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CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN EARLY MODERN HISTORY

## The Armada of Flanders

During the Thirty Years' War, Spanish naval power reached unprecedented levels. The creation of a 'fleet in being', employed widely in defence of Monarchy and Empire, was part of a profound reappraisal of Madrid's international strategy. Maritime concerns were perceived as vital to the political, military and economic priorities of the Monarchy. They played a central role in the great programme of reform elaborated and co-ordinated by the count- duke of Olivares.

The ports and shipyards of Flanders, above all Dunkirk, were the crucial focus of maritime revival. The Flanders armada, which took shape in response to the use of seapower by the Dutch rebels, evolved into the most effective unit in Spain's defence establishment – a devastating and awe-inspiring weapon. In combination with its privateering auxiliaries, this elite striking force dominated the North Sea for some twenty years (1625–1645), and campaigned also in Mediterranean and Atlantic theatres of war. Yet its contribution to the tenacious survival of Spanish hegemony has never before been assessed.

A narrative of the armada's fighting record over the century of its meaningful existence is presented with constant reference to the strategic–logistical context and analysis of policymaking in Madrid. Attention is paid to the political significance of maritime policy, and particularly the relationship between Madrid and its subordinate headquarters in Brussels. A major section of analysis is supported by a set of quantitative appendices. Treatment is given to the infrastructure of the armada; the ships themselves, above all the revolutionary but elusive 'frigate'; the social hierarchy of crews and commanders; and details of administration and financing.

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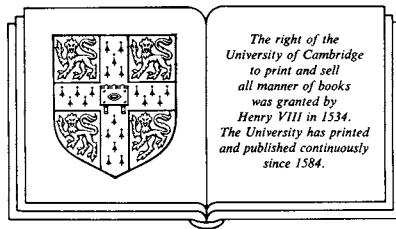
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# The Armada of Flanders

Spanish Maritime Policy and European War, 1568–1668

R. A. STRADLING

*University of Wales, College of Cardiff*



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For Helen, at last

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## Preface

The book's main subjects are lashed together in its catamaran title. It analyses naval policy in the western European theatre of the Spanish Monarchy's wars, and focuses on the role of the Flanders armada in its evolution and execution. It illustrates a thesis which is now, if belatedly, recognised by most historians of the period – namely that Spain remained a major naval power for nearly a century after the defeat of the Invincible Armada, consistently seeking to defend its European hegemony by these means, which were as crucial to its policy as the deployment of land forces. That the army has recently been much more central to our perception of Spanish power is due in large measure to the early work of Geoffrey Parker. In fact, the latter's contributions have never ignored the maritime context of the Spanish System. Moreover, his study of *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road* (1972), one of the foundation volumes of the present series, has provided an exemplar of lucidly presented research which this book aspires (doubtless in vain) to complement.

Several cognate themes are encountered in the course of discussion. Two, in particular, may be seen as essential to the argument, if on a secondary plane. These are: privateering utilised as part of a mainstream naval strategy, and the central place of Dunkirk in this strategy. Insofar as it has any original aspects, my work seeks to contribute to this history of war and politics. Its touch is light (and often derivative) on the economic consequences of Spanish maritime policy; on technical questions of shipbuilding and other aspects of warmaking infrastructure; on naval policy in the Atlantic and Mediterranean theatres; and on issues of international and maritime law. This procedure is partially justified by the prior existence of monographs by Tony Thompson, José Alcalá-Zamora, Jonathan Israel, Carla Rahn Phillips, David Goodman and Miguel Angel Echevarría, and by the promise of further work in relevant areas by several of these scholars. Moreover, in the interests of space, I have felt obliged largely to suppress my own interest in the broad cultural significance of Spain's maritime past. I hope to return to this region at a later point, and that the present craft (meanwhile) will find a berth alongside the others, adding to the interest of the harbourscape by the different cut of its rig.

