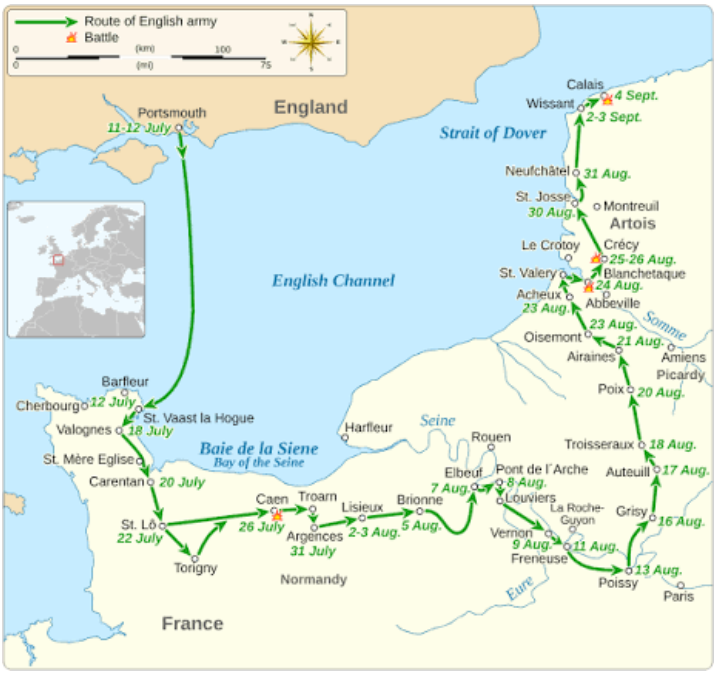
How does the way a state generates and pays its armed forces affect the way it employs them?

The Hundred Years War, actually 116 years long, from 1337 to 1453, was an expensive war fought in France, started between the Plantagenet Edward III of England and Phillip VI Valois of France. There were two causes of the war, one dynastic the other territorial. Firstly, and the reason it was so protracted were the disputed claims by several English kings that they should also be kings of France, beginning with Edward III. Secondly, the confiscation of most of the vast English controlled areas of France, at one time from Normandy in the north down the west side of France to Gascony down to the Spanish border and as far east as the Auvergne. It wasn't a period of continuous fighting, there were several periods of truce and there were significant English victories at Crecy, Poitiers and Agincourt but ultimately the English lost. This was new period of raising armies after the castle building programme of Edward I which was vastly expensive in the short term but more economic in the longer run; having castles and an army on campaign was just too expensive in the 14th Century.

This essay will cover the Edward III's Normandy campaign up to the siege of Calais, which required a fleet to transport his army to France and it will argue that how the English army was recruited and paid influenced the tactics on the battlefield.



This was the period of Edward's "military revolution" transforming the army from a force raised by feudal obligation to being a wholly paid army, bringing with it social and structural changes. The essay will also argue that the increased importance of the English archers was central to the defeat of the French mounted knights and how much of this increase was due to tactical or economic considerations. There was a subsequent change in the cost base of the army. Estimates of value and costs from multiple sources are not totally consistent, but the trends can be seen and this essay will also address how the money to fight the war was raised and how the English combatants were paid and how much.

The army of the 14 century was funded by two sources of cash, firstly national taxation paid into the Exchequer and Chancery and secondly funds from additional taxes on the population and the church

specifically for the war, "less a system of taxation than a system of plunder".[1] This extra cash was paid into the Wardrobe, controlled by the royal household outside of the Exchequer. England had a well-developed civil service that was needed for the efficient organisation of military activities, keeping records and accounts for pay, supplies and food, although bureaucracy was not in a rigid order. In the 13th century the Exchequer only supplied a minority of war funds to the Wardrobe, whilst the additional funds were collected from the towns by the Sheriffs. The first Keeper of the Wardrobe was Anthony Beck, Bishop of Durham in 1274, but it was his son Thomas who began keeping records in ledgers not rolls[2] well in advance of Double Entry Bookkeeping of 1494. The payments from the Wardrobe were developed into the 14th century and administered by the army paymaster, the Cofferer. By the end of the century the Exchequer was providing all funds to the Wardrobe. Credit was also available, Edward III borrowed from the Bardi's and Perruzi's in Italy, both of whom overextended their credit and were bankrupted when Edward could not repay[3].

