CHAPTER 5

The Madness of Kings
KINGSHIP AND ROYAL POWER
1407

The whole of the French nation was saddened by the illness which the king [Charles VI] contracted... for he was till then high in the love and favour of his subjects, and because he was the head the distress was all the more deeply felt. When the head of a body is sick, all the limbs suffer.¹

Jean Froissart, Chroniques

The five English and five French kings who contested the Hundred Years War were hugely significant in shaping the course and outcome of the struggle, and this despite the rise of professional armies and the increasing importance of state institutions, the growth of bureaucracies, representative assemblies and the greater intricacy of local government, and despite the emergence of gunpowder and a major restructuring of the social order. As the French jurist Jean de Terrevermeille (c.1370–1430) wrote, 'His [the king's] losses are our [the people's] ruin, and our safety within him lies.'² And yet this was also a period in which the institutions of monarchy and conceptions of kingship were placed under enormous strain. Just as kings shaped the outcome of the war, so the struggle reshaped many of the characteristics of kingship in England and France. The war was coloured by and led to the depositions of three English kings, while the madness of Charles VI all but destroyed France.

To a degree this had always been so; kings had always shaped national destinies and royal failure had often proved disastrous, but rarely were the consequences as crippling as those seen in the reign of Charles VI. The vacuum at the centre of France (at the head of the body politic) caused by the king's madness led to civil war. This, in turn, allowed Henry V to capture Normandy, and through the subsequent treaty of Troyes in 1420 he almost seized the French throne. The treaty appeared to signal the extinction of the Valois line and the effective annihilation of French kingship.

The consequences of Charles's madness had become manifest long before this. In 1407, there happened in the city of Paris an event which was more pitiful than any that had occurred for a very long time in the Christian kingdom of France, and that event was the death of one man. Because of it the king and all the princes of his blood and indeed nearly all his people suffered greatly; the kingdom was for a long time divided against itself and much weakened by this strife... I am speaking of the death of the Duc d'Orléans, only brother of the king of France, Charles the Well-Beloved and sixth of his name.³

The assassination of Louis, duke of Orléans, by agents of Duke Jean the Fearless of Burgundy on 23 November 1407, was caused, in part, by King Charles's insanity, and it proved critical in shaping the trajectory of the remainder of the Hundred Years War. Twelve years of civil strife followed, at the end of which Jean himself would be murdered. Killed on the dauphin's orders on the bridge of Montereau (at the confluence of the Seine and Yonne rivers) in 1419, his death in its turn led to the Anglo-Burgundian alliance and the Double Monarchy. Clearly, this was not the outcome Jean had intended in 1407. Leaving aside his own murder, he had no wish to place an Englishman on the throne of Clovis (r.481–511), Charlemagne (r.768–814) and St Louis (Louis IX; r.1226–70). Indeed, Jean had no real wish to lessen the French king's authority, or to take his place; rather he aimed to wield essentially vice-regal power by gaining control of the council that took charge during the king's increasingly febrile 'abences' – the name given to the sometimes protracted bouts of madness Charles VI suffered for thirty years of his reign.

The first indication that all was not well with Charles had come on 5 August 1392 when the king was en route to Brittany, at the head of an army raised to chastise the recalcitrant Duke Jean IV de Montfort (1339–99). In the forest outside Le Mans he suffered the first manifestation of the illness, often diagnosed as paranoid schizophrenia, which would scar the remainder of his long reign.⁴ The day was said to have been very warm and the king was wearied by periodic bouts of fever and lack of sleep. Charles, his brother Louis, the recently appointed duke of Orléans, and a few attendants entered a clearing near the village of Pontvillain. A page, perhaps lulled into sleep, dropped his lance and it fell on another man's helmet.
Hearing the clash of metal, Charles reacted with extraordinary violence. Thinking he was attacked, he lashed out with his sword. None dared restrain him, and swiftly the page and three of his companions were killed. The king also struck Louis and pursued him through the forest. For more than an hour, until completely spent, the king assailed any who came near him before eventually collapsing and falling into a coma.  

Having only lately reached his majority, both the king and also his kingdom were wracked by this seizure. His father’s death in 1380 had thrown court and country into conflict as Charles’s uncles vied for control.  

The two main protagonists in these early days of his reign were the deeply unpopular Louis of Anjou (1339–84), whose ambitions stretched beyond France into Italy, and Philippe the Bold of Burgundy, who wished to use the resources of the royal treasury to carve out an even greater principality for himself in the Low Countries. Courted by both these men were the other princes of the Blood Royal and the key power-brokers, Jean, duke of Berry (1340–1416) and Louis of Bourbon (1337–1410). Louis of Anjou soon left to pursue his Italian dreams, leaving Philippe in control of the government and its extensive resources. By means of some judicious alliances he soon established himself as one of the most powerful princes in Europe. Then, in 1387, Charles VI declared himself of age (he was twenty), ready to assume the duties of government, and he replaced his uncles on the council with men of his own choosing - a group known to Froissart as the Marmousets (men of the king’s chamber). This group, which operated under the political leadership of Olivier de Clisson (constable of France, 1380–92) and the intellectual direction of Philippe de Mézières, sought reform in government and throughout the state.  

France saw a new balance of power established. Alongside the Marmousets the king’s younger brother, Louis, duke of Touraine, was the main beneficiary of the new regime. Through a great deal of patronage and his valuable marriage in 1389 to Valentina Visconti of Milan, Louis increased his political and territorial influence enormously. Then, just prior to the 1392 Brittany campaign, Louis exchanged (‘upgraded’) Touraine for the duchy of Orléans. When Charles’s madness struck it allowed the rift at the heart of government to be reopened. Louis’ political advancement meant that he now formed the main opposition to Burgundian ambitions, and growing hostility between these power blocs led to his assassination in 1407 on the orders of Jean the Fearless, duke of Burgundy since 1404.

Jean the Fearless (Jean sans Peur) did not (perhaps could not) distance himself from Louis’s murder, but neither did he show any remorse for his actions. On the contrary, he acknowledged his involvement in the affair, defended himself robustly and, rather dramatically, rewarded the principal assassin, Raoul d’Anquetonville, with an annuity ‘in consideration of notable services which . . . [he] had rendered to the king and [the duke of Burgundy]’. The king, however, during one of his lucid moments, saw things differently: the murder of one of the Blood Royal could not be ignored because it was, in a sense, an attack on his own authority. Throughout the later Middle Ages increasingly grandiose claims, founded on legal argument and expounded in theological doctrine, were made for the extent and (divine) source of French royal power. These led not only to the near sanctification of the king but also conferred certain sacral qualities on his family – those of his blood. The murder of one of the Blood Royal, therefore, even though perpetrated on the orders of the duke of Burgundy, had to be explained or punished. Early in the new year (1408), Jean the Fearless took steps to justify himself. His lawyer Jean Petit drafted a now-famous apologia, claiming the murder had been a judicial execution made in the interests of the state; he accused Orléans of treachery, tyranny and dabbling in black magic. Duke Jean received a warm reception in Paris when he told the same story. Such accusations resonated in this period, and that of sorcery not necessarily the loudest.

From the late thirteenth century the accusation of treason carried increasingly dangerous connotations and, as a result, increasingly brutal punishments in both France and England. Philippe VI had responded to Flemish revolts in 1328 and 1338 – actions he viewed as treacherous – with brutal retribution, torture and execution. It was because of this, in part, that Edward III claimed the French throne in 1340 – to prevent a charge of treason being laid against the Flemings: by pressing his claim they might pledge him their allegiance with fewer qualms. The charge of treason took on greater significance in the later Middle Ages following the use of Roman law to bolster royal authority and elevate the status of the monarch. Capetian lawyers stated that the king was as an emperor (i.e. without superior) in his own kingdom (rex in regno suo est imperator) – a concept later adopted in England. Together with a developing if still abstract idea of the state, such concepts contributed to the greater political fury with which treason (to king and state) was punished. Hanging, drawing and quartering (with certain variations depending on the nature of the crime) was introduced as the sentence for high-profile individuals adjudged guilty of treason. Both Plantagenet and Valois kings used the threat of the charge of treason as a political weapon, albeit with mixed success. Rulers such as
Philiippe VI, uncertain of their authority and desperate to prevent any diminution of their status, claimed *lèse-majesté* to be not only the ‘sister of rebellion and ... an act of disloyalty’, but also ‘tantamount to sacrilege’. In England, Edward II and Richard II thought similarly and both used broadly (or barely) defined notions of treason to exert their authority. In their cases this strategy proved disastrously counter-productive and it contributed to their eventual depositions. In 1398 Richard went so far as to declare that ‘the mere allegation of a man’s treason was notorious proof of his guilt’. When determined solely by royal whim, treason, with its threat to life, limb and honour, posed a fundamental danger to the body politic. In particular it inhibited the nobility from playing what its members saw as their proper role, diminishing their opportunities to question, let alone criticise, the king. In England the result of such political impotence might leave only a more direct course of action, namely to dispose of the monarch altogether since no lesser means of complaint remained. In France, although treason charges remained common throughout the period of the Hundred Years War, the reaction against Valois kings tended to be less violent.

The opaque definitions of treason which Edward II and Richard II employed soon came to be seen as tyrannical. Those kings more certain of their positions or more sensitive to the potential divisiveness of such a policy delineated the parameters of the crime much more precisely. Edward III issued the Statute of Treason (1352): to commit treason was to plot the death of the king, queen, or heir-apparent; to violate the queen or the king’s eldest daughter; to wage war against the king in his realm; to provide direct assistance to the king’s enemies; to undermine the privy seal, great seal, or the king’s money; to murder the chancellor, treasurer, or the king’s justices. All other felonies that might be adjudged treasonous were to be brought before Parliament. After the Lancastrian usurpation in 1399, Henry IV returned to this definition.

In France the quasi-divinity of royal power made accusations of treason especially significant. When combined with certain political realities and the spectre of sorcery, which gained even darker connotations in the context of Charles VI’s madness, the accusations which the duke of Burgundy levelled against the murdered Duke Louis proved sufficiently convincing, and on 9 March 1408 Charles offered Jean the Fearless a formal pardon. Unsurprisingly this did nothing to lessen the enmity between the houses of Orléans and Burgundy; indeed, it provoked civil war. Charles’s ‘absences’, therefore, led to a major crisis of kingship, as did the Lancastrian revolution in England. Richard II’s deposition in 1399 proved much more significant than that of Edward II in 1327. Henry IV’s coronation shattered the Plantagenet line of succession, brought turmoil to England and ruptured the Anglo-French truce of 1396, which had been sealed in the same year with King Richard’s marriage to Charles VI’s six-year-old daughter Isabella.

This was merely one occasion when kingship shaped and was shaped by the Hundred Years War. Matters of kingship guided the trajectory of the conflict from its inception. Royal rights lay at the heart of many of the disputes that ignited the war in 1337: the harbouring of Robert d’Artois, the mutual aggravation of Anglo-Flemish and Franco-Scottish relations, the status of Gascony, and the claim to the French throne itself. Some of these issues had been a source of simmering resentment for some time because of conflicting interpretations of the legal relationship between the Plantagenets and Capetians. However, Charles IV’s death in 1328 marked the end of the Capetian dynasty and changed the nature of the Anglo-French struggle. A series of disputes that had centred on the comparative rights of kings over lands in France became, at least in theory, a conflict over the right to rule France itself.

The rumour of war, therefore, grew louder with Philippe VI’s coronation in 1328. It was a ceremony that conferred enormous authority on him: far more than just a political act, in France it was little less than a beatification. In England, by contrast, the anointing of the king never seems to have carried quite the same significance. This was in spite of vigorous attempts to propagate a potent image of holy kingship resting on legal and theological foundations, and augmented by fanciful stories in which angels delivered vials of oil with which to anoint God’s chosen monarch. The spiritual authority conferred by the coronation and fostered by long years of ecclesiastical support meant that the French monarch was portrayed as more akin to a Christian Roman emperor than to other European kings, including his English counterpart.

