

How stable and well served was the monarchy in this period?

In this chapter, the main issues relate to the strength of the monarchy and how well its ministers served it. There are a number of passages for comment, interpretation and comparison: the main skill concerns interpreting and comparing sources.

- What challenges were there to the monarchy and how serious were they?
- Did faction weaken the monarchy in the period?
- How well served by its ministers was the monarchy in the period?
- Was the stability of the Tudor monarchy threatened in the period?
- What was the greatest threat to the stability of the monarchy?
- By the end of the chapter you should be aware of the problems that faced the monarchy in the period, including the issues of the succession and the problems created by the age and gender of the monarch. You will also be aware of the different explanations of the importance of faction in the period and the effectiveness of the various ministers employed by the Crown. You should be able to interpret and extract information from a range of sources and evaluate their reliability as evidence. You should also be able to deal with what they say about an issue and their value as historical evidence.

Examiner's advice

You must not forget that this is a source-based paper and therefore these issues will be examined through a series of sources from both contemporaries and historians. A study of the mark-scheme shows clearly that most of the marks are for demonstrating source skills and the focus will therefore be on developing the skills that are essential for this paper, rather than building up a detailed factual knowledge of events. These skills will be developed as you progress through the book. This chapter will focus on encouraging you to read sources carefully and think about the ways in which you can assess their provenance. This will involve thinking about issues such as who wrote the source, why it was written, its date, the language used and its typicality.

What challenges were there to the monarchy? Did they create instability?

Three areas had the potential to threaten the stability of the monarchy in the period 1536–69. They were the issues raised by the succession of a minor and then two female rulers, the problem of faction and the abilities of the monarch's servants.



Figure 2.1 Henry VIII.

The main causes of the challenges to the monarchy were:

- Henry's complicated matrimonial exploits
- the age of the ruler
- the gender of the ruler
- the issues of marriage and the succession.

ACTIVITY

What impression does Figure 2.1 give of Henry VIII? How does the artist achieve this?

How did Henry try to solve the succession problem?

The background

As you read this section you should think about whether the succession question ever threatened the political stability of the country.

Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragon had produced only one surviving child: Mary. Many members of the ruling elites believed that the monarch must be male. Although the succession in England was not governed by **Salic Law**, there was no tradition of female rulers, and the last time a female had been named as heir, in the twelfth century, the country had collapsed into civil war. Henry probably did not believe that a female could or would be able to rule England and that a male heir was therefore essential. This was certainly a major factor in his decision to divorce Catherine and marry Anne Boleyn in 1533. The marriage to Anne resulted in a second daughter, Elizabeth, who was recognised as heir by an Act of Parliament in 1534. The same Act also declared Mary illegitimate. Following the execution of Anne in 1536 and Henry's marriage to Jane Seymour, a second Act of Succession was passed, declaring Elizabeth illegitimate.

However, the birth of a son did not secure the succession. Jane died due to complications after childbirth, and Henry subsequently married Anne of Cleves in January 1540, Catherine Howard in August 1540 and Catherine Parr in 1543. Despite these marriages no more children were born, but a Third Act of Succession was passed in 1543–44.

Salic Law

A law that had its origins in France and excluded females from succeeding to the throne

Examiner's advice

It is important that you do not just skim-read sources, but read them carefully and ensure that you understand the content. As you read Source A below, ensure that you are clear about the order of succession and the authority by which the succession was to be determined.

Source

A From the Third Act of Succession (1543):

In case it should happen that Henry VIII and his only son Prince Edward should die without heirs, then the crown shall pass to the Lady Mary and to her heirs, with such conditions as Henry VIII shall state by letters under the Great Seal or in his last Will; and should the Lady Mary die without heirs, then the crown shall pass to the Lady Elizabeth and to her heirs, with such conditions as Henry VIII shall state by letters under the Great Seal or in his last will.

ACTIVITY

- 1 Why do you think Henry involved Parliament in the determining of the succession?
- 2 How had the order of the succession changed from the Second Act of Succession? Why?

Source

B Henry's declining health in 1546 meant that Edward would come to the throne as a minor. Therefore, to avoid any disputes and ensure a peaceful succession, he confirmed the Third Succession Act by his will in December 1546.

We will ... that, immediately after our departure out of this present life, our said son Edward shall have and enjoy the said imperial crown and realm of England and Ireland, our title to France ...

And for lack of such issue and heirs, ... the said imperial crown and all other the premises shall wholly remain and come to our said daughter Mary and the heirs of her body lawfully begotten; upon condition that our said daughter Mary, after our decease [death], shall not marry nor take any person to her husband without the assent and consent of the privy councillors ... We will that, after our decease, and for default of issue of ... our daughter Mary [i.e. if Mary does not produce children], the said imperial crown ... shall wholly remain and come to our said daughter Elizabeth and to the heirs of her body lawfully begotten...

The will also added that if all of Henry's children died without heirs the throne would pass to his niece, Frances Grey. She was the elder daughter of Henry's sister's marriage to the Duke of Suffolk. It also meant that children from Henry's elder sister Margaret's marriage to James IV of Scotland were excluded; this would mean that according to the will there was no place in the succession for **Mary Stuart (Queen of Scots)**. The will, it could be argued, was also designed to ensure that the Catholic Mary was excluded and replaced by the Protestant Grey family.

BIOGRAPHY**Mary Stuart (Queen of Scots)**

The daughter of James V of Scotland and Margaret (Henry VIII's sister). Many Catholics believed she was the rightful heir as they did not recognise the validity of Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn and therefore believed that Elizabeth was illegitimate. Mary had married the son of the King of France. She was already Queen of Scotland, but by 1559 her husband was King Francis II of France. She was therefore seen as a serious threat to English security.