Edward III carried out a "military revolution", transforming the ways a medieval army was raised and paid, from a feudal system based on land ownership of compulsory, unpaid companies fulfilling their military obligations to a wholly paid, professional army. Under the feudal system, the aristocracy would be invited into the army personally by the king, sometimes pressured, based on their level of landed wealth, in 1300 this was £40 per annum for landholders.[4] The lowest social rank of unpaid foot soldiers could be conscripted by the Commission of Array which was an order from the king to officers, or gentry, in a given area to recruit a required number of the population and to deliver them in a fit condition ready for military service. This inspection was called the muster and the phrase "to pass muster" is still in use today; as is the use of commission for the appointment of an officer. Pay from the King was common but not consistent across the force, magnates or captains could receive funds but they would sometimes supplement their pay to reflect their status, or their perception of their status, to contribute a larger force. Up to this point the use of mercenaries had been a regular addition, so the composition of an army could be complex, a mixture of feudal, volunteer, unpaid and paid soldiers, some of whom would have been pressed into service against their wishes. Paid service was not necessarily voluntary service and these armies were held together by threads of obligation.[5]

Edward III's "military revolution" was to raise entire armies of volunteers, by contract and paying them by the system of Indentures. The Indenture was a two-part, short term, written contract between the King and his captains for individual men, for a specified period. This created an available English army of part time soldiers, but many men made soldiering their trade, and by the mid-14th century there were substantial numbers of men-at-arms and archers who might be considered professional. Soldiering was big business and the eventual profits were handsome. France by comparison, did not

[1] Jurgen Brauer & Hubert Van Tuyll, Castles, Battles and Bombs, (London, University of Chicago Press, 2008) p 51

[2] Michael Prestwich, *War, Politics and Finance under Edward I* (London, Faber and Faber, 1972), p 152

[3] Jurgen Brauer & Hubert Van Tuyll, *Castles, Battles and Bombs*, (London, University of Chicago Press, 2008) p 335, note 16

[4] Andrew Ayton, 1994, *English armies in the 14th Century*. In Anne Curry& Michael Hughes, *Arms, Armies and Fortifications in the Hundred Years War*, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, p22

[5] ibid p23

adopt this approach staying with a feudal system[6] because its huge population and agricultural wealth meant it could muster large numbers of men-at-arms despite the cost.[7]

There were significant advantages of the Indenture system. Militarily, as these groups were regularly recruited, paid and fought together, they understood what tactics to deploy and how quickly to combine infantry, archers and mounted troops effectively. Economically, it allowed a campaign to be budgeted so that the size and cost of an army could be reliably calculated and how much cash to raise. Finally, with the budget established, it allowed campaigns to be more numerous, flexible and ambitious; for example, in the Spring of 1345, the Earl of Derby, contracted to take 2,000 men to Gascony and Earl of Northampton 500 men to Brittany.[8] Indenture payments from the Wardrobe were delegated to these commanders as the king was not on these campaigns.[9] Although the acceptance of Indentures was not immediate by the nobility, by the Normandy campaign the concept of a paid army was accepted and the need for mercenaries decreased.

Typical infantry disbursements at that time were for Constables, 1 shilling a day, Platoon Commanders of twenty men 4d a day and Foot soldiers 2d a day. For the Cavalry, payments were for a Bannerette 4 shillings a day, a knight 2 shillings a day and Squires and Sergeants 1 shilling a day[10]. This shows clearly that the infantry and the archers were a cheaper commodity in the fighting force.

When there were problems of cash flow, payments were assured by Debentures[11] of credit, issued for later payment, and they could also be made in-kind of food as when on campaign the force could be living from hand to mouth. However, pay was not the only benefit, typically there would be a package of benefits including a Letter of Protection, a Charter of Pardon, the Regard, Horse Appraisal and Spoils of War. The Letter of Protection, was a document issued by Chancery, which would suspend any legal action until the soldier had returned home. As the warrior class was also the landowning class this could be taken out to cover any unforeseen issues while away against any local issues. Up to half the army would take out this protection. The Charter of Pardon was an amnesty against previous criminal offences. Several thousand were granted for the campaign of Normandy to non-aristocratic combatants. Criminals were keen on this legal redemption to wipe the slate clean, but it was a blatant recruiting tool as these men were unpaid. The Regard was for men-at-arms, to cover the cost of additional plate armour. Paid to the captains, it was 6d per day for each man-at-arms and this was a significant amount compared to their standard pay. A man-at-arms could claim Horse Appraisal as compensation for the loss of his most expensive item of equipment, his principal war horse. This was typically £15 but the value could vary between £5 for a squires horse and £100 for the best captains. To put into perspective, a knight serving in the army for a full year would receive about £45 in pay and regard. Finally, any soldier could expect cash from Spoils of war, usually booty or ransom, at the end of campaign, but he accepted that he owed the Crown a portion of this, typically a third, possibly rising to half if Regard and Horse Appraisal was also being paid out. [12]