The more limited nature of English kingship is evident in the oath which the monarch swore at his coronation. In the revised oath of 1308 Edward II promised not only to confirm the laws made by his predecessors, as his forebears had done, but also ‘to maintain and keep the laws and rightful customs which the community of the realm shall choose, and defend and enforce them to the honour of God, to the best of his ability’. This created a new and different form of contract between ruler and ruled. It implied that a change had occurred in the complexion of the body politic and that a new relationship now existed between the constituent parts of
that body. By this time a reference to the 'community of the realm' implied a more extensive political body than merely the magnates and Privy Council; rather the oath indicated that the king was now answerable, in some way, to his people as a whole. While Edward II and his successors gave no more than the most general considerations to the expectations of the English peasantry, the coronation oath reveals the growing importance of a widening political community - one that would soon begin to express its opinions in Parliament and, with the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, through mass action.  

Just as the king had to be aware of a changing political constituency, so the people were readjusting their relationship with the monarch. Following the change in the coronation oath the so-called 'Declaration of 1308' stated that homage was due to the Crown and the regal office, not to the person of the king. This distinction between office and individual - the notion of the king's 'two bodies' - represents an important change in the conception of English monarchy and it may have facilitated the rash of royal depositions that followed.  

The importance of coronations (of king-making) can also be seen in the manner in which they influenced major strategic decisions in the course of the Hundred Years War. In late 1359, after the French rejected the extortionate Second Treaty of London, Edward III landed with one of the largest and best-equipped English expeditions forces to date and marched on Reims, the coronation city. At the beginning of the war the king may have hoped merely to gain Gascony in full sovereignty and stop French interference in Scotland. As the campaign unfolded his hopes grew; perhaps he envisaged a restoration of the Angevin Empire, and following the capture of Jean II at Poitiers in 1356 his ambitions may, briefly, have extended to the throne of France itself. The siege of Reims, however, failed, as did a subsequent assault on Paris, forcing Edward to come to terms at Brétigny in 1360. The treaty recalibrated English aspirations at least until the French civil war.  

An even more dangerous expedition was undertaken to Reims to ensure Charles VII's coronation. Because of the treaty of Troyes and the conditions appertaining when Charles VI died, his son had not received the crown. In 1429, despite the relief of the siege of Orléans and the dauphinist victory at Patay (18 June 1429), the road to Reims, deep in Burgundian territory, remained perilous. The ceremony, however, was central to Joan of Arc's mission, and although propagandised and romanticised there is a measure of truth in the image of the halting, hesitant, uncertain dauphin transformed into Charles the Victorious by his coronation. Similarly the immediate although ill-conceived English rejoinder of Henry VII's ceremony performed in Paris and by an English bishop showed a keen awareness of the political significance of royal investiture.  

The coronation - a true coronation, that is - invested a monarch with great political and spiritual authority. It was an office underpinned by legal argument and theological doctrine, both of which evolved and became more closely entwined throughout this period. After being anointed with the Holy Oil, first used to invest Clovis, French kings were permitted to take Communion in both kinds (wine as well as bread), and both French and English monarchs gained the power to heal the king's evil (the skin disease scrofula). A regular custom of touching those afflicted with scrofula developed in the French royal court under Louis IX. In England, although earlier monarchs claimed or were attributed with healing powers, there is no strong evidence of a similar practice in use before Edward I came to the throne (1272). These sacral powers continued to be utilised during the Hundred Years War and came to indicate a legitimate claim to the French throne. In 1353 one Jehan de Lions avowed Edward III to be the rightful king of France because he could cure scrofula - a declaration for which he was imprisoned. In the Grandes Chroniques Louis IX's miraculous powers as king were used not only to emphasise his devotion and humility, but also to demonstrate his Valois successors' political legitimacy.  

Such ceremonies were influenced by biblical, Greek and Roman works regarding the source and extent of royal power. In France, authors such as Nicole d'Ormes, Christine de Pizan and Philippe de Mézières emphasised the pre-eminence of royal power although they recognised the king had responsibilities to his subjects. At Edward III's court, various governmental theories were proposed in the Speculum Regis, written for him as a young man by either Simon Islip (archbishop of Canterbury, 1349–66) or William of Pagula (d.1332). Thomas Bradwardine (1290–1349) was another who argued in favour of autocratic kingship. In De causa Dei he used Aristotle's Metaphysics to emphasise the thaumaturgical powers of the English king.  

The influence of Roman law was of particular significance in advancing this conception of kingship and promoted strongly by authors such as Giles of Rome (c.1243–1316) and John Wyclif (in De Civili Dominio and De Officio Regis). Giles referred to the prince or the king as a demi-god (semi-deus), and writers at the court of Charles V used even more extravagant language to exalt royal power. These influenced later practices in England.
such as Richard II’s insistence in the 1390s on new ceremonial and the use of ‘majesty’ as a term of address. The veracity of the story that Richard demanded his courtiers kneel if he so much as glanced at them has been called into question, but there is little doubt that his reign was seen as tyrannical. In reality, however, his style of government was representative of changing European conceptions of kingship — ones that, at this stage, sat more comfortably in a French rather than an English context.22 The Valois kings were buttressed in their authority by long years of thaumaturgical ritual and propaganda not evident to the same degree in England. In France the king was above the law and bound by no constraint but ‘the fear of his own conscience’.20 It is perhaps for this reason that the madness of Charles VI was not a cause for deposition, although, like Richard II, he was clearly thought of as rex inutilis (a useless king).

This combination of divine authority and legal rights offered kings a powerful protection against rebellion, at least in theory, since those who opposed the royal will could be deemed sacrilegious. Clearly, however, this was not sufficient to protect English kings from deposition, which suggests they were not judged as ‘holy’ as their French counterparts. Indeed, in the case of Richard II, he may have been deposed in part because he assumed a style of kingship that had a distinctly French, sacral and hence authoritarian quality. The distinction between the English king’s ‘two bodies’ grew in this period: as the splendour and spiritual resonance of the monarch’s office increased, his hold on that office grew more tenuous.

When Richard II suffered the same political fate as his great-grandfather Edward II, he was portrayed as wanting in both his personae (or bodies) as king — the body politic and the body natural. Richard’s personal limitations and failures were emphasised: he was accused of perjury in respect of his personal and coronation oaths; of sacrilege and sodomy; his mismanagement of the government was said to have led to a loss of royal dignity; and he had failed to uphold the law and liberty of the realm. This included, most damningly, chapter 39 of Magna Carta, which originally stated: ‘No free man shall be taken or imprisoned, or dispossessed or outlawed or exiled or in any way ruined, nor will we go or send against him except by the lawful judgement of his peers or by the law of the land.’ Legal constraints such as Magna Carta prevented the extensive use of Roman law in England: its inferiority to common law ensured English kings could not use it to bolster their authority to the degree enjoyed by the French. It is deeply significant that in 1369 Edward III replaced the phrase ‘no free man with no man, of whatever estate or condition he may be’. He promised no one should be dispossessed, imprisoned or put to death without ‘due process of law’, which was the first use of that phrase in the statutes.21

Richard had ignored this and attempted to be the source of the law rather than its mouthpiece (rex loquens as opposed to lex loquens). His actions were in accordance with certain Roman legal concepts: Princps legis solutus est (‘the king is not bound by laws’) and Quod principe placuit legis habet vigorem (‘what the prince decides has the force of law’).22 But in an English political context in 1399 he could only be adjudged a tyrant. The rule of law, the status of the monarch, his ability to govern, implement justice and defend the country were linked inextricably. Kingship in order to be effective had to be strong, but that strength could be used with ‘evil intent’ and, should it be so, the aristocracy was obligated to defend the proper laws and customs of the realm against tyranny in just the same way as they were required to support a just ruler — by force of arms.

Richard’s deposition, perhaps because he was Charles VI’s son-in-law, was discussed widely in France and horrified the French court. It entrenched the English reputation for moral depravity symbolised by regicide. Guillaume de Rochefort, chancellor of France (d.1492), exaggerated more than a little when he alleged the English had endured twenty-six changes of dynasty since the foundation of their monarchy. Such a ‘stigma of crime’, he said, could never have taken place in France. His words, however, reflected differing attitudes to kingship on either side of the Channel.33

The development of Capetian and Valois claims to monarchical supremacy had taken place over a long period and evolved still further during the Hundred Years War. John of Salisbury’s thirteenth-century notion of the king as the image of God (rex image Dei) became, by the end of the second decade of the fifteenth century, an avowal of little less than a divine right of royal succession. By comparison, the kings of England, notably Richard II, while at the apex of the political community were an intrinsic part of it and subject to its contractual principles.24 It was a contract that resulted in the deposition of successive English kings.

The Valois, therefore, may have been vulnerable to attack from abroad but in general the French monarchy rarely gave the impression of being threatened at home. Despite the political and personal disasters of Crécy, Poitiers and Agincourt, no French ruler paid with his life or throne. The later Capetian and early Valois kings created a model of kingship that appeared all but invulnerable to domestic assault.25 Indeed, growing pride in the king and the Valois dynasty prompted various French authors to
delight in the comparative poverty of Plantagenet monarchy and in the
degeneracy that led the English to ‘kill their kings’. For this reason,
despite his madness, there was no significant attempt to remove Charles VI
from the French throne. The civil war that followed the assassination of
Louis d’Orléans in 1407 was not a struggle to seize the Crown, merely to
control its resources.

The apparent incomprehensibility or impossibility of regicide in France
is, though, easily exaggerated – one of many idealistc themes nurtured
through long years in the abbey of Saint-Denis and at the University of
Paris. The French crown did not rest as easily on the monarch as those
propagandists suggested: Charles of Navarre, for one, had no qualms in
seeking ‘regime change’ in France, while Charles VII had to face the revolt
of the Praguerie. Nonetheless, there is little doubt that the theoretical
foundations on which the French monarchy stood – legally and spiritually,
if not bureaucratically and financially – were considerably more robust than
those that sustained the Plantagenets.

As this suggests, conceptions of royal power differed in England and
France, certainly when the war began, and those differences grew as the
struggle unfolded. This was in part because the Hundred Years War altered
political and social structures in England and France, changes to which
monarchies had no immunity. War led to an expansion of government and
encouraged greater participation in it as bureaucracies and representative
assemblies developed – these institutions vied for power with the monar
chies. Furthermore, the war continued for so long that it became a national
enterprise for successive generations. This reshaped the martial role of
the king and engendered a new sense of national consciousness in England and
France (see Chapter 10).

However, although the Hundred Years War wrought many changes, the
basic requirements of late medieval kingship remained much as they had
been for generations, which is no surprise since much of the glamour of
royalty lay in its antiquity. For Sir John Fortescue, the fifteenth-century
political theorist, the king’s responsibilities were simple and twofold: ‘the
office of king is to fight the battles of his people and to judge them right-
fully’. Success in these areas should ensure a successful reign such as that
enjoyed by Charles V. Known to posterity as Charles ‘the Wise’, he was
wise enough to surround himself with capable men who ensured justice
was done and the realm defended. According to Christine de Pizan, the
king’s biographer, ‘The king desired to fill his court and his council with
just and wise men ... [and] for the good conduct of his wars he made men
come from every country, seasoned knights wise and expert in the ways of
war. The importance of seeking out and giving heed to good advice had
long been recognised. According to Jean Gerson, ‘A king without prudent
counsel is like the head of a body without eyes, without ears, and without
nose.’ By that criterion (and others) Edward II and Richard II were both
senseless. Edward ‘resembled his father [Edward I] neither in wit nor
valour, but ruled the country in an unbridled fashion, and relied on the
advice of certain evil persons ... such a man was not worthy to wear the
crown and be called king’. According to John Capgrave (1393–1464), Richard II’s failures were
due largely to his injudicious choice of advisers: ‘King Richard was in the
habit of promoting worthless and malicious characters, and without either
regarding the advantage of the state, or attending to the advice of the lords,
afforded a hearing only to those who used, as it were, to colour their faces
with the pigment of flattery.’ Thomas Walsingham, similarly, described
the members of Richard’s household as

knights of Venus rather than Mars, showing more prowess in the
bedchamber than on the field of battle, defending themselves more with
their tongue than with their lance, being alert with their tongues, but
asleep when martial deeds were required. So those who were in the
king’s company made no effort to teach him the attributes that befit a
great knight. I am not just speaking of skill in wartime but also to the
pursuits which especially befit noble kings in peacetime such as hunting
or falconry or similar things which increase a king’s reputation.

