

## 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Navies and England

By the 1660s, England wasn't measuring itself against one enemy — it was measuring itself against the world.

- The **Dutch Republic** mattered because they were England's mirror: efficient, commercial, disciplined at sea. They showed what England *had to beat* to survive as a trading nation.
- **France** mattered because it represented the future: centralized power, state funding, and a navy built by royal design rather than merchant pressure.
- **Spain** mattered because although it had declined as a naval power, it still carried danger. A fading empire could still defend routes, protect treasure, and provoke war.
- **The Barbary states** mattered because naval power wasn't just about battles — it was about protecting sailors, commerce, and lives from capture and enslavement.
- **Denmark and Sweden** mattered because navies are built long before they sail: masts, rope, tar, and timber flowed through Baltic chokepoints.
- **Portugal** mattered because alliances could extend England's reach farther than war ever could — into the Mediterranean, Africa, and the global trade world.

So when Pepys worries about accounts, dockyards, shortages, corruption, and readiness, he isn't being small-minded or bureaucratic. He understands something crucial: *England does not get to choose its naval rivals — it has to be ready for all of them.*

And that's why *Pepys* matters: Not because he commands ships — but because he helps build a navy that can survive shifting enemies, changing alliances, and an increasingly global sea.

If the Dutch are England's mirror rival, the rest of Europe (and beyond) is the pressure cooker.

(See map on back)

# ENGLAND & THE NAVAL POWERS OF THE 17th CENTURY

