofield.19

The easiest criticisms to counter are the ones made by Dupuy and Pocquet du Haut-Jussé. As early as 1476 Edward had renewed a thirty year truce as well as treaties of amity and commerce with Francis II of Brittany. By 1480, Edward IV was involved with the military support of Burgundy and in 1481 he committed himself to a similar but more extensive agreement with Brittany. While it is true that these accords coincided with marriage alliances that were economically favourable to England, the existence of the former along with the fact that Edward was active militarily between 1475 and 1483 does help to disprove the ideas of Dupuy and Pocquet du Haut-Jussé. The weaknesses of their propositions will become increasingly evident in the following pages.

In the two years after the Treaty of Picquigny, there was little or no reason for Edward IV to do anything except to sit back and collect his large pension from the King of France. However, this pleasant calm did not last. In the early part of 1477 the state of relations between England, Burgundy, Brittany and France became quite tense. This escalation was triggered by the death of Charles the Bold of Burgundy who was killed in the Battle of Nancy on 5 January.

The death of Charles the Bold created a crisis for Burgundy and Brittany. The future of Burgundian autonomy depended on who would marry Charles' heiress, Mary of Burgundy. If Louis XI gained her hand for his son, then Burgundy would be lost forever and Brittany might follow in the near future. Unfortunately for England and Burgundy an appropriate candidate for a marriage alliance with the latter did not exist. Edward's brother, the Duke of Clarence, was the most suited in terms of rank, but his role in the overthrow of Edward in 1470 made him completely unacceptable to either party. A second possibility lay in the person of Anthony, Earl Rivers, but he was poorly suited in terms of rank. Nevertheless Edward did extend this offer as well as a promise for English military assistance to Burgundy. In the words of Miss Scofield, 'much as she needed help, Mary of Burgundy had no intention of wedding a petty English earl. She decided instead to marry Maximilian of Austria.' The two were married on 18 August 1477.20

At this juncture two comments must be made about the overall criticisms of Ross and Scofield. First, Edward's offer of military aid is a strong example of the King of England not allowing himself to be pinned down by the agreements of Picquigny. Surely he had risked both the marriage alliance and his pension by extending this proposition to the Burgundians. If accepted, this alliance would probably have put the English and French at war and thereby ended the accords of Picquigny. As for the idea that Edward IV allowed himself to be duped by Louis' continuous promises that he would be true to the agreements of 1475, it is clear that the King of England already greatly distrusted his French counterpart and was acting accordingly. Edward IV was well aware that Louis XI had offered the hand of the Dauphin to Mary of Burgundy and acted adroitly by sending ambassadors to the Holy Roman Emperor to discuss the renewal of the peace and league which had existed in earlier days between England and the Holy Roman Empire.

Although the possibility for this marriage alliance passed, another
opportunity opened and Edward did not miss his chance. In July of 1478, Mary and Maximilian became parents to the future heir of Burgundy, Philip. Within a year (18 July 1479) it was agreed that he would marry Edward’s daughter, Anne of York. This was finalized in August of 1480. The specific agreements were as follows:

1. Philip of Burgundy would marry Anne of York.
2. Burgundy could recruit up to six thousand archers from England.
3. If Edward failed to negotiate a settlement with Louis XI that would protect Maximilian and Burgundy, then he would “openly declare for the duke.”
4. Maximilian would pay 50,000 crowns annually to Edward if the French pension were lost.

Professor Ross in particular was very critical of Edward IV’s diplomacy with Burgundy. In addition to the main criticisms, he stated “This Burgundian treaty of 1480 is a notable monument to the theme of avarice in the foreign policy of Edward’s later years.” Ross focused his censure on the fact that Edward was to provide no dowry for his daughter’s marriage and that Maximilian was to replace the French pension. However, Professor Ross did not consider the full picture. Again, Edward IV was risking the loss of Picquigny. By openly allying with the Burgundians Edward was blatantly disregarding the clause in the Treaty of Picquigny which called for the two Kings to aid each other in putting down armed rebellions in each other’s realms. This Anglo-Burgundian alliance, along with the fact that the French were defeated at Guinegate (7 August 1480) by Maximilian with the aid of English auxiliaries gives further proof that Edward IV did not allow himself to be restricted in his foreign policy after 1475. While it is evident that Edward was quite interested in gaining financially from this agreement with Maximilian, it must be acknowledged that he was taking a substantial risk by becoming involved with Burgundy. Why should Edward not demand a high price for aid that might well be very costly to England? Clearly then, Edward’s insistence on making Maximilian pay represents shrewd bargaining as much, if not more than it reflects his greed.