Such matters were of deep concern to the wider polity, especially the
nobility who wished to have the ear of the king and for him to behave
appropriately – to be a king was, in no small measure, to appear kingly. Part
of Edward III’s success stemmed from his ability to collaborate with the
English aristocracy and to bring the political elite together in support of
his domestic policies and continental ambitions. This was a policy born of
necessity and the result of seeing the dangers of division at first hand in his
father’s court. It was also a policy recommended by authors concerned with
theories of political governance such as John of Salisbury (c.1120–80),
whose highly influential work on the body politic was translated for Charles
V. Christine de Pizan used the same image to project an idealised social
model: she stressed the need for harmony between the estates, the impor-
tance of balance in aristocratic relations and the mutual obligations of ruler
and ruled. A prince should care for his subjects, and take note of their wishes, although, Christine noted, this gave them no right to rebel against him. 46 Philippe de Mézières, in similar fashion, used the image of a great ship and its sailors working together under the command of the captain (king) to represent an idealised vision of unity among the French Estates General. 47

The nature of the relationship between a king and his subjects remained an issue of importance for a long time. For Niccolò Machiavelli at the start of the sixteenth century a prince best controlled his subjects through fear. This idea was far from new; over a hundred years previously Christine de Pizan had reached the same conclusion, 48 as had Jean Froissart, although predictably he expected rather more of his heroes: 'a lord was to be loved, trusted, feared, served and held in honour by his subjects'. 49

Charles V, by achieving a measure of national unity and through a judicious choice of counsellors and lieutenants, orchestrated a French military revival from 1369 until his death in 1380. Charles, though, was no great soldier himself, and for many the ideal king was also a warrior. The glamour gained by victory in battle could be a vital element in successful royal government but, in France at least, as the war progressed the importance of national military success outweighed a king's personal prowess. Throughout the war, tactical developments and improvements in military technology intensified the dangers of the battlefield: casualty rates increased and the opportunity to take prisoners declined. This placed all combatants at greater risk, royalty included. For a king, however, capture might be more damaging politically than death. The consequences of the defeat at Poitiers and the imprisonment of Jean II were long remembered. As a result, certainly for Christine de Pizan, the military successes of Charles V's reign were not compromised by his limited personal involvement. Given the memory of Poitiers, the dangers of indiscriminate missile weapons and the growing threat posed by artillery, she preferred to emphasise prudence (prudentia) over prowess (proœce) as the key virtue of kingship. 50 While it was certainly the case, as Honoré Bonet wrote, that the king of France 'could not abstain from making war against the king of England without mortal sin for if he were to allow his men to be killed and his kingdom robbed and destroyed, who would pardon such negligence?', 51 he did not have to do so in person. Certainly, by the time Charles VII came to the throne in 1422, bravery in battle and skill-at-arms were not indispensable requirements of French kingship. 52

In England, by contrast, it remained a clear political advantage to be recognised as a warrior. Military failure or perceived passivity played important roles in the depositions of English monarchs, while personal success in the field against the nation's traditional enemies, France and Scotland, added much to a king's reputation. As a result, Richard II's policy of peace towards France and failure to live up to the reputation of his father and grandfather, still less to that of the Lionheart, his namesake, undoubtedly compromised his authority. By contrast, Henry V was able to transform the prestige and authority of the English Crown at home and abroad. 53 Like Richard II, Henry VI suffered by comparison with his forebears: contemporaries could scarcely believe he was the son of the victor of Agincourt. Scrawling for an explanation, they described him as 'his [French] mother's stupid offspring, not his father's, a son greatly degenerated from the father, who did not cultivate the art of war'. 54 This only worsened with the king's descent into madness, said by some to have been brought on by news of the defeat at Castillon in 1453. 55

It is clear that numerous fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century authors such as Froissart, Chandos Herald and Thomas Walsingham, writing for English audiences, placed great value on royal martial prowess, and although others such as John Gower saw the main role of the king as that of a governor not a warrior, theirs appears to have been a minority view. In France, by contrast, as the war progressed the expectation lessened that the king would also be the epitome of knighthood, perhaps because, as Crécy, Poitiers and Agincourt showed, chivalry (in its traditional, mounted guise) was unlikely to bring victory in an age of infantry and missile weapons. Charles VII became Charles 'the Victorious' in large measure because of the potency of Jean Bureau's artillery train, not his own skill-at-arms. By the end of the war there was a clear distinction between the expectations the peoples of England and France had of their kings—'Chivalry came to define the English regal style, just as sacramentalism did the French'. 56

The differences in the military expectations of kings as well as other characteristics of French and English kingship can be seen in royal funerals. 57 Among the most distinctive aspects of services in both countries was the use of a lifelike effigy in place of the deceased king. In England this practice dated back to the funeral of Edward II (1327) and it may have come to French attention following Henry V's death in 1422; certainly, it was first adopted in France a few months later for Charles VI's funeral. 58 Thereafter the French rites associated with the effigy appear to have swiftly become more elaborate. In France and England both effigies were dressed in the royal regalia and adorned with the symbols of sovereignty; but in France the effigy was treated as though it was alive—meals were even
served in its presence. Because the effigy retained the dignity of monarchy, the dauphin — the new king — did not participate in the funeral since it was thought improper/impossible for two kings of France to inhabit the same space simultaneously. Again, the imperial connotations of rule are apparent in this ceremony; French royal funerals display many of the characteristics of Roman apotheosis ceremonies. Through the use of the effigy the illusion of continuity of rule was maintained until the new monarch acceded: _Le roi est mort! Vive le roi!_ The old king, through the effigy, retained his sacred authority and so continued to bear his symbols of office until buried at Saint-Denis.99 The body of the king was accompanied to his burial by the four presidents of the _parlement_ of Paris — a practice going back to the funeral of Jean le Bon in 1364. They did so ‘because they represent his person in matters of justice, which is the principal member of his crown, and by which he reigns and has seigniory [sovereignty].’60

The sacral nature of French kingship was, therefore, evident in royal funerals. By contrast, in England the service revealed the military and chivalric connotations of monarchical power. During the Hundred Years War the tradition began of a knight (or more than one) entering the chapel during the requiem mass. Riding one of the king’s horses, bearing a shield emblazoned with the king’s arms and carrying his standard, he and other knights of the realm offered these tokens at the foot of the royal tomb. This may have begun in 1377 (Edward III) and was certainly performed in 1422 (Henry V). By comparison it was not until 1498 that a French king’s ‘achievements’ were offered up at his funeral. This indicates that English kings (at least the successful ones) conformed to that ‘rather aggressive brand of chivalry’ which differentiated English from French kingship in the later Middle Ages.61

Differences in the character of English and French kingship had been evident when the war began in 1337, and they became more apparent as the struggle progressed. The period of the war saw France make the painful transition from ‘feudal’ monarchy to the verge of early modern absolutism. Following an uneven process of disintegration and reconstruction, the power and prosperity of Capetian France were all but broken before the Valois were able to establish (and re-establish) systems of governance centred on the king. This gave the monarch extensive and potentially sole control over the nobility and matters of finance and law — a system that continued to evolve and endure until the end of the _ancien régime_.62 In England, by contrast, the further development of the so-called ‘war state’ built on earlier constitutional foundations to create a realm in which the

The death of Charles IV (1328) and the ensuing succession dispute complicated matters still further. In the aftermath of the Valois accession Edward III paid homage to Philippe VI for Gascony and Ponthieu.66 According to Valois lawyers, this showed an acceptance of the superiority of French kingship and of Philippe’s claim to the French throne. The English later responded that Edward had been a minor at the time, which offered him protection under Roman law, and that he had given homage on condition that this did not harm any of his hereditary rights. Consequently, they argued, he had not renounced his claim to the French throne. This view is reflected in certain chronicle accounts. According to Froissart, ‘The king Edward of England did homage by mouth [i.e. a kiss] and words only, without putting his hands between the hands of the king of France.’ By contrast, this limited form of homage is not shown in illustrations from the _Grande Chroniques_: Edward is depicted dressed in royal attire, which suggests he did homage not merely as duke of Gascony but as king of England too.67

Edward III himself seems to have acknowledged, quietly perhaps, the political and moral superiority of French kingship — certainly for a French
and Flemish audience and certainly when claiming the French throne. Over the course of his reign Edward adjusted his title, proclaiming himself either king of France and England, or king of England and France, depending on circumstances. Similarly, after his usurpation in 1399, Henry IV reversed the title on his great seal to read rex Anglie et Francie, reflecting his need to emphasise greater concern for his English title. However, after 1340 when the claim to the French throne was first proclaimed heraldically, the fleur-de-lys were always given prominence on the royal arms. This, then, seems an acknowledgement that French kingship was considered in some way(s) superior to English kingship, certainly around the time the war began. Unsurprisingly, the authors of the Grandes Chroniques and various French theorists shared this opinion. Christine de Pizan and others promoted a potent image of sacred royal power. The ‘most Christian king’ (rex christianissimus) secured the nation’s future. The Crown’s superiority rested on its consistent defence of ‘Ho.y Church’, a link that the canonisation of Louis IX had strengthened, and on its antiquity, particularly its links to Charlemagne, which were embodied in the coronation sword (joyeuse) and the royal banner (the Oriflamme). Later, Charles V would actively promote a cult of Charlemagne, even referring to him as a saint in 1378.

Antiquity was a potent symbol of power, but monarchs on both sides of the Channel had to negotiate with more immediate political forces at home in order to protect themselves against attack from abroad. The power and status of English and French kings depended in part on the authority of their respective representative assemblies – Parliament and the Estates General. In England the burgeoning authority of Parliament restricted the extension of royal power. The Commons, because of its control over taxation, began to exercise greater influence over the king and the direction of royal policy. Although princely rights were proclaimed and defended with immense vigour throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, English monarchs were forced, increasingly, to respond if not accede to parliamentary demands. A series of renowned Parliaments in the last quarter of the fourteenth century showed the changing nature of the political relationship between the king and the ‘community of the realm’. The Good, Wonderful, and Merciless Parliaments (1376, 1386, 1388) revealed the growing power of the Commons as it brought charges of impeachment and attainder against the Crown’s ministers.

A different relationship existed in France between the king and the Estates General. Although subjected to regular military and political setbacks, French monarchical authority grew relatively unfettered, while English kings had to work within new parameters and subject to a new political relationship with the representatives of the ‘community of the realm’. This was a political group that now extended beyond the traditional magnate power bloc. In France provincial loyalties and simple logistics inhibited a comparable rise in the authority of the Estates General. National assemblies had gained little influence in Capetian times, and apart from exceptional periods there was rarely a call for a general assembly of the whole kingdom during the Hundred Years War. This did make it difficult to raise taxes, especially in the years before 1356, but it meant the Estates General gained little influence over the king. Only in the 1340s and 1350s did the Estates General appear to be growing in authority, but it soon succumbed to internal divisions and growing tensions. It became a forum in which individual animosities were fought out, while the revolt of the Jacquerie brought any political actions of the lesser Estates into suspicion. Because of this, once it secured regular and easy access to taxation, French royal power could develop relatively unchecked. This, however, was not a smooth process. Initial steps towards a system of semi-permanent taxation were taken in response to the need to ransom Jean II and, subsequently, to deal with the problem of uncontrolled mercenary activity after the treaty of Brétigny in 1360. This system collapsed with the Armagnac (Orléans)-Burgundian civil war and was only re-established around 1435. Thereafter taxation provided the means for Charles VII to deal with a renewed mercenary threat and drive the English out of France. Taxation was vital for the extension of French royal power: it allowed for the 1445 ordonnances, which paved the way for a standing army, and provided resources to co-opt much of the nobility into the king’s service.