Throughout the text, the anglicised word 'armada' signifies the Flanders flotilla. Other concentrations, such as established naval forces (*Armadas*), fleets



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### *Preface*

sailing on a regular basis along a set route (*flotas*) and one-off strategic expeditions (*empresas*) are spelt out in full. In the interests of simplicity, wherever possible non-Spanish monetary values have been transposed into that of the Monarchy's main coin of exchange, the gold *escudo*. In particular, it should be noted that the comparative value of the *escudo* and the Brabant florin used in the Spanish Netherlands was approximately 1 to 2.5. The unit of volume known as the *last* has been translated into modern tons, using the rate of 1 to 2 at which it is commonly reckoned. Elsewhere, tonnage measurements used in original documents have not been tampered with. The writer believes that it is impossible to be sure of which 'ton' (*tonel* or *tonelada*) the author of a document is referring to, and that in any case the variables they represent (around 15 to 20 per cent) are not substantial enough to effect the verisimilitude of the account, or to worry most readers.

## Acknowledgements

Work on this book began so long ago that from my present perspective it almost seems part of a continuum from a childhood fascination with the world of buccaneering. The archival research was in large part completed by 1983 but because of other commitments and distractions composition was repeatedly postponed. In the end, the actual writing process relentlessly occupied the whole of a year's Study Leave in 1989–90. As it stands, the result is bulky enough, but the original sources for its subject are so voluminous – particularly, but not exclusively, at Simancas – that had time and the bell permitted, it could have been three times larger. However, the task was lightened, not only by the character of much of the narrative–anecdotal material, but by the delight of dealing with such men as the secretary (or *greffier*), Jean Penning; the master of a beer-boat, Captain Hatch; the Spanish naval archivist, the late Capitán Vicente Vela (*vela* = sail); the privateering skipper Sparre, and many other *dramatis personae*.

I have accumulated many debts, some of them doubtless forthcoming out of sympathy for my slow progress in others better qualified to be writing this history. Such, certainly, was the origin of the incalculable fund of assistance provided by my friend Miguel Angel Echevarría of the University of the Basque Country. He has displayed selfless concern for my intellectual improvement in all matters touching Spain and Hispanic cultures. His profound additional reserves of knowledge about the Low Countries have left a powerful imprint. Lastly, his published work has illuminated several aspects of the present discussion. If we still argue about some basic issues, it is with great good humour and notable lack of intense conviction.

My colleague Professor John King, of the Cardiff Maritime Studies School, examined a large section of the work in draft, and I thank him for pointing out several landlubber's blunders. I am grateful to some other younger scholars for sharing aspects of their work – Andrew Thrush, Jane Ohlmeyer and Ian Scott fall into this category. When at their present stage of development, I remember benefiting from the advice of Dr Alistair MacFadyen, whose marvellous thesis on Anglo-Spanish Relations (1625–60) I again turned to for information in writing parts of this book. Many years ago, too, Professor James Jones responded with generosity and insight to my appeals for guidance on the foreign relations of seventeenth-century England.

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The skilled care of archivists, especially in Spain, deserves every recognition. In Simancas, the team of *archiveras* under the benign leadership successively of Doña Adela de la Vega and the present *Directora*, Doña Angela de la Plaza, have been a further credit to the reputation of that matchless institution. In the archive of the Museo Naval in Madrid I received help from the Director, Capitán José María Zumalácarregui, the *Directora Técnica* Doña Ana María Vigón Sánchez (both now retired) and from Doña Dolores Higuera Rodríguez, Director of Research. My visit to the Archivo General de la Marina in Viso del Marqués was rendered profitable by the assistance of Don Juan del Campo Muñoz and Don Vicente de Campo Hernán.

As long ago as 1981, when I first tentatively approached him on the subject, Helli Koenigsberger encouraged me to hope that my work on the armada of Flanders might be acceptable to the joint curators of the Cambridge Studies in Early Modern History. His colleague, John Elliott, may recall some gentle chiding of my perversity in writing a textbook and a general study before attempting a genuine monograph; and the book's appearance in this series is a testament to his concern. Both editors have stoically endured the hard labour of examining my original manuscript, correcting its many errors and clarifying its frequent obscurities.