This leads to the Anglo-Breton marriage and the military and commercial agreements of 1481. A thorough examination of the treaty reveals that these accords were a key part of Edward IV’s strongest efforts to limit the power of Louis XI on the continent. It also demonstrates Edward’s ability to carry out his foreign policy without being hindered by the Treaty of Picquigny.

The treaty was divided into three parts. The first part concerned the marriage of Edward’s son, Edward Prince of Wales, to Anne of Brittany, eldest daughter of Francis II. The second part of the treaty centred on a military alliance between the two parties and their successors. The major emphasis of this section was upon defensive cooperation. The last section of the treaty provided for a commercial accord that would facilitate trade relations between the merchants of the two states.

One of the opening lines stated: ‘These are the chapters of perpetual friendships, leagues, associations and confederations...’ This set the scope of the agreements to be concluded by England and Brittany. A marriage joining England and Brittany through blood would be the most effective means of creating profound relations between the two. That Edward and Francis were
intent upon establishing such relations is confirmed by items six, seven, nine, thirteen and eighteen of the treaty.

Item six, for example, provided that Lady Isabel would take the place of her sister Anne, if the latter ‘(God forbid) should decease before her marriage had been contracted and consummated.’ Item seven went even further to ensure a marriage between the two royal houses. This ensured that until Lady Anne had been married to Prince Edward, ‘no marriage contract or treaty whatsoever may be concluded for the said Lady Isabel.’ Moreover, no other daughter of the Duke ‘in the case that the said Lady Anne has predeceased’ could marry until Lady Isabel had been joined in matrimony to the Lord Prince of Wales. On the other hand, item nine stipulated that if the ‘Lord Prince of Wales should pass from this world (which may God avert) before the consummation of this marriage,’ then the marriage should be contracted between the next oldest son of the King and the oldest daughter of the Duke.

If the above were not enough to guarantee the conclusion of a marriage joining the two houses, item thirteen provided further security against one more unexpected development. It allowed that if the Duke should have ‘any natural and legitimate son’ before or after the marriage had occurred, then this son would marry a daughter of the King.

As a close to these assurances, the King and Duke gave their words of honour in item eighteen, saying that they would ‘work for and care for their offspring to be married to each other’ as it had been agreed to in the treaty.

In view of these assurances, it seems more than reasonable to assert that Edward IV and Francis II were making sincere and serious efforts to unite their states perpetually. That such relations could actually be established appears rather dubious at first, but item twelve gives one good reason to believe that it was indeed possible. This section of the treaty stated that the ‘aforesaid King and Duke . . . with the authority and approval of all the concerned estates and parliaments of the kingdom of England and the duchy of Brittany it will be decreed that, in the event that the Lord Prince of Wales will generate with the aforesaid hereditary daughter of Brittany several males,’ the first would be the heir of England and his brother would become the duke of Brittany where he would live and ‘carry the shield of his fatherland.’

While it would not be impossible, nor even unlikely, for two brothers to turn against one another, the advantages of working together seem to outweigh those of acting antagonistically or even independently. For one, the future Duke of Brittany would not be likely to be in any position to oppose the King of England. The idea of the Duke attempting to act independently does not appear very plausible either when one considers the likelihood of an attempt by France to subjugate Brittany. As for the English point of view, it would be to the King’s advantage to have an ally on the continent. Such an ally could help to contain the growth of France. Although helping to defend an ally would have been costly, not having an ally on the continent might have been even more so. One more important factor that would serve to keep these brothers united was the commerce that was so vital to the economies of their states.