The resources available to kings, therefore, increased very considerably during the Hundred Years War, and they took full advantage of this. Royal households grew in size and complexity, and as the court became fixed in a single or small number of locations its features, luxury, status and the practices observed within its confines developed: in architectural terms, despite the war, military considerations gave way to matters of display and domestic comfort. In the first half of the 1350s, Jean II settled the French court more permanently in and around Paris, and Charles V moved the royal household from the Palais de Justice to the Hôtel Saint-Pol. Around this time the ceremonial of royal visits to the parlement of Paris also became increasingly intricate. Royal space within the grand-chambre of the parlement, from which royal judgments might be passed, was to be clearly
demarcated with the paraphernalia of the *lit de justice*: a canopy, cover, backdrop and pillows, all embroidered with *fleurs de lys* and the arms of France. This separation of the monarch through the use of draperies was extended to other locations including the Hôtel Saint-Pol, the Salle Saint-Louis of the Palais de Justice, and the Louvre.74

In the fourteenth century Paris provided the Valois kings with a degree of security from regular English raids and ensured French kings were in close contact with the institutions of government. As the machinery of national administration became focused on the capital so it was necessary for the king to be nearby. For the same reason, after 1360, once Edward III finished his campaigning career he resided in or around London. Windsor became a favoured residence, the new Camelot, home to the Order of the Garter and a public memorial to the monarchy. The king largely rebuilt the castle between 1350 and 1377 at a cost of over £51,000. He reconstructed the Great Hall and the royal apartments. Edward provided himself with seven chambers, a closet and private chapel; the queen had four chambers, one with an adjoining chapel. Guest quarters and lodgings for senior members of the household were also constructed and furnished to the highest standards. Such developments involved a new use of space within great households. A larger number of rooms with a wider range of functions were assigned and designed for individual use. Edward also undertook impressive redevelopments at Sheen (Richmond) and Eltham (Greenwich), to which Richard II and Henry IV added. These three properties were the chief focus of expenditure on English royal domestic housing in the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries and became the primary residences of the king, but they were not the only ones: King's Langley, Woodstock near Oxford, Henley-on-the-Heath and Kennington were all improved and extended.75

Such new building served not only to demonstrate royal status but also the status of those who served the king. Many aspects of the household were not functional but concerned with ‘religion, display, extravagance, courtesy, gesture and movement, indeed anything that underpinned status and magnificence’.76 At Windsor one reached the royal presence by progressing through a suite of chambers of increasing quality. In Charles V's donjon a: Vincennes near Paris the same hierarchical process took place, although vertically rather than horizontally. Such buildings allowed for the performance of ever more complex court ceremonial. Meals and feasting provided opportunities to emphasise royal power as well as the hierarchy that existed beneath the king. Seating and the provision of different qualities of food and drink demonstrated status and played a part in the general ritual of the court. Such questions of status might also be disruptive. At Charles VI's coronation banquet a scuffle broke out between the dukes of Anjou and Burgundy over precedence and seating.77 Such activities were a key way by which royal (and noble) power and authority were demonstrated and imposed and, in time, they became one of the main ways by which power and authority were defined.

The religious calendar regulated the court’s annual and daily rhythms in accordance with saints’ days, fasts and festivals, and so the Chapel Royal provided an important ritual setting and forum in which the king’s power could be displayed. Matters of national and international politics also shaped religious ceremony and might influence the design and decoration of royal chapels. The Valois enjoyed the magnificence of the Sainte-Chapelle, built by St Louis (Louis IX) to house the Crown of Thorns and the other relics he had purchased from Emperor Baldwin II of Constantinople. In the extraordinary setting of the upper chapel with its breathtaking stained glass a clear symbolic link was presented between Christ and the French monarchs. Furthermore, the Capetians and their successors had taken on the imperial mantle as defenders of Christendom, a theme also emphasised in the glass. The chapel may well have served as a pilgrimage site designed to encourage devotion to the king as much as to the King of Kings.78

St Stephen's Chapel, Westminster, was completed under the patronage of Edward III and Philippa of Hainault in 1363. Religious, dynastic, domestic and political considerations are evident in the design. On the altar wall to the north, beneath a painting of the Adoration of the Magi, St George was depicted leading a line of royal males consisting of the king and his five sons; the queen and her daughters were shown on the south wall. This important early example of English dynastic portraiture celebrated the royal family and made a powerful political statement. The family were depicted in a French style and Philippa and her daughters were dressed in the French fashion. Perhaps based on a French example at Poissy commissioned by Philippe IV, the wall painting may have been 'overt display of English fecundity' — an important statement given the failure of the Capetian line. Just to underline the political intent the quartered arms of England and France were prominently displayed. Given the nature of the Hundred Years War the king's family, the blood royal, was rebranded in accordance with English political ambitions.79

By the end of the war changes in military tactics and technology had altered the nature of warfare, its funding and the composition of royal
armies. This, in turn, altered the role and expectations of kings. While numerous guides for rulers (‘mirrors for princes’) show that the main duties of kingship remained the defence of the realm, the maintenance of order and the provision of justice, the means by which these ends were to be achieved, had changed considerably. The war, therefore, placed new and different pressures on monarchs and an awareness of this influenced political and military strategy. For example, the English chevauchées, whatever else their aim, were an assault on French kings – a statement that they could neither defend their realm nor maintain law and order within it.

The changing nature of the Hundred Years War reshaped the contesting views of kingship in England and France. By the early fifteenth century the conflict had evolved from a dynastic and feudal struggle into a national war fought by two kings who claimed identical powers in France. And in some superficial ways the institutions had become more similar. Family ties, for example, had strengthened, a fact both sides emphasised independently through their assertions of links to the Capetians and especially to St Louis. The Milemete treatise, a consideration of the art of kingship, compared Edward III to the young Louis IX, and Edward himself stressed this connection in his letter to the French people in 1340. Henry V was advertised as both a direct descendant of St Louis and a legitimate king of England. After the treaty of Troyes English rulers continued to use dynastic imagery centring on St Louis: the duke of Bedford and the Anglo-French chancery promoted this link on coinage, on posters hung in the city of Paris and in public ceremonies. In other ways, however, the institutions were evolving increasingly distinctly. The conception of the French king as rex christianissimus who governed a holy realm had formed part of French political theory since the later thirteenth century, but it emerged with renewed vigour as a consequence of the Hundred Years War.

Although conceptions of kingship changed over the course of the Hundred Years War, and despite mounting differences between English and French views of ideal monarchs, defence of the realm and of royal rights remained central to the promotion and manifestation of royal authority in the later Middle Ages. The king himself may not always have been a soldier but his ability to put troops into the field was vital to the maintenance and demonstration of monarchical power. The connection between the king and his soldiers was, therefore, crucial – and at no time was its importance greater than in 1415.

In the opinion of the French [that] which assured the English of victory [at Agincourt was] the continuous way in which they rained down on [them] – a terrifying hail of arrow shot. As [the archers] were lightly armed and their ranks were not too crowded, they had freedom of movement and could deal mortal blows with ease . . . They kept themselves with advantage in the middle of the bloody mêlée . . . fighting with so much passion for they knew that for them it was a matter of life or death. 1

The Religieux of Saint-Denis, Histoire de Charles VI (c.1415–22)

It was the regular soldiery – infantry and longbowmen – who secured England’s most famous victory in the Hundred Years War. The limitations of knights and cavalry, which had been clear from the opening engagements, were writ large in 1415. Henry V’s first campaign to France began with the siege of Harfleur in August and September and the reckless march towards Calais. It concluded on 25 October with the extraordinary triumph at Agincourt that became legendary almost as soon as it had been won. Later, from Shakespeare’s perspective, this last shining moment presaged the drab then bloody descent into civil war. It established Henry as perhaps the greatest of England’s medieval kings and Agincourt as the pre-eminent example of English martial fortitude until the Second World War.

The shattering victory, not far from the Somme, was, however, not one that came like lightning from a clear sky. It was the product of a military evolution, perhaps even revolution that had begun with Edward I’s campaigns to Wales, Scotland and France. For the French, we are told, the defeat at Azincourt revealed not only the poverty of native skill-at-arms but also the political canker at the heart of France that had grown out of the
CHAPTER 10

National Identities
ST GEORGE AND LA MÈRE FRANCE
1449

Thus King Charles of France . . . bad by the Grace of God, and also by the
skill and wisdom of his knights and counsellors and soldiers of all ranks,
regained his duchy of Normandy which had been occupied . . . by his ancient
enemies the English. He had placed the whole province under his power, and
made provision for new government, and for police and military garrisons
. . . all the while trusting in the grace and mercy of the King of Kings, who
wills that every man should have his own, as it is written in a passage in
Saint Matthew: 'Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's: and unto
God the things which are God's.' Because of this he resolved to march into
Guyenne, which had been occupied by the English since time immemorial . . .
The nobles and people of that land have always been rebellious against the
crown of France . . . although it forms part of the kingdom of France.1

Enguerrand de Monstrelet, La Chronique

When Charles VII invaded Normandy on 31 July 1449, he initiated the
final act of the Hundred Years War. In March he had been provided with
an excellent excuse for the invasion when the English-allied mercenary
captain François de Surienne (known as 'L'Aragonais') launched an attack
on the Breton bastide (fortified town) of Fougères, near the Norman border.
Charles took the opportunity willingly, but his main concern at this stage
of the war was political not military, not a concern for a bastide in Brittany
but with the promotion of Valois authority throughout the realm. The
king's main priority by 1449 was with his own people not with the English,
and his chief aim to ensure the loyalty of his greatest nobles, especially
the Princes of the Blood. In a letter to the king of Castile and Leon dated
2 April 1451, Charles claimed he had been forced to take action in 1449
because the English had attempted by certain means to withdraw and
attribute to themselves the subjection and obedience of our nephew of
Brittany and of his lands and duchy, although, in truth, as is well known, he
is our man, vassal and subject. 2 Such an act, far more significant than
the loss of a mere bastide, could not be countenanced. The invasion of
Normandy, therefore, offered the king a chance to make a major demon-
stration of his power within his growing nation, and to offer decisive
evidence of his sovereignty. It was a happy coincidence that the attack
on Fougères also provided Charles with a reason to begin the series of
campaigns that would end the Hundred Years War and see English territo-
rial holdings in France reduced to nothing more than the port of Calais.