Fundamental research for the book was made possible by consistent financial help from The British Academy. I am deeply indebted to the Trustees for their repeated demonstrations of confidence and patience. During my Study Leave, colleagues in the History Section at Cardiff uncomplainingly took the consequent extra strain of a teaching load which was already heavier than usual. In expressing my thanks, I am aware that their fraternal attitude is merely one happy feature of many years' association.

My wife, Helen, is another who has looked forward to the completion of the work; partly to gain a respite – however temporary – from living with the self-absorption and petulance of the writer, partly in order to be paid the debt of dedication which is so long overdue. But like all the rest, and more truly, her credit has come interest-free.

## Glossary

<i>alcalde</i>	town mayor
<i>alfárez</i>	army officer (roughly, rank of lieutenant)
<i>alguacil</i>	law enforcement officer
<i>almiranta</i>	rear-flagship of a fleet or squadron; not flagship, as might be assumed by Anglophones
<i>armador</i>	owner (and often builder and/or skipper) of privateering ship; but could also mean a partner with shares in such an enterprise
<i>armateur</i>	see <i>armador</i>
<i>arbitrista</i>	author of proposal on government policy-reform (usually socio-economic)
<i>arbitrista del mar</i>	an <i>arbitrista</i> with special interest in maritime, geopolitical, or broadly strategic affairs
<i>asiento</i>	contract for service to crown ( <i>asiento de dinero</i> = money loan)
<i>bisoño</i>	raw recruit
<i>capitana</i>	flagship
<i>cortes</i>	Castilian Estates (or Parliament)
<i>consignación</i>	royal revenue offered as loan collateral
<i>consulta</i>	formal report to king of council or junta
<i>coningsschepen</i>	king's ships
<i>contador</i>	accountant
<i>covachuelista</i>	Madrid bureaucrat
<i>ducado</i>	financial unit of account
<i>depositario</i>	Admiralty official in charge of prize goods
<i>empresa</i>	naval expedition or enterprise
<i>escudo</i>	largest Spanish coin of exchange
<i>estado</i>	Council of State (Madrid)
<i>forzado</i>	criminal serving sentence as galley oarsman

*Glossary*

<i>galeoncete</i>	smaller galleons patented in 1590s
<i>hábito</i>	membership of one of Castile's military orders (i.e. a knighthood)
<i>hacienda</i>	royal treasury, supervised by a council
<i>hombres de negocios</i>	bankers to the crown
<i>jornada</i>	royal visit to provinces (a 'progress')
<i>juros</i>	state investment bonds
<i>limpieza (de sangre)</i>	the doctrine of 'purity of blood', signifying eligibility for higher royal service and honours
<i>maravedí</i>	Castilian copper coin of low value
<i>media anata</i>	occasional royal imposition of payment moratorium ( <i>juros</i> dividends or official salaries)
<i>mesada</i>	monthly allowance in royal subsidy
<i>oficial mayor</i>	senior assistant or official (e.g. <i>veedor</i> )
<i>pagador</i>	paymaster
<i>pagaduría</i>	office of paymaster
<i>particular</i>	see <i>armador</i>
<i>particulier</i>	see <i>armador</i>
<i>pechero</i>	Castilian taxpayer
<i>pinaza</i>	pinnacle
<i>pliego</i>	file of papers
<i>presidio</i>	Spanish military bases in Italy and North Africa
<i>proveedor</i>	assistant inspector
<i>cuatro villas</i>	administrative district comprised of the 'four towns' of Santander, Laredo, Castro Urdiales and San Vicente de la Barquera
<i>reforma</i>	suppression of a military unit (or its merging with another)
<i>residencia</i>	public examination of senior official's record at the end of his tenure
<i>servicios y millones</i>	taxes periodically reviewed by <i>Cortes</i>
<i>tenedor</i>	storekeeper
<i>veedor-general</i>	chief inspector
<i>veeduría</i>	post or office of <i>veedor</i>
<i>visita</i>	audit of accounts by officials of <i>Hacienda</i>
<i>valido</i>	Spanish royal favourite and chief minister