The first section of the treaty had the potential to establish strong relations between England and Brittany and set a solid foundation on which to build effective military agreements. The main objectives of these military alliances are
quite clear from the text of the treaty. Of particular interest are items twenty and twenty-one.

Item twenty stated the general nature of the accords and also gives some idea of how Edward IV intended to counter the aggressions of Louis XI. The decisive clause declared: 'The Lord King will be bound to help the Lord duke and his heirs and successors with all his might for the defense of his homeland and the duchies of Brittany against any who wish to invade'. The Lord Duke was bound to act in the same manner.

Since this is the opening of the military agreements, and because there is no mention of an offensive pact, one can deduce that the intent of these alliances was primarily defensive in nature. Secondly, considering they were aimed at preventing invasions from being successful, it can be argued that the predominant objective of Edward's foreign policy was to contain the King of France rather than overthrow him or even reduce the size of his territories. That this was in fact the intent of Edward is demonstrated in item twenty-one.

Item twenty-one opened by stating: 'It is agreed, concorded and concluded between the said king and duke that in case King Louis of France, the Dauphin of Vienne, or his or their heirs and successors or any other person or nation through their machinations or enticements, attack the said Lord duke or his heirs and successors and the Duchy of Brittany and make war against them, the lord King of England is obligated to aid the Lord duke and his heirs.' Two points in particular stand out from this passage. First, from the beginning to the end, these provisions are aimed at containing Louis XI and his French successors. Secondly, this policy of containment was designed to be long-term.

How was this policy to be achieved? It was agreed that the English would send 3,000 archers to Brittany and for the first three months, they would be paid by the King. After this initial period, the troops would be maintained by the Duke. Furthermore, additional troops 'up to the number of 4,000 archers' could be obtained from England at the expense of Brittany. The Bretons, for their part, agreed to supply an equal number of troops: That the combined forces of these two states would be enough to contain Louis XI and the French does seem possible. At the very least, this combination would have made any French monarch hesitant to attack Brittany.

Moving to the commercial clause of the treaty, one finds an agreement to further stimulate trade between England and Brittany. This was done by granting special privileges to the merchants of the two states. By lowering customs duties and the like, the agreement set the basis for mutually beneficial trade. The increased trade that would be generated, would in turn lead to more benefits thus creating a perpetual circle on incentives for more trade. The net result of these growing commercial ties would be to strengthen the already profound political ties.

What did Ross and Scofield have to say about these Anglo-Breton accords? Miss Scofield reviewed all the details of the treaties, but did not bother to evaluate their significance one way or the other. Professor Ross on the other hand admitted that these agreements had some potential, but then refused to give Edward any significant credit for his foreign policy with Brittany. He said simply: 'Had it taken place, this match might have kept Brittany out of the hands of France, but would surely have involved a war with the French King,
who could not afford to see such a major fief pass into English hands.  

This analysis ignored two important points. The first is that at the time the military accords went into effect, Louis XI was too occupied with Burgundy to be troubled with Brittany and in fact did not threaten that duchy to any notable degree before he died in 1483. Moreover, Professor Ross did not examine the situation following Louis' death. In 1483, France became governed by a regency. Such a government was in no position to challenge the combined forces of England and Brittany. Yet another crucial factor which Ross did not fully consider in evaluating Edward's diplomatic efforts, is that at the same time Edward IV was negotiating with Brittany, he was also encouraging an alliance between Francis II and Maximilian. All told, Edward's diplomacy from 1478 to 1481 amounted to a resurrection of the old triple alliance. However, Edward's alliances of 1480 and 1481 were much more effective than those of 1475. This is because they were defensive in nature and it would be easier to maintain the status quo than it would be to conquer territory from the French.

In view of the above, it is quite plausible to assert that treaties engaged in by Edward IV between 1480 and 1481 had a great deal of potential to contain the expansionist efforts of Louis XI. Furthermore, Edward's involvement in these treaties demonstrates beyond any doubt that he was not allowing himself to be manipulated by Louis.