In many ways it is surprising that hostilities had not resumed before 1449.
After the truce of Tours had been concluded on 28 May 1444, divisions
became increasingly obvious in the English camp as Henry VI actively (and
sometimes independently) pursued a peace policy with France. He agreed to
the surrender of the county of Maine in December 1445, although this did
not take place until 1448. English attention thereafter focused on the defence
of Normandy, and the king even suggested that his claim to the French
Crown might be traded for sovereign control of the duchy. At the same time
various initiatives were undertaken to shore up the deteriorating English
position. In particular, support was sought within France; steps were taken to
fill the political void that had been left in December 1435, when Philippe the
Good and Charles VII had made peace and sealed the treaty of Arras. To this
end the English courted François I, duke of Brittany, and his brother, Gilles
de Champaقة. Long after the conclusion of the Blois–Montfort civil war in
1364, dukes of Brittany had sought to avoid taking sides in the Hundred
Years War, and François had maintained a studied neutrality when possible.
Gilles, however, had wider ambitions, and he had spent the years 1432–34 in
Henry VI's household, becoming close friends with the king. When François
paid homage to Charles VII in March 1446, divisions, already evident,
widened in the ducal family, bringing about the arrest of Gilles in June – an
act that appalled Henry. The English attack on Fougères, therefore, formed
part of an extensive and intricate plan that aimed to pressurise Brittany into
an alliance with England, free Gilles and force François to distance himself
politically from Charles VII. In the event, it failed disastrously and gave
Charles the opportunity to stamp his authority and re-establish his 'good
lordship' throughout the realm.4 Hence, the final phase of the Hundred Years
War, like the first, would be a struggle for sovereignty – one to determine the
extent and depth of the king of France's power within his realm.
Charles VII secured Brittany's allegiance swiftly and used the opportunity the English attack afforded to continue his campaign: Normandy and Gascony capitulated in short order in the face of bribery, political coercion and military force. Normandy was overrun within a year by French armies advancing on three fronts: Rouen surrendered on 10 November 1449; English reinforcements were crushed at Formigny on 15 April 1450; the capture of Caen (24 June) and Cherbourg (12 August) completed the conquest. In the summer of the following year, Charles sent an army south to Gascony under the command of Jean de Dunois (the 'Bastard' of Orléans, Charles d’Orléans’s half-brother): Bordeaux and Bayonne submitted on 12 August and 20 August respectively. Henry VI's response – a paltry gesture of defiance – was, on 2 September 1452, to appoint John Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury, his lieutenant in Gascony. The French had expected an attack on Normandy and with their forces divided, on 23 October Talbot managed to recapture Bordeaux with the aid of Gascons loyal to England, or at least those preferring the distant government of London to a claustrophobic Valois presence. Over the next two months he re-established English control in the Bordelais, Médoc and Entre-Deux-Mers. Talbot had, however, only delayed the inevitable; despite receiving reinforcements he and his army were destroyed by Jean Bureau's artillery at the battle of Castillon (17 July 1453), which marked the end of the Hundred Years War.  

Castillon was proclaimed a national victory, achieved through a national effort, and undoubtedly it proved to be a victory that enhanced an already flourishing sense of national identity. For Enguerrand de Monstrelet (quoted above) Charles VII triumphed over his 'ancient enemies' because he moulded the military potential of France into a powerful fighting force with the help and advice of wise representatives of the body politic. His conquests, underpinned in reality by new political, administrative and governmental initiatives, were seen as divinely inspired; they brought about the extension of Valois kingship within France to a point approaching its 'natural' geographical frontiers. And yet when Charles had turned, finally, to Gascony, it was not to liberate but to (re)conquer a duchy 'occupied by the English since time immemorial', whose people 'have always been rebellious against the crown of France'. Monstrelet gives a clear indication of the growth of a sense of French national identity over the course of the Hundred Years War, while simultaneously recognising some of the limitations of that identity. Even in 1453, many 'Frenchmen' had no wish to be governed from Paris, and Gascon exiles continued to exercise influence at the English court. 

The Hundred Years War had, nonetheless, reshaped both France and England substantially, and created or 'imagined' them into a new form – throughout the kingdom Frenchmen and women could now start to imagine themselves as part of a single community. Indeed, France (herself) was now personified. The poet and political writer Alain Chartier, driven from his native Bayeux and then from Paris by the English invasion of 1417-20, coined the term la mère France (Mother France) in 1422. In his Quadrilogue invectif that same maternal figure entreats nobility, commons and clergy to unite in their efforts to save her from invasion and civil war. In a similar fashion St George emerged in the course of the struggle as England's patron saint and the very image of the nation. In 1351 it was said that 'the English nation ... call upon [St George], as being their special patron, particularly in war'. By the end of the war men were willing to fight and die for those images and what they represented. Dying for one's country became redemptive. For some it was an almost Christ-like sacrifice, for others service in the name and for the honour of the nation brought with it a place in heaven, and glory and gratitude on earth. Furthermore, because the war had reshaped the institutions of government – the administrative and bureaucratic systems of the state – one could now serve the nation in many ways, not only on the battlefield. St George and la mère France also represented those who served the nation in Parliament or the Estates General, in the Exchequer and the chambre des comptes. These state institutions, in turn, helped determine the parameters of the nation. Its borders – geographical, cultural, social and political – were laid out much more clearly over the course of the war, and this process enshrined the differences between England and France. 

Writing in various works in the aftermath of the fall of Bordeaux, Sir John Fortescue (Chief Justice of the King's Bench since 1442) emphasised what he saw as the clear constitutional differences between England and France. In particular, he concentrated on the superiority, as he saw it, of an English limited monarchy (dominium politicum et regale) over French 'absolute' kingship (dominium regale). English kings, unlike those in France, could not make laws or impose taxes without the consent of Parliament, but Fortescue argued that their power was at least the equal of their Valois counterparts because it was augmented with the support of the community of the realm. Writing, in part, as a response to such French polemicists as Jean de Monttreuil and Jean Juévan des Ursins, Fortescue described French justice as tyrannical, an arbitrary tool in the king's hands, not subject to the proper English procedures. As a result, he believed that in France, as soon
as a man is adjudged to be guilty according to the king’s conscience, he is thrust into a sack without any form of trial and is thrown into a river at night and drowned: a great many more men die in this way than stand convicted by due process of law.”

Whether misguided, mischievous or mendacious, Fortescue’s impression of French law, a defining criterion of French society, is instructive. The Hundred Years War emphasized and created differences between the two nations that soon became caricatured and exaggerated. By the end of the conflict both countries faced – or claimed they faced – a threat not only to their political integrity but also to a newly fashioned sense of national identity. Frenchmen and Englishmen, collectively, thought of themselves differently, and as very different from each other, due to the duration and nature of the Hundred Years War.

The evidence for such a development is considerable: a welter of propaganda proclaimed the justice of each side’s cause, some of it the product of an intense intellectual debate between scholars and churchmen. Cultural slurs were exchanged with increasing frequency and vehemence; national stereotypes hardened. Over the previous hundred years the English had killed more Christians than any other people, according to Jean de Montreuil in about 1411. They wanted nothing more than to destroy the kingdom for which they had only abhorrence and hatred. Both sides employed cartography to represent their national borders; patron saints embodied the nation on earth (as in heaven); and the church(es) disseminated the message of the state to the people. The appeal to serve the nation and to act for the common good became familiar refrains. The lower ranks of society began to invest in war personally, as taxpayers and as soldiers in national service. The population at large became investors in a national enterprise.

Because of this, in 1450 ‘men [in England] began to protest about the sudden and complete loss of the king’s lands in France’. This politicisation resulted from the great effort both sides expended to justify new and near permanent levels of taxation. Those who paid their taxes expected their money to be used wisely and to good effect. In the phase of the war from 1340 to 1360, English military success had been proclaimed throughout the country, which ensured that Edward III’s aspirations became those of the English political ‘class’ as a whole, and this group grew in size and social diversity as a consequence of the conflict and the national mobilisation of men and resources. The English population became accustomed to military success in this period, which meant that later failures could not easily be explained. Meanwhile in France similar processes were at work, galvanised not by victory but by devastation and occupation. After a time the sheer length of the conflict also began to influence attitudes; mutual antipathy became the normal state of affairs. And a range of other factors also played their part: the growth of chivalric and military orders, the central role of the monarchy and the importance of language, especially the increasing use of the vernacular, contributed a great deal to new and enhanced concepts of nationhood.

Therefore the Hundred Years War intensified and redefined a sense of national identity in England and France, but it did not create those identities ex nihilo. A French identity had been tied closely to the growth of royal authority over a long period, alongside a developing belief in the people’s status as members of God’s most favoured nation. The reality and theory of Capetian power had extended in breadth and depth from, perhaps, the reign of Louis VI, ‘the Fat’ (1108–37), whose deeds and dynasty were praised and commemorated by successive authors in the abbey of Saint-Denis from the time of Abbot Suger (c.1081–1151) onwards. Saint-Denis was the wellspring for the mythology of French royal power: home to the coronation regalia, the place in which the Capetians and their Valois successors were furnished with a historiographical foundation, polemical support and, most importantly, a sacral lustre. This spiritual celebrity, in turn, was conferred upon the members of the French nation – the most Christian people of the most Christian king. In this way the French came to view themselves as a Chosen People – a claim confirmed by a series of miraculous events over long years including the conquests of Philippe II, ‘Augustus’ (r.1180–1223), and the extraordinary victory at Bouvines in 1214 that ended the Angevin-Flanders war. The sanctification of Louis IX at the start of the fourteenth century only served to strengthen this ‘mystique of nationhood that was tied to the royal blood of the kings’.

In England a conception of national identity was also bound up with royal status, although not so tightly. The extension and retraction of English authority within the British Isles and in France under the Norman, Angevin and Plantagenet kings had shaped the conceptual as well as the geographical borders of the nation, and hence its identity. This process may be traced through a series of phases and events. Prior to the outbreak of the Hundred Years War, the last major attempt to extend English authority in the British Isles had been in Edward I’s reign when he sought to subdue his neighbours in Wales and Scotland. Edward’s policies served to exaggerate the ‘national’ differences (political, cultural, legal and linguistic) that already
existed between the countries of the British Isles and drove the Scots into the Auld Alliance (1295), which encouraged the outbreak of the Anglo-
French war. Before this, the treaty of Paris (1259) had done much to rede-
fine relations between England and France: it forced ‘Englishmen’ (some of
whom might not have been resident in England) to declare their political
allegiances more exactly, thus giving a new precision to a sense of national
identity. The treaty was a confirmation that the bulk of the Angevin Empire
had been lost, although this had been evident to many since Normandy fell
to Philippe Augustus in 1204. In turn, the loss of French lands led to the
construction of a new ‘English’ identity, even though a sense of ‘Englishness’,
although of a different sort, can be discerned far earlier than this. It had been
gendered by various expansionist projects in the British Isles and Ireland
in the twelfth century, and these built upon a nascent, although not national,
identity with roots in the Norman Conquest of 1066 and, indeed, reaching
back to King Alfred’s Wessex in the ninth century. A sense of national identity, therefore, was one shaped in part or perhaps chiefly through conflict with England’s neighbours in the British Isles and
with France. Prior to the outbreak of the Hundred Years War, although in
the midst of Anglo-French hostilities, Parliament had heard accusations
that the French were seeking to destroy both the English nation and the
English language. First claimed by Edward I in 1295, the allegation was
reiterated in 1344, 1346, 1376 and 1388. As the Parliament rolls of June
1344 put it, the king of France ‘firmly intends, as our lord the king and
his council fully comprehend, to destroy the English language and to occupy
the land of England’. French invasion plans discovered at Caen in 1346
suggested an intention ‘to destroy and ruin the whole English nation and
language’. Why a threat to a language commonly used only by a minority of the
ruling elite at this time should prove so troubling is intriguing. Yet an asso-
ciation between identity, nation and language strengthened over the course
of the later Middle Ages, not only in England and France but throughout
Europe, much of which saw ‘a growing intolerance of language diversity’. During the Hundred Years War the increasing use of the vernacular in
England emphasised and was used to express a growing cultural divide
with France. Consequently, at the start of the fourteenth century, the
English aristocracy had been predominantly francophone (and often
culturally francophile); however, by the end of the Hundred Years War its
members spoke mainly English. This had begun before the outbreak of
hostilities in 1337, but the war greatly accelerated the process.