## Rough comparative values of Spanish and Flanders currencies, c. 1620–60

### CASTILIAN

Ducat <sup>1</sup>	= 375 maravedís <sup>1</sup> = 1.333 reales de a ocho (silver)
Escudo (gold) <sup>2</sup>	= 340 maravedís = 1.25 reales (silver) = 10 reales (vellón) = 2.5 florins
Real (silver)	= 275 maravedís = 0.8 escudos = 0.75 ducats
Real (vellón)	= 34 maravedís
Cuartillo	= 8 maravedís
Cuarto	= 4 maravedís
Octavo	= 2 maravedís

### FLANDERS

Patacón	= 9.5 reales vellón = almost 1 escudo
Florin	= 4 reales vellón 0.4 escudos = 136 maravedís

<sup>1</sup> In this period, ducat and maravedí were only units of reckoning (or 'coins of account').

<sup>2</sup> In the text, footnotes and appendices, monetary values are expressed in escudos wherever convenient and possible.

---

## Abbreviations

AGS/	Archivo General de Simancas, Valladolid
CJH	Consejo y Juntas de Hacienda
CMC	Contaduría Mayor de Cuentas, (Tercera Epoca)
E	Estado
EEH	Embajada de España en La Haya
GA	Guerra Antigua
AGI/	Archivo General de Indias, Seville
IG	Indiferente General
AGM	Archivo General de la Marina, Viso del Marqués
AHN/	Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid
E	Estado
Hac.	Hacienda
AHP(C)/	Archivo Histórico Provincial de Cantabria, Santander
CEM	Centro de Estudios Montañeses
AHP(G)	Archivo Histórico Provincial de Guipúzcoa, Tolosa
Sec. Neg.	Secretaría Negociación
AMA	Archivo Municipal de Alicante
AMD	Archives Municipales de Dunkerque, Dunkirk
APR/	Archivo del Palacio Real, Madrid
SA	Sección Administrativa
ARB/	Archives du Royaume de Belgique (Allgemeine Rijksarchiv), Brussels
CA	Conseil d'Amirauté
CP	Conseil Privé
Div.	Manuscrits Divers
SEG	Secrétairerie d'Etat et de Guerre
BL/	British Library, London
Add.	Additional Manuscripts
EG.	Egerton Manuscripts
Harl.	Harleian Manuscripts
BN	Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid
BPU	Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, Geneva
BRB	Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, Brussels

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MMG/	Maritime Museum Library, Greenwich
PHB	Phillips' Collection
MN/	Museo Naval, Madrid
Nav.	Colección Navarrete
Oxf. Bod.	Bodleian Library, Oxford
PRO/	Public Record Office, London
SP	State Papers
RAH	Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid

## MISCELLANEOUS

<i>BAE</i>	Biblioteca de Autores Españoles
<i>CODOIN</i>	Colección de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España
<i>CSPD</i>	Calendar of State Papers, Domestic
<i>EHR</i>	English Historical Review
<i>EHQ</i>	European History Quarterly
<i>ESR</i>	European Studies Review
<i>MM</i>	The Mariner's Mirror