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[6] Bennett, M, 1994, *The Development of Battle Tactics*. In Curry, A and Hughes, M, *Arms, Armies and Fortifications in the Hundred Years War*, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, p2

[7] Clifford Rogers, 1993, *Military Revolutions in the Hundred Years War*, In The Journal of Military History Vol 57, No2, p247

[8] Andrew Ayton, 1994, *English armies in the 14th Century*. In Anne Curry& Michael Hughes, *Arms, Armies and Fortifications in the Hundred Years War*, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, p26

[9] Michael Prestwich, *War, Politics and Finance under Edward I* (London, Faber and Faber, 1972), p 160

[10] ibid p 159

[11] ibid p 155

[12] Andrew Ayton, 1994, *English armies in the 14th Century*. In Anne Curry& Michael Hughes, *Arms, Armies and Fortifications in the Hundred Years War*, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, p2

However, this new financial administration did not standardise the structure or unit size in the army, company strength could vary between 9 commanded by a knight to several hundred by an earl. Influenced by the defeat of Edward I at Bannockburn, where the cavalry charge was defeated by the Scottish long speared infantry, English battle tactics changed from the attacking mounted cavalry charge, to taking a defensive position with men-at-arms fighting on foot, inviting the enemy to attack. Subsequently, the man at arms plate armour changed to allow for maximum mobility and the lance became a pike. The war horse was relegated to flee or pursue roles and its value decreased, typically from approximately £16 in 1338 to £9 in 1359.[13] Because less money was being spent on the cavalry more archers could be used for the tactics seen at Crecy and their respective numerical proportions were becoming more equal as they became an integrated force.[14]

By the Normandy campaign the pay for an archer had risen to 6d per day and although this was cheap, compared to the mounted troops, and cost effective considering their increasing tactical importance, it allowed them to buy a horse and, significantly, became mounted archers. This improved the quality of the force, the mounted archer was typically a yeoman, a man of standing in their communities, more expensively equipped, much more than the poor-quality foot soldiers of Edward I. An advantage was that a mounted army could operate with speed and flexibility and that the English could employ the Chevauchee, a rampage of Fabian tactics[15] to defeat the French without the risk of a full-blown battle. Chevauchee was a raiding strategy to inflict maximum economic damage in an area by pillaging property, destroying crops and social aggression to weaken the enemy's political and moral authority in the ravaged region.[16] All of these changes combined to increase social mobility and the composition of the army. There was less distinction between chivalrous knights and yeoman archers, now both on horseback, and it was not uncommon for a mounted archer to become a knight. The aristocratic sense of identity was lost, from traditionally looking down from a war horse on their inferiors, they now fought side by side on equal terms, they were partners with the bowmen.[17] By Agincourt the ratio of archers to men-at-arms was 3 to 1.[18]

The Normandy campaign of Edward III began on July 11th 1346 when he invaded Normandy, sailing from Portchester with a large army, transported by up to 1,000 ships, landing at Hogue Saint-Vaast on the Cherbourg peninsular. Not having a Royal navy, Edward had to charter a merchant fleet from the south coast. The Cinque Ports had a preferential arrangement, otherwise the merchants were compensated but the crews could be pressed. In June 1340 an English fleet commanded by Edward destroyed the French fleet at the Battle of Sluys, which enabled this unopposed Channel crossing[19].

On 26th July, Caen was destroyed by the English by Chevauchee. Mounted forces struck quickly with devastating effect and it is estimated that 2,500 people were massacred at Caen.[20] Edward then marched on to Paris, where the larger French army was not ready for a battle preferring to stay within the city walls. This was a typical tactic from the castle building period, avoiding a battle unless the odds were in your favour. With no action, Edward marched north, crossed the river Somme and