Language, therefore, long recognised as a key ethnic determinant,
became an increasingly politicised subject (and object) in the later Middle
Ages: a cause for conflict and a means by which conflict was described and
furthred. At almost exactly the same time as Edward I addressed the
English Parliament on the matter of the threat to the nation’s political and
cultural integrity, Philippe IV’s officials claimed that individuals in English
Gascony could be killed simply for speaking the lingua Gallica (northern/
Parisian French, the langue d’oïl). In England, as animosity towards France
grew, the vernacular (the ‘mother tongue’) emerged as the language of
administration, popular literature, history and political propaganda, and its
use ‘was a precondition of the process of deepening and consolidating the
sense of national identity by harnessing the emotive energy of the associa-
tion between language and nationalism’. This process was enshrined in
legislation: in 1362 the Statute of Pleading established English as the
language to be used in debate in English royal and seigneurial courts (with
some minor exceptions). After 1399 the Lancastrian dynasty made exten-
sive use of written English in an attempt to win patriotic support for its
claim to the throne. Henry IV and his successors followed the example set
by the Capetian and Valois kings who had worked in such close alliance
with the historians and propagandists of the abbey of Saint-Denis.
Consequently, the first half of the fifteenth century saw a rapid rise in the
number of English-language chronicles as the Lancastrians attempted to
appropriate vernacular historiography for their own ends.

During the Council of Constance language was again emphasised as the
prime characteristic of a nation. In 1417 the English ambassador, Thomas
Polton, noted:

Whether a nation be understood as a race, relationship, and habit of
unity, separate from others, or as a difference of language, which by divine
and human law is the greatest and most authentic mark of a nation and the
essence of it [my emphasis] … or whether it be understood, as it should
be, as an equality of territory with, for instance, the Gallic nation – in all
these respects the renowned nation of England or Britain is one of the
four or five nations that compose the papal obedience.

Polton’s chief concern at the council was to sustain England’s claim to be
one of the ‘nations’ (nationes) of the papal obedience, alongside France,
Spain, Germany and Italy. These groupings were not nations in a modern
sense but geographical collectives brought together for the purposes of
 ecclesiastical organisation. In order to make his claim, Polton equated England (natio Anglica) with Britain (an ecclesiastical grouping comprising England, Ireland, Wales and Scotland), despite the fact that few of those additional peoples paid allegiance, willingly at least, to Henry V. The particular circumstances of the Council of Constance and the form of Polton's argument are a reminder that definitions of the 'nation' (in Latin variously described as gens, patria or natio) were not fixed in the late Middle Ages. Indeed, without the institutional features of the modern nation-state — capitalism, printing, industrialisation, mass education, and so on — it has been argued that France and England should not be considered as nations in this period. Or, if France and England were nations by the end of the Hundred Years War, they were not necessarily so in quite the same sense as the politico-cultural 'units' that followed.

While such matters of precise definition are important, there is no question that the people of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were subjected to intense political, social and cultural pressures which both bound them together (as nations), yet also, at various times, placed enormous pressures on those same nations, threatening to fracture them. The Hundred Years War dismembered both countries militarily, governmentally, culturally and/or through disputes between members of the body politic. France was rent apart not only by English attacks, occupation and civil war, but by the Capetian-Valois apanage policy. In the apanages — areas partially divested of sovereign authority and given over to one of the Princes of the Blood — an already potent sense of regional identity was often exaggerated to the extent that it could supersede or undermine national loyalties. Edward III recognised and attempted to exploit this in the early stages of the war through what has been described as his 'provincial strategy', and the Lancastrian kings sought to manipulate the divisions of the Armagnac-Burgundian civil war in a similar fashion. Such local loyalties and divisions inhibited the development of not only a sense of national identity, but also of the construction of some of the institutions of government that might provide a focus for such an identity and a means of communicating it throughout the realm. This is particularly evident in the regional Estates whose independence prevented governmental centralisation and Valois exploitation of France's full military and financial resources until late in the war.

This sort of regional particularism was exemplified by and identified with such ambitious princes as Charles of Navarre, Gaston Fébus of Foix, Jean de Montfort of Brittany and successive dukes of Burgundy. The Hundred Years War offered these men the opportunity to assert their independence and that of their principalities within France. Such political impediments to the construction of a national identity were strengthened by distinct linguistic and cultural characteristics in certain regions. Political and cultural divisions of this sort could and did divide loyalties to a central authority and so inhibited the development of a sense of national identity, especially one primarily dependent on the monarch. Nonetheless, although the war allowed certain principalities to exploit French royal weakness, over a period of time it also provided French kings with some of the legal, administrative and military mechanisms to limit that same regional independence and eventually restore France to its 'natural' territorial borders. In the seventh century, Isidore of Seville (c.560–636) had defined Gaul as a country bounded by the Alps and the Pyrenees, the (Atlantic) ocean and the Rhine. In part, the Hundred Years War was fought to justify the Capetian-Valois claim to sovereignty over that same area in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Conflicting regional identities and concerns regarding the legitimacy of the Valois succession ensured that royal claims to lordship throughout the 'natural' geographic area of France were often questioned. After the death in 1328 of the last Capetian monarch, Charles IV, the Valois kings fought a constant battle to justify their claim to be the legitimate rulers of a unified France. They claimed to wield imperial power within the kingdom and argued that this descended from their Capetian and Carolingian forebears. They declared that their sovereign writ bound everyone within the realm and that there was nowhere their authority did not hold. Royal authority was, therefore, bound up with a concept of the inviolability of the French nation. Because of this, English counter-claims to territories within France such as Aquitaine and Normandy were, in some ways, more damaging than the Plantagenet demand for the throne of France itself. If the nation could be divided, then the myth of universal Capetian/Carolingian sovereignty within France could be discredited. If the theoretical foundations of Valois power were undermined, then the very concept of France could be invalidated. In this sense the French fought the Hundred Years War to substantiate a mythic concept of nationhood.

The expansion and contraction of Capetian/Valois authority within France over a long period prior to and during the Hundred Years War is in striking contrast to the situation in England. There the geographical frontiers of the country changed very little throughout the medieval period, which accounts for certain differences in the process of nation-building
between the two countries. This is not to suggest, however, that England was politically or culturally homogeneous. Its diversity can be seen in the independent attitudes, distinctive political priorities and cultural differences of the English palatinates, marches, and in some counties: the political map of England (and certainly of the British Isles) revealed a great many regional variations. The Hundred Years War, however, helped redraw that map, if not completely: English internal frontiers became less apparent, although some political and cultural divisions remained. The long conflict saw the development of systems of permanent taxation, of a defined role for Parliament and of increasing control by central authorities over the localities as the so-called ‘war state’ emerged. The demands of the Hundred Years War ensured that in England, as in France, albeit at different times and to varying extents, central authorities began to exploit national resources more fully. Regional identities diminished in the face of this assault and were replaced with something bearing a more national stamp. The gradual reincorporation of various appanages under the direct rule of the ‘Most Christian King of France’ and the assimilation of the duchy of Lancaster into the English royal demesne after Richard II’s deposition in 1399 were the most obvious but by no means the only examples of this process.

Clearly, however, although the Hundred Years War encouraged a general process of political and cultural homogenisation, the conflict also subjected it to occasional, violent and potentially fatal punctuations. England and France suffered regular political divisions, the most spectacular of which led to depositions and civil wars. Since failures of what might, anachronistically, be described as ‘foreign policy’ often encouraged such divisions, the war should not be seen as a force that always engendered a sense of national consciousness, or national unity. Indeed, the conflict may be seen as a struggle brought on by differing interpretations of what constituted ‘foreign policy’, given the corporate or federal nature of the English king’s domains, with claims to Wales, Scotland, Ireland, France (especially Aquitaine and Normandy), and the Channel Islands.

The outbreak of the Hundred Years War shifted England’s political priorities and relations with those same ‘nations’ in the British Isles and Ireland: it ended an intense phase of Anglicisation that had begun following England’s own colonisation (‘Normanisation’) after 1066. In the intervening years England claimed political sovereignty over the entirety of the British Isles and demanded, albeit unsuccessfully, the imposition of English legal, social and cultural norms throughout that area. Celtic laws and practices were denigrated; indeed, various Irish practices were described, explicitly, as degenerate by the Dublin parliament of 1297. In 1294 Peter Langtoft wrote: ‘May Wales be accused of God and of St Simon for it has always been full of treason. May Scotland be accused of the mother of God! And may Wales be sunk down deep to the Devil. In neither of them was any truth.’ Such attitudes in Edward I’s reign reflect an intense, unmatched and perhaps unrepresentative period of English colonial activity. Nonetheless, such activity did a great deal to shape Anglo-Celtic relations in the period just prior to the outbreak of the Hundred Years War. It also led to some of the most famous expressions of nationhood in Britain and Ireland in the Middle Ages: the Remonstrance of the Irish Princes (1317) and, in Scotland, the Declaration of Arbroath (1320), which stated ‘for as long as but a hundred of us remain alive, never will we on any conditions be brought under English rule. It is in truth not for glory, nor riches, nor honours that we are fighting, but for freedom – for that alone, which no honest man gives up but with life itself.’

Despite the fact that Scotland, Ireland and Wales were or were considered potential staging grounds for a French invasion, with the outbreak of war in 1337 English attention for the most part turned to France. However, as the conflict progressed, although resources were employed throughout the British Isles only intermittently to try and enforce English power (and political and social norms), attitudes hardened to England’s Celtic neighbours. Given a growing sense of national identity this is not surprising: ‘the very Englishness of the [French] enterprise made [English] accommodations with Welsh and Irish society more difficult than they might otherwise have been’.

The Hundred Years War, therefore, began with a sense of national and cultural superiority already evident on both sides of the Channel. This posed certain problems given the nature of English war aims in France. How could an English king seek to shape a distinctly francophone national identity at home in order to gain the necessary resources to conquer the kingdom of France, while at the same time proclaiming he would allow France, once conquered, to be ruled according to those same customs that he described at home as so threatening and inferior? When Edward III first claimed the French throne in 1340 he swore to maintain ‘the good laws and customs which existed at the time of [his] progenitor, St Louis, king of France’. Edward’s successors maintained the same policy and this required a certain political legerdemain: to their English subjects they needed to appear increasingly English as the war progressed; to their
potential French subjects they could not appear distinctly foreign. Such concerns became particularly acute during the negotiations leading to the treaty of Troyes in 1420 when both sides demanded that the union of the Crowns should not lead to a closer political union that might compromise either nation’s cultural integrity.36

Such concerns over national integrity, both political and cultural, were fought out and debated throughout the war in order to determine what, precisely, constituted the foreign or the alien. Given the context, it is not surprising that, in many cases, the chief criterion determining an individual’s identity was political loyalty. Questions of allegiance lay at the heart of the Hundred Years War: uncertainties regarding political affiliations, loyalties and responsibilities had encouraged the increasingly febrile relationship between the kings of England and France since the treaty of Paris (1259), if not before. Hostilities developed because political allegiance and duty were defined differently, while expectations of service and responsibilities varied widely within and between English and French dominions. The conflict was fought over these differences, particularly in areas such as Normandy, Gascony and Burgundy. Because of the centrality of this issue the war may be seen as comprised of conflicting attempts to reforge a common sense of allegiance. This struggle to define and enforce political loyalty contributed to a sense of national identity in two ways: first, a unitary kingship – the typical focus of allegiance – formed a key element in establishing a nation and a sense of national identity; and, second, the intellectual debate bound up with the war and concerning the justice of a national cause revolved around the sovereign rights of individual monarchs.39

This route to political clarity was not a simple one. Over the duration of the conflict, kings might fracture national identities as effectively as fashion them. In England the limitations of Richard II and Henry VI brought about revolt and deposition, while Henry IV faced armed rebellions in England and Wales. In France military indignities were heaped on Philippe VI and Jean II, leading to the latter’s capture at Poitiers in 1356 and his long English captivity. Charles VI’s madness brought about a different form of ‘absence’, but both absences emphasised weakness at the centre rather than a strong foundation on which a national identity might stand. Consequently, even though kings were an important factor in forming national identities, during the Hundred Years War the stark contrasts between the strength and fragility of certain monarchs, accentuated by political divisions in both France and England, mean they were rarely a stable factor.