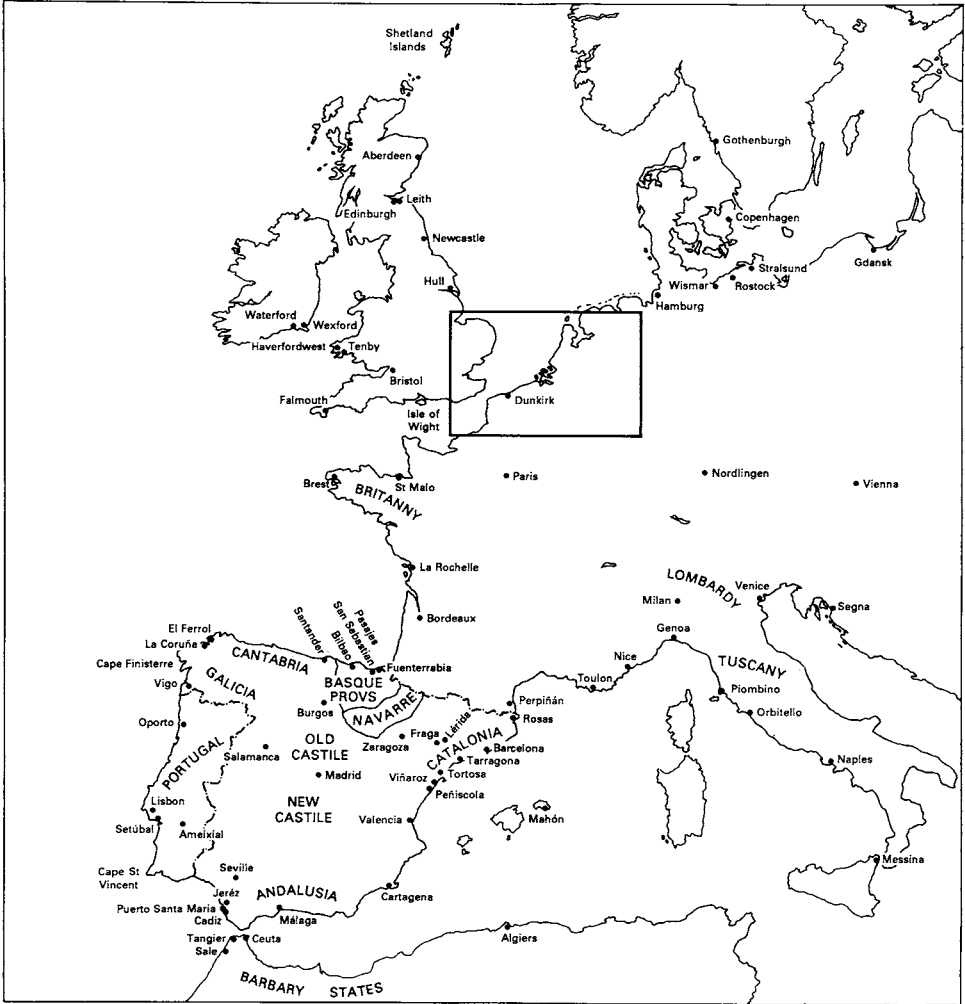
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Map 1  
Operational Theatres of the Dunkirk Armada, 1598-1656, with locations referred to in the text.

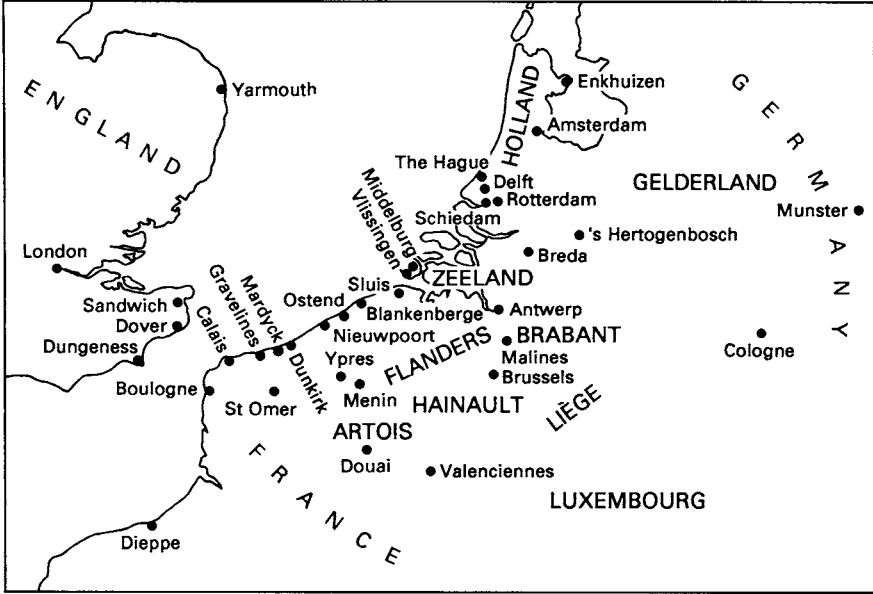
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Map 2

The Flanders ports and their geographical vicinity, with locations referred to in the text.