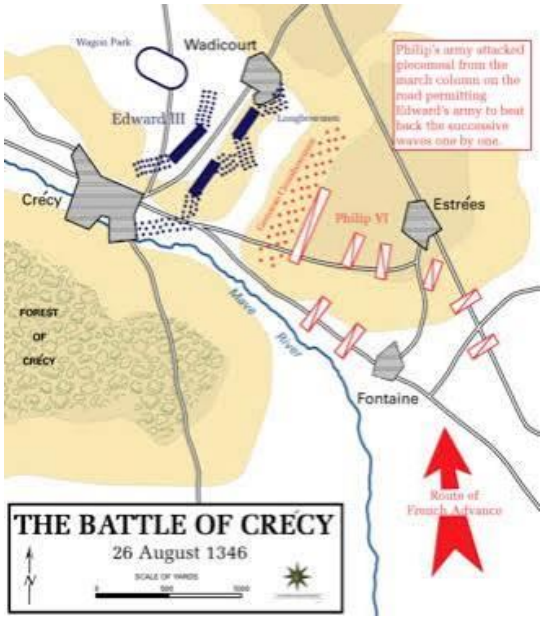
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[13] ibid p35
[14] ibid p31
[15] Christopher Allmand, 1988, *The Hundred Years War*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, P67
[16] Matthew Bennett, 1994, *The Development of Battle Tactics*. In Anne Curry& Michael Hughes, *Arms, Armies and Fortifications in the Hundred Years War*, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, p3
[17] Andrew Ayton, 1994, *English armies in the 14th Century*. In Anne Curry& Michael Hughes, *Arms, Armies and Fortifications in the Hundred Years War*, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, p35
[18] ibid p33
[19] John A Lynn, 1993, *Feeding Mars,* Boulder, Colorado, The Westview Press, p79 - 95
[20] Kelly DeVries, 1996*, Infantry warfare in the early fourteenth century*, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, p157

waited for the French at the village of Crecy, having covered 335 miles in 32 days, the speed of a convoy drawn by oxen.

The Battle of Crecy on 26th August was quite straightforward. Estimates of the strengths of the two armies vary, but it is widely agreed that the English were outnumbered by at least two to one but importantly in an army of around 15,000 there were around 7,000 Archers. The French had an army of around 30,000 of which 12,000 were mounted knights along with 12,000 infantry and 6,000 crossbowmen.

As Edward chose the battle area, it was familiar territory and he had probably planned ahead with supplies of food and ammunition. He took up a defensive position on a ridge in front of the two villages of Crecy and Wadicourt with three terraces descending to a flat area which would be the battlefield, with a river with a running down one side. The men-at-arms were positioned, on foot, on top of the highest ridge. The archers formed up in an elevated position and at a slight angle on both flanks to create a crossfire into the flat killing ground below into which they hoped to force the French.



The French arrived at the battlefield and immediately formed up to attack, they did not rest after their march; so quickly that the crossbowmen could not get their shields from the baggage train. Philip had no control over his knights who immediately started an uncoordinated cavalry charge. The English archers, with their increasingly lethal longbows,[21] from their advantageous positions cut down many of the French knights, and when the remnants reached the English positions were finished off by English men-at-arms in fierce hand to hand fighting. There were three charges all with the same outcome.

The crossbowmen were ineffective, also shot by the archers. It was an overwhelming victory for the English and a devastating defeat for the French with approximately 10,000 killed and the English relatively unscathed. The cheap to employ English archers had contributed most casualties to the carnage.

[21] Clifford Rogers, 1993, *Military Revolutions in the Hundred Years War*, In The Journal of Military History Vol 57, No2, Figure 1, p250



The English fresh from their victory march on to Calais and lay siege, a blockade by land and sea until the city falls in August 1347, a siege of endurance rather than ingenuity or superior military technology[22]. The capture of Calais gave the English a base for other military expeditions in the Hundred Years War.

The military revolution of Edward III enabled him to generate a wholly paid army, employed to travel fast on horseback but fight fiercely on foot. The money required to fight a war was collected nationally, administered centrally and the army was raised by a new form of contract, the Indenture, and payment was usually made in cash at muster. Professional soldiering could be very profitable in the Middle Ages. A better paid army created social mobility, the previously poorly paid archers then had the wealth from their campaign earnings to become a mounted yeomanry and progress up the social scale.

Tactically, the mounted force enabled the army to fight the Chevauchee, but in a set-piece battle the archers took over from the cavalry charge as the potent fighting force, as knights on chargers were becoming redundant after the defeat at Bannockburn. Economically, compared to the expensive mounted knights and horses, archers were plentiful, cheaper to pay, with cheap and lethal weapons, could be trained quickly, did not command a large enough ransom to make capture worthwhile and expendable. In an early example of opportunity cost, the money saved on paying mounted troops could be used to pay for more archers, who were fundamental to the new battlefield tactic of defence; 7000 archers were cheaper than 7000 men-at-arms. It was a cheaper army to employ using increased archery firepower, but very effective, as results show at Crecy, Poitiers and Agincourt.

By the end of the Hundred Years War the Middle Ages had come to an end, with the advent of gunpowder which meant that Trebuchet siege machines being replaced by cannons and combat had

[22] Andrew Ayton, 1994, *English armies in the 14th Century*. In Anne Curry& Michael Hughes, *Arms, Armies and Fortifications in the Hundred Years War*, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, p36

moved away from weapons of blades and points being replaced by weapons of shot, bullets and rockets and the era of the archer was coming to an end.

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