In spite of this, and despite the fact that individual kings failed their people, during the period of the Hundred Years War the realm and the nation grew increasingly synonymous. Indeed, there seems little doubt that at least by the fifteenth century the defence of royal rights – the primary cause of the Hundred Years War – had become equated with the defence of the nation, and not only the defence of territorial boundaries but also the defence of language, customs and a way of life. The emergence of a national sentiment was, therefore, cemented not always by individual kings but often by the institution of monarchy.40 Loyalty to the nation meant loyalty to the monarchy, which, in England, allowed one to remove a failing king and not break faith with the nation. In France, conditions differed somewhat: the reigning monarch became explicitly associated with the identity of the nation as the head of the body politic, and the antiquity and sacral character of the monarchy did much to protect individual kings. The importance of good government and the well-being of the nation were, however, recognised at various times as distinct from the well-being of the monarch. As in England, the connection between a (French) national identity and the ‘common good’ could be used to attack the Crown. Even after the vindication of the Valois monarchy brought by the final victory at Castillon in July 1453, the French Crown was not entirely secure, and it is noteworthy that its first major challenge came in the form of the suggestively titled League of the Public Weal (1465).41

Nonetheless, when a French victory at Castillon brought the end of the war, however uncertain contemporaries were of the fact, it provided Valois propagandists with tremendous ammunition: it indicated divine approval for the dynasty and confirmed Charles VII’s sovereignty over (much of) France. At Castillon, the Valois made real the ‘myth’ of French kingship. Charles VII became the true heir of the Capetians and Carolingians – the successor to Charlemagne and ‘emperor in his kingdom’. In commemoration the king had a special medal struck. It bore the legend ‘When I was made, everyone in France, without dispute, obeyed the prudent king, loved by God’ – but it also carried the unfortunate coda, ‘except at Calais, which is a strong place’.42

Such commemoration reflected and helped further construct a sense of national identity despite the minor embarrassment of English Calais, some Gascon resistance, Breton recalcitrance and continuing Burgundian aggression. The war itself, its memory and commemoration, became bound up with rituals of national identification and formed a key element in drawing individuals together and giving them a collective identity.43
Memorials to the war (if not war memorials in a modern sense) were constructed throughout and after the conflict in France and England; in the east window at Gloucester Cathedral (commemorating the English victory at Crécy); through the membership of the Company of the Star and Order of the Garter; in tomb effigies and monumental brasses; and through the invocation of Saints Michael and George, those slayers of the dragons of England and France respectively.

As the conflict unfolded, such memorials and icons became increasingly associated with the concept of sacrifice for the nation. In France, especially after defeat at Agincourt in 1415, it seems to have become important for a death in battle to be recorded on tombs or in epitaphs. This was certainly true by the end of the war, as the epitaph of Jean de Bueil (1477) shows:

Pray for me, good people,
For the lord of Bueil killed in the great war
Fighting for France and for you.46

In tone and character it is reminiscent of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century war memorials that drew on Horace's maxim *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*. This was familiar during the period of the Hundred Years War, when a growing number of treatises and military orders urged knights to sell their lives dearly on the battlefield. Although authors such as Honoré Bonet suggested one might imperil one's soul dying in a war against Christians,45 others, including Geoffroy de Charny, argued that death should hold no fear for a soldier who died in defence of the common good:

[W]hen lords have wars ... their men can and should fight for them and move confidently and bravely into battle for such causes, for if one performs well there, one is honoured in life, and if one dies there, one's soul is saved, if other sins do not stand in the way of this.46

As Charny strove to galvanise French chivalry in the 1350s, so Thomas Walsingham despaired of England's military failures in the 1380s. His language, too, is indicative of the growth of a sense of national identity, of the need to serve the nation, and reveals his belief that those unwilling to place their lives at her disposal were cowards:

Heavens above! The land which once produced and gave birth to men that demanded the respect of all men ... now spewed out men lacking

It is not surprising in this context of national sacrifice that French and English polemicists adopted certain aspects of crusade ideology leading to the emergence of a sort of 'sanctified patriotism'.48 Crusading rhetoric began to be employed regularly in national service. The promise of a crusade had been used repeatedly from the early 1330s as both 'carrot and stick' to try and maintain or secure peace. The enemy's failure to agree terms for a settlement was often promoted as a grotesque unwillingness to recognise the need for a further campaign against the Turk. With the Great Schism and the devastating defeat at Nicopolis (1396) the prospect of successful international cooperation became increasingly difficult, despite the extraordinarily diligent efforts of Philippe de Mézières and others. Instead, the Hundred Years War was recast: it acquired some of the connotations of a crusade, and evolved from a dynastic struggle into one between chosen peoples.49 Aspects of this were already evident and may be seen in Louis I d'Anjou's Apocalypse tapestries (c. 1373), which reflect the disasters of war and endemic plague. They provide a clear (and literal) example of the process by which the enemy was demonised. The tapestries portray the English, represented by Edward III and his sons, as monstrous and demonic, riding from the mouth of hell in a riot of devastation across France, while pitying saints can only look on in anguish. But, like the forces of the Apocalypse, they would be defeated eventually and with God's help.50 Joan of Arc's activities and her own 'Letter to the English' (22 March 1429) should also be read in this same 'crusading' light. She claimed to have 'come from God to reclaim the blood royal'; to 'have been sent by God, the King of Heaven, to drive [the English] out of France'; and to assure the duke of Bedford and earl of Suffolk, to whom the letter was addressed, that they would 'never hold the kingdom of France from God, the King of Heaven, son of St Mary; for King Charles will hold it, because God, the King of Heaven, wishes it.'51

Later, certain French polemicists would depict Joan as a godsend — again, both literally and metaphorically. During her lifetime, matters were not so clear — certainly not for the people of Paris, which she assaulted in 1429. Even by the conclusion of the nullification trial in 1456 the reputation of this (soon-to-be) national icon remained uncertain. This
highlights the regional divisions and divided loyalties, as well as the sense of sheer war-weariness that pertained at various times in the course of the struggle and worked against the construction of a clear, encompassing national identity. For the Parisian Bourgeois, for example, at several points in his journal, any sort of peace, any cessation of 'this war, accursed of God' was preferable to the continuance of a national struggle, whether sanctified or not. But as the war progressed and especially in its later stages, a consensus seems to have emerged that dying for one's country was a sacrifice to be accepted willingly if the nation was at risk of occupation or annihilation, since such a sacrifice, like one made in a crusade, guaranteed salvation. In France this became particularly evident after 1415 and the defeat at Agincourt, la maudite journée (the accursed day). It is no coincidence that around this time a number of French works began to propound the concept that the very identification of the nation, the name 'France', derived from *franc*—meaning free from tribute. Hence to be French was to be free and independent of any outside influence.

War between England and France led to a growing sense of nationhood in both countries. The struggle was chiefly a political one but it was also galvanised by a series of socio-political and cultural changes that affected much of Europe in the later Middle Ages. Trans-national institutions began to weaken; the role of the Church changed and papal authority declined. Cultural ties frayed as Latin lost its sway. Their replacements were independent and vernacular. Consequently, the Hundred Years War shaped and, as it concluded, entrenched new conceptions of national identity on both sides of the Channel. For England, it was an identity shaped by the shifting tensions between its 'British' and 'French' ambitions and orientations. In France the growth of royal power in theory and actuality formed the central core in an identity which, through the war and subsequently, came to encompass the 'natural' extent of the country.

Over the course of the war a theory of national identity was proposed vigorously from court and capital in prose, in verse, in material form, in processions and sermons. In 1370 William of Wykeham wrote to archdeacons in the diocese of Winchester stating that the French 'are preparing to attack, invade and crush the borders of the realm of England ... with no small multitude of ships and armed men'. In response to this he had 'ordered and caused processions to be made and celebrated and devout prayers to be said in all monasteries, churches and other sacred places'. Through the Church and various other channels a potent message was propounded regarding the common good, a common enemy, the importance of a common history, and the need for a national effort to defeat the perfidious enemy who threatens 'our' very way of life. St Denis (later St Michel) or St George would protect the nation. The English were regicides; the Valois and their Capetian predecessors were descended from a butcher; David II, the king of their Scottish allies, was an adulterer who had soiled the font at baptism, and so on. The programme gathered pace throughout the conflict aided by a process of cultural homogenisation and a growing awareness of the brutal realities of war. Froissart remarked, 'since they wished to wage war, both kings found it necessary to make known to their people and set before them the nature of their dispute, so that they would be eager to support their lord. And by this means [the people] were aroused in each kingdom. But it is still difficult to know how that central message was received in the localities, on the frontiers of the kingdom and by the bulk of the population.

The journal of the Parisian Bourgeois, although produced in the capital, provides some insights regarding attitudes that may be a little more widely representative. His opinions changed over the long course of his account (1405–49) and his attitudes shifted regarding the various parties involved in the civil war and the nature of the Anglo-Burgundian occupation. As the tide of war turned in favour of Charles VII, 'the Victorious', so too the Bourgeois came to favour the Valois. Success (and failure) in the war made a final contribution to a sense of national identity. It shaped a collective memory of suffering, struggle and eventual victory achieved through a collective sacrifice. After 1453 there was a slow acceptance among the English that they were an island nation, no longer a power on the continent of Europe. In France, the chroniclers and lawyers constructed an 'official memory' of the war in which victory became a victory for the French nation. In the popular imagination this validated the propaganda, helped erase some of the discord of civil wars, the divisions caused by the treaty of Troyes and made at least some of the sacrifices worthwhile.
Conclusion
1453 AND BEYOND

The English defeat at Castillon and the fall of Bordeaux in the summer of 1453 marked the end of the Hundred Years War. It was, though, a somewhat unsatisfactory conclusion, and not merely for the English and Henry VI. There was no treaty; Charles VII took control of Gascony but not Calais; Henry did not renounce his claim to the French throne, and nor would his successors do so until 1801. Even then, and following the battles of Trafalgar (1805) and Waterloo (1815), relations between England and France remained uneasy into the twentieth century. But in 1453 the nature of the hostilities that had coloured Anglo-French relations since the end of the Capetian dynasty changed radically. Contemporaries recognised this and imbued the events of 1453 with great political significance. The resonance surrounding the end of the war did not compare with the fall of Constantinople which happened in the same year, but for the English their humiliation marked a shattering change of circumstances, and together these events marked the beginning of a new order in Europe. The ‘rebellion’ of the duke of Aquitaine and the war for the throne of France were over, whatever the Yorkists, Tudors, Stuarts and Hanoverians might say. The end of the war, however, did not bring peace. In France, Charles VII may have become Charles the Victorious but he had to face the rebellions of his son Louis and the growing threat of Burgundy. The country and countryside had to be restored and tended. It had suffered horribly over successive generations and required a great deal of care and attention. Fortunately, the economy improved in the second half of the fifteenth century, as did the weather, leading to an upsurge in trade.

In England, by contrast, the scars of defeat covered the body politic and a bitter sense of betrayal and of national humiliation soon fed the flames of civil war. The losses between 1449 and 1453 had shaken the Lancastrian government and shocked the country at large. The fiasco had to be explained; those responsible had to be punished. At times war with France had bound the country together in a national mission; now, the end of that war tore it apart. Many who had fought side by side against the French would take up arms against one another in the Wars of the Roses at St Albans (1455), Towton (1461), Barnet (1471) and Tewkesbury (1471). One legacy of the Hundred Years War, therefore, was a France resurgent politically and economically, but an England faced with devastation as its leaders turned on one another to protect their power and pride, and to assuage the nation’s shame.

But the war did not only transform the political status of each nation; it effectively reforged their identities. England and France had been set on divergent evolutionary paths when the dispute began. The war accelerated their progression along those paths. The connections between England and France were virtually severed and their similarities were very much fewer in 1453 than they had been in 1337. The war began as a feudal and dynastic struggle between two monarchs; it ended as a national conflict. In many ways, of course, this left England weaker and clearly inferior to France. In another sense, however, it offered an opportunity for the English Crown, and perhaps also the English state, to conceive a new status for itself. Even though this new identity was the product of defeat, the feudal bonds between kings and countries that had encouraged hostilities in the first place and had always marked England as inferior to her neighbour across the Channel were erased. Rulers of England were now, finally, compelled to seek a new independent identity and a new political position for themselves within the British Isles, Europe and the wider world. The Angevin Empire had been lost, irrevocably; the search for a new empire would begin.