ACTIVITY

- 1 Why did Henry's will state that if Mary should marry after Henry's death she must have the approval of the Privy Council?
- 2 Why do you think Henry thought it was necessary to issue instructions for the succession in his will when the Third Succession Act already existed?
- 3 What sources of authority have been used by Henry to settle the succession? Why?

Although both Mary and Elizabeth had been restored to the succession, the acts which had made them illegitimate were never repealed!



Figure 2.3 Edward VI.

Edward was only nine years old when he came to the throne. He was governed first by Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset (see pages 51–52) as Lord Protector and then John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland (see pages 53–54).

How serious a threat to the power of the monarchy was Edward's age?

It must be remembered that England's record of child kings was not very encouraging:

- Richard II had succeeded to the throne in 1377 at the age of ten, but was later deposed and replaced by Henry IV.
- Henry VI had survived as king as a minor; a council of competing nobles ruled on his behalf from the time he succeeded to the throne, aged eight months, in 1422. However, civil war followed soon after he achieved majority in 1437.

- Edward V succeeded his father, Edward IV, as king in 1483, aged 12. He was imprisoned in the Tower of London two months later, and was probably murdered, possibly by his uncle, who became Richard III.

Henry's death in 1547 brought Edward VI, a boy of nine, to the throne. Although, until his final illness in 1553, it was expected that Edward would take full control of the kingdom when he came of age, a minority nevertheless created problems that would have to be overcome.

Henry had tried to overcome these difficulties by establishing a **Regency Council** to rule the country, with all sixteen members having an equal voice. However, these provisions were quickly overthrown and Edward Seymour, uncle of the new king, soon emerged as the Duke of Somerset and Lord Protector. Despite this, there were some who questioned the legality of Somerset's authority, and this only added to the instability.

It could be argued that a council of sixteen would never have worked: it would have led to factional squabbles and unrest, and therefore a dominant voice was needed to prevent this. Yet Somerset was ambitious; he had been able to appoint supporters such as **Anthony Denny** and **William Paget** to key positions in the late king's household so that Henry's will could be altered. Then, through bribery and rewards, Somerset was able to emerge as the dominant character.

Regency Council

A group of councillors who rule on behalf of a monarch while the monarch is a child or a minor. The Regency Council of 1547–49 was headed by Somerset.

What were the problems created by Edward's age?

- inability to lead troops in war
- emergence of faction
- unrest and a possible return to the Wars of the Roses
- the image of the monarchy.

BIOGRAPHY

Anthony Denny

A confidant of Henry VIII, Denny was in charge of the King's Privy Chamber. This was an important role, particularly in Henry's last years, as he spent much of his time in his private rooms. People could only gain access to the King with Denny's permission, so he was able to exclude those whom he did not want to influence the King.

BIOGRAPHY

William Paget

Born in 1505, Paget entered Parliament in 1529. Henry and Cranmer used him in their attempts to win support from European universities for Henry's divorce. In 1543 he became a Privy Councillor, and then Henry's Private Secretary. Along with Somerset he was Henry's main advisor in the King's final years. He supported Somerset's protectorship against Northumberland, and served both Northumberland and Mary – though he did oppose Mary's religious reforms.

There is little doubt that Somerset used his position to further his own power and wealth. He took many decisions without consulting the Regency Council; instead, the government of England was increasingly conducted through Somerset's household and there was an increased use of proclamations, rather than Parliament. However, it could be argued that these were necessary given the continual crises that the government faced. Most importantly, Somerset appeared to ignore the advice of other members of the ruling elite, so much so that his close friend and advisor, William Paget, then Secretary and a member of the Privy Council, even wrote to him in critical terms in May 1549:

Source**C** A letter from William Paget to Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset:

However it cometh to pass I cannot tell, but of late your Grace is grown in great choleric [angry] fashions, whensoever you are contraried in that which you have conceived in your head. A king which shall give men occasion of discouragement to say their opinions frankly receiveth thereby great hurt and peril to his realm. But a subject in great authority, as your Grace is, using such fashion, is like to fall into great danger and peril of his own person, beside that to the commonweal [well-being of the state].

ACTIVITY

- 1 It was suggested that the date when an account or letter was written is important. Why might Paget be writing in such terms to Somerset in May 1549?
- 2 What criticisms of Somerset are made by Paget in Source C?
- 3 What is the purpose of Paget's letter to Somerset?
- 4 How might this affect its reliability?

Source**D** Only a few weeks later, in July, Paget wrote again to Somerset in the following terms:

I told your Grace the truth, and was not believed: well, now your Grace seeth it, what seeth your Grace? The King's subjects out of all discipline, out of obedience, caring neither for Protector nor King ... Remember what you promised me in the gallery at Westminster before the breath was out of the body of the king that dead is. Remember what you promised immediately after, devising with me concerning the place which you now occupy ... and that was to follow mine advice in all your proceedings more than any other man's. Which promise I wish your Grace had kept.

ACTIVITIES

- 1 It is interesting to consider the tone of Paget's second letter to Somerset (Source D). This can perhaps be best done by reading it out aloud. What is the tone of the letter? Why?
- 2 It would also be worthwhile to compare the tone of Source D with that of Source C. In what ways are they different? Why?
- 3 What has happened between Paget's previous letter to Somerset (Source C) and this letter (Source D) which causes him to say the 'King's subjects out of all discipline, out of obedience'?
- 4 What is the purpose of Source D?
- 5 According to Source D, what had Somerset promised Paget?
- 6 How might this affect the reliability of Paget's comments?

devise

In a monarch's will, a clause that deals with the question of who will succeed to the throne.

Although many historians