The obvious question at this point is if this was such a well-thought-out policy that had so much potential, then why did it fail? The answers to this lie in the events which followed the conclusion of the treaty. The first blow to Edward's foreign policy came on 27 March 1482 with the premature death of Mary of Burgundy. Her death triggered a shift in power in Burgundy and this in turn led the Burgundians into the arms of Louis XI. The estates of Brabant and Flanders, who were dissatisfied with Maximilian, took charge of the Burgundian state in the name of Mary's children, who were the legal heirs. The result was the Treaty of Arms signed by France and Burgundy in December 1482. An important aspect of this treaty provided for the marriage of the Dauphin of France to Margaret of Austria. This effectively removed the possibility of further agreements between England and Burgundy against France. The removal of Burgundy as an ally of England was a significant but not necessarily permanent loss for England. Historically, Burgundy had always been the stronger of England's two allies. With Burgundy gone, Edward had only Brittany to work with against France.

The most crucial event which helped to dismantle Edward's foreign policy came in April of 1483 when Edward himself died unexpectedly. This had several repercussions. For one, it meant that Edward would not be the one to oversee the implementation of the treaty with Brittany. Secondly, because of Edward's death, his brother, Richard Duke of Gloucester, became the Protector of the new king, Edward V, who was only twelve years old in 1483. The position of young Edward as the possessor of monarchical authority, put him in the middle of bitter rivals for his power; namely, Richard Duke of Gloucester and the Woodvilles. The result of this rivalry was the deposition of Edward V and his brother Richard. This effectively ended the possibility of a marriage alliance between England and Brittany, and also helped to undermine the military as well as commercial accords between the two states.
Hence, not long after Edward had built the main structure of his foreign policy against Louis XI and France, it fell apart as the result of several unforeseen events. It seems unlikely that anyone could have predicted the early deaths of Edward IV, Edward V or Mary of Burgundy, let alone planned a foreign policy that would have been effective in spite of such developments.

Before moving to the final analysis of Edward IV's foreign policy between 1475 and 1483, it is essential to answer the last and most severe condemnation of Edward's diplomatic efforts in this period. The criticism here comes from both Ross and Scofield and concerns Edward IV's handling of the events which allowed Louis XI to sign the Treaty of Arras with the Burgundians. Edward's biographers asserted that this was the point at which Edward's foreign policy fell apart forever. According to Ross and Scofield this was an unmitigated disaster. Exactly why it was such a catastrophe was not explained, but they concurred that Edward IV's diplomatic strategy was both shameful and impossible. It was shameful because Edward had allowed himself to be outwitted and outmanoeuvred by the King of France. It was impossible because it was 'in opposition to his people's best interests . . .'

The specific agreements of the treaty were as follows:
1. That Maximilian's heiress Margaret of Austria should marry the Dauphin Charles of France.
2. The counties of Artois and Burgundy should be regarded as her marriage portion.

Was Edward IV's foreign policy really shameful and impossible? I believe not. To begin with, it has already been noted that Edward was well aware of Louis' treachery and the possibility that the latter might never follow through on the marriage alliance involving Elizabeth of York and the Dauphin. It was precisely because Edward understood this that he initiated the Anglo-Burgundian alliances of 1480. As if this were not enough evidence, contemporary observers, cited by Miss Scofield, also reported that Louis' deviousness was clear to Edward.

Was Edward's handling of the events leading to the Treaty of Arras shameful because he failed to protect his ally Maximilian? Again, I believe, the answer is no. There were several sound reasons why Edward decided not to become involved. The first was that the English were already engaged in a war with Scotland. To become entangled in two separate wars would surely have strained English resources to their limits. Professor Ross condemned Edward for getting himself involved with Scotland, implying that it was not necessary. Edward was certainly aggressive, but considering the proximity of Scotland and the problems she had caused earlier, the King seems justified in what was clearly an effort to put the Scots permanently in their place.

Furthermore, until the unexpected death of Mary of Burgundy in March of 1482, Maximilian was not under the same pressure which eventually forced him to accept the Treaty of Arras. Indeed, it was this unforeseen event which made Edward's decision to withhold military aid from Burgundy seem like a poor choice. In fact it was not this decision by Edward which forced Burgundy into an undesirable accord with France. Rather it was Mary's sudden death and the internal developments that followed which pushed Maximilian into signing the
Treaty of Arras with Louis. When Mary died the estates of Brabant and Flanders took charge of her children and opened peace negotiations with Louis XI.\textsuperscript{24} The leaders of these estates distrusted Maximilian and without their support there was little sense in sending military aid to him. What was likely to be gained from becoming enmeshed in a civil conflict such as this? Here the risks seemed to outweigh any possible reward. Edward’s refusal to send aid was the wisest option.\textsuperscript{25}

A more important question to answer, is whether or not Edward IV handled the situation of 1482 in the best interests of his people? Here the response, I would suggest, is undoubtedly yes. As stated above, attempting to fight on two fronts would have been a severe strain on the resources of England. This in turn might have led the English to incur significant losses on both ends. Edward’s decision was more prudent. The most important loss resulting from the Treaty of Arms — the possibility of French control over Burgundy — was something that could be reversed later on once Edward had finished with Scotland and had time to strengthen his armies. For the moment, however, Louis’ influence in Burgundy was not so strong that it endangered Calais which was England’s foothold on the continent. Other than his pension and the marriage alliance — which were Louis’ to give and take away — Edward and the English had suffered no permanent losses by the Treaty of Arras. The rest of Edward’s foreign policy remained intact. In particular, the Anglo-Breton treaties remained in force.

Having examined the foreign policy of Edward IV from 1468 to 1483, several concluding comments remain to complete the picture of an active and well-thought-out policy. While it is understood that Edward’s plans did not come to fruition, the advantages that this foreign policy held over more aggressive ones must be emphasized.

To begin with, by attempting to contain Louis XI rather than defeat him, Edward removed the necessity of being militarily dependent upon either Brittany or Burgundy. Such a dependence had proved fatal in Edward’s 1475 invasion of France. When Charles the Bold and Francis II failed to provide the English with strong support, Edward was forced to forget his hopes of conquest and settle for the Treaty of Picquigny.

The defensive nature of the new alliances meant that Edward would only have to give his partners aid in protecting their own territories. The military requirements for these defensive operations would have been substantially less than those required for an all-out invasion of another country with the intent of conquering it. Moreover, the reliability of these alliances was doubly ensured, first by the marriage alliances and, secondly, by the probability that both Brittany and Burgundy under their present leaders could be counted on to defend themselves against Louis XI.

A second advantage that Edward’s policies offered was the avoidance of great expenditure to meet his obligations. Even if Edward was called upon to defend either of his allies, the expense would be considerably less than if he attempted an aggressive continental invasion. Furthermore, if the expense was large, it would still be easier to attain the funds from Parliament. Not the least of the reasons for this was the fact that Edward would be defending crucial trade interests for England. This was especially true when one considers that a
complete takeover of Burgundy by France would greatly endanger the English position at Calais. Calais was England’s major wool staple.

What conclusions can be drawn from this analysis of Edward IV’s foreign policy between 1475 and 1483? First of all, it is clear that Edward’s diplomatic strategy had improved over the early part of his reign. He managed to keep his kingdom out of expensive conflicts and even provided himself with a source of income, his pension, which eliminated the necessity of taxing his people heavily. Secondly, it must be recognised that Edward’s foreign policy was more than possible; it had great potential and the only reason it failed was because of a series of unforeseen events for which no one could have been prepared.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. This article was a seminar paper written for Professor Reinhold Schumann of Boston University whose support and advice have been invaluable. Charles Ross, Edward IV (Berkeley 1974), p.112.
2. Ibid., p.112.
3. Ibid., pp.228-29.
4. Ibid., p.233.
5. Ibid., p.238.
13. Ibid., p.185.
18. Ibid., p.291.
22. Ibid., p.273.