Another legacy of the war was war itself: over the years of the struggle England and France and their people became shaped by war and organised for war. English and French society became increasingly militarised. More than a century of endemic warfare resulted in the establishment of governmental, bureaucratic and financial structures to support conflict on a wholly new scale. Without such structures the English indenture system and the French ordonnances of the 1440s would have been impossible. In England this formed part of the precocious establishment of a ‘war state’ in which much of government became shaped by and for military purposes. As a consequence of this, the army was placed on a semi-professional footing early in the struggle. In France the process was more protracted, but the
Crown was eventually able to acquire control over sufficient resources—financial and administrative—to enable it to construct a permanent standing army that formed a vital element in the emergent French state. These developments were deeply significant and not solely in military terms. They also altered the relationship between the king, the various representative assemblies (the Estates General and Parliament) and the aristocracy. In financial terms the changes driven by the need to wage war so regularly for so long meant that only monarchs enjoyed (potential) access to far greater resources than had their predecessors. In France, however, access to more extensive funds was acquired without a comparable rise in the influence of the representative assemblies: the French Estates, generally speaking, remained pliant and gained little influence over taxation. By contrast, members of the Commons in the English Parliament became increasingly aware of their authority and ability to influence the direction of royal policy now that this policy depended on the money which the Commons could grant.

The professionalisation of warfare that drove these governmental reforms also brought about the end, in both countries, of 'feudal' service, or at least its widespread use. As a result, the role of the aristocracy altered very considerably, as did its position in relation to the Crown and the part it played in the business of the state. The establishment of a large standing army in France not only strengthened the position of the Crown and linked it directly to the development of the state but it provided a means of directly co-opting a small but significant proportion of the nobility into national service in a wholly new way. This, in turn, enabled the Crown to exercise increasing influence over the nobility. As a consequence fighting became a career, one adopted by many outside the ranks of the aristocracy; it was no longer (or not merely) an act of noblesse oblige: this eroded the fundamental association between nobility and military service. This was also the case in England, although the new priorities of the Wars of the Roses ensured that the military function of the nobility could not be set aside for some time.

The militarisation of society in England and France also had the effect of drawing certain groups together through employment and shared experiences. With the end of the war came an end to some of those collective identities. For example, the intense phase of ransoming that had characterised and bankrolled much of the struggle concluded in 1453. The war had involved much of military society in the ransom business for the potential opportunity to ransom a prisoner of war had encouraged participation in the conflict, whereas capture, by contrast, could ruin a soldier. The Hundred Years War had seen some major changes in the practice of ransoming. As military conduct became increasingly professional, so it became more difficult for individuals to take prisoners. Increasing levels of mortality on the battlefield reflected the growing importance of tactics that relied on order and discipline in the ranks. Despite this, ransoming continued to be important throughout the war. With the rise of professional armies, however, ransoming took on a more political character and it became more a priority for the Crown and the state rather than for the individual soldier. During the Hundred Years War the Crown had begun to exercise its rights to politically valuable captives; this became the predominant model in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The transformation in the military role of the aristocracy and the changing experience of taking prisoners was also the result of technological and strategic developments. The greater use of infantry, missile weapons and the introduction of gunpowder artillery were among the most significant innovations, and they had widespread implications for the organisation and financing of warfare, as well as for the social connotations of military service. The military revolution that took place during the Hundred Years War marked the beginning of a new age, one which Don Quixote would lament in Miguel de Cervantes's novel of 1605:

Blessed be those happy ages that were strangers to the dreadful fury of these devilish instruments of artillery, whose inventor I am satisfied is now in Hell, receiving the reward for his cursed invention, which is the cause that very often a cowardly base hand takes away the life of the bravest gentleman; and that in the midst of that vigour and resolution, which animates and inflames the bold, a chance bullet (shot perhaps by one who fled...) coring nobody knows how, or from where, in a moment puts an end to the brave designs and the life of one who deserved to have survived many years.

This was the type of death that Thomas Montague suffered at Orléans in 1428 and John Talbot at Castillon in 1453. Artillery, like the longbow before it, revolutionised military strategy and had immense repercussions on the ways in which campaigns were conducted; it forced a reassessment of the chivalric ethic and transformed the role of the aristocracy on the battlefield. Indeed, as a consequence of technological and strategic imperatives, by the end of the Hundred Years War the knights of England and France had relinquished their pre-eminent military positions. Longbows
replaced lances, infantry replaced cavalry and the social contours of military service were redrawn.

Even among the command ranks, increasing numbers of leaders were drawn from those first found clinging to the lower rungs of the aristocracy, men such as Bertrand du Guesclin, John Chandos, Walter Mauny and the Burea brothers. The social fluidity that the war promoted and which repeated outbreaks of plague encouraged meant that membership of the growing ranks of the aristocracy became more achievable for those who traditionally would have had no means of gaining acceptance. The development of sub-knightly ranks of the aristocracy — in England the gentry; in France the petite noblesse — and the emergence of a wealthy merchant class and upper stratum of the peasant, allowed families and individuals to ease their way in and perhaps fall out of the ranks of the aristocracy. Furthermore, with the expansion of the state and a new conception of nationhood, men could now find careers away from the battlefield; there were new ways to serve in the governmental and bureaucratic institutions that had developed to promote, organise and bankroll the war. Men such as William de la Pole (d.1366), a merchant from Hull, founded a baronial dynasty because of his ability to lend money to the Crown, much as Jacques Coeur (c.1395–1456) became hugely significant because he could fund Charles VII.6

The changes in the ways in which war was prosecuted, financed and organised ensured that it became, to a new extent, a national business. The nation was investing its wealth and strength in a collective venture and it required a return on that investment. Central authorities did much to encourage this collective attitude and sought to engender a sense of community. Sophisticated systems of propaganda were employed at elite and popular levels to justify the war and encourage support for its prosecution. Partly as a consequence of this, new conceptions of national identity emerged on both sides of the Channel. The very meanings of nationes, patria, res publica, status, and so on, changed as both countries fought for domination and faced, or claimed they faced, destruction. The words and what they represented gained new connotations; they implied a greater sense of community and, perhaps it would not be too anachronistic to say, of fraternity.7

One product of this insistent stream of propaganda was the reification of the myth of a unified France. The dream of Valois hegemony within the 'natural' geographical area of France came to be realised through military success against England — all but completely achieved by 1453 — and over the following half-century by the Crown's reabsorption of the apanages and other independent estates into the royal demesne. This geopolitical process was a remarkable achievement given the sheer size of France and the longstanding links that many regions had with England. The extended southern shore of the 'English Channel', the area that stretched from Gascony, through Saintonge, Poitou, Brittany, Normandy and across to Flanders, had enjoyed close ties — economic, political and geographical — to the northern shore, many of them more important, historically, than those which bound them to Paris. A further problem took the form of the burgeoning power of Philippe the Good and his successor Charles the Bold who, in addition to the county and duchy of Burgundy, ruled Flanders, Brabant, Holland, Zeeland, Hainault and Luxembourg, and so formed a bloc to the extension of royal control within that natural geographic (hexagonal) area of France.8

Regional particularism also remained potent elsewhere. In some cases local loyalties had been accentuated over the course of the war by tensions such as the Armagnac-Burgundian struggle. Political differences generated by that conflict, and the various additional disputes that had combined to intensify the Hundred Years War, would take several generations to cool. There were also further areas of contention that had to be settled, such as those which arose from the trial and condemnation of Joan of Arc, hence the need for her rehabilitation (nullification) trial in 1455–56. In more general terms, despite ever greater political unity, a range of social, cultural and linguistic differences remained evident in France for some time. However, in Rosier des guerres (a work now widely agreed to have been dictated in 1481–82 by the king to his physician for the instruction of his son), Louis XI wrote a powerful statement of the loyalty to the nation that had been engendered by the Anglo-French war and which now characterised attitudes to and in France: 'None may doubt the merit of death in defence of the common good. One must fight for one's country.' No doubt this represented an exaggerated vision of conditions and feelings in the country, but it reflected a new conception of the nation and of the responsibilities of all Frenchmen to fight in the mothersland's defence.9

In England a comparable process of geopolitical unification took place during the war and thereafter, although it was fraught with difficulties. Henry Bolingbroke's usurpation of the throne in 1399 brought the Lancastrian 'apanage' within the royal demesne, and one of the few advantages of the Wars of the Roses was to continue this process — more estates returned to the king's direct control. Greater cultural unity was gained through the increasing use of the English language for governmental and popular purposes, although
dialectical differences remained widespread throughout the country. The use of the language for official publications encouraged an increasing politicisation of the population that did, at times, generate a powerful sense of national sentiment. However, it also led to divergent attitudes concerning the proper direction for the nation and what constituted the common good. The rise of the 'Commons' in Parliament, the various peasant revolts that punctuated the conflict and the civil war that grew out of its failure, are an indication of the problems involved with this growing sense of popular, political awareness. The assertion of the 1381 rebels that they were 'the true commons' reverberated through political society.10

A mounting political awareness was perhaps the most benign impact of the war on the populations of England and France. The direct effects of the conflict tended to be less abstract and more violent. Community life was seriously affected in many areas. Normandy, Paris and other areas of northern France had experienced foreign occupation with all its problems, and some of its benefits. Other regions, such as Gascony, would now have to adapt to a different sort of occupation—a new governing culture and political dispensation: rule from Paris would prove as foreign in its way as government from London. Throughout both countries taxation had become all but permanent. Indeed, few aspects of economic life had remained untouched by the conflict. For the French peasantry, in certain parts of the country, the series of attacks from English soldiers, foreign mercenaries and the exploitation of their own side must have felt unrelenting. Although certain merchants and manufacturers benefited a great deal from the war, in some (few) parts of England and (many in) France communities declined or disappeared because of raiding or the effects of war on trade. Plague also played a vital role in this process, exacerbating the misery and yet providing new opportunities for those who survived.11

Women were among those who could, if lucky, take advantage of the greater opportunities for social mobility in the century after the plague. It was a far from easy time, of course, especially in France where attacks on women were all too common, but acceptance into new trades and a greater level of personal independence were significant developments. The benefits, however, did not last. Although the war demonstrated the political abilities and great fortitude of many women in France and England, the treatment meted out to the most famous woman of the period, Joan of Arc, revealed the underlying levels of misogyny that would be reinstitutionalised when socio-economic conditions slowly reverted to 'normal' in the later fifteenth century.

Many ecclesiastical communities also suffered. Despite spiritual sanctions and certain military ordinances those churches and monasteries that were unfortunate enough to lie in the paths of English or French soldiers were rarely spared the horrors of war. The Church and its members were also co-opted by the Crown in both countries to legitimise their respective claims and to wage a propaganda war in support of their conflicting aspirations. Both sides were successful in this, although the focus of French and English propaganda differed. In general, however, the involvement of the Church in the struggle did little for its reputation. The period of the Hundred Years War saw the spiritual authority of the Church and many of its members compromised by a new awareness among congregations of its political corruption and worldliness. The power of the papacy waned in the context of the 'Babylonian Captivity' in Avignon, the Great Schism and the Conciliar Movement. Monarchs on both sides of the Channel took the opportunity to assert greater authority over their 'national' Churches while the impact of the Black Death seemed only to confirm the failures of the institutional Church. What emerged to fill the spiritual vacuum was a vibrant lay piety that, in time, encouraged further reform.

The peoples of England and France and the countries in which they lived were therefore changed in deeply significant ways by the experience of the Hundred Years War. No one realised that with the battle of Castillon and the fall of Bordeaux the war, in one guise at least, had ended; no one knew that they were witnessing the end of an age. However, in more than one way the Hundred Years War gave birth to a new era and to modern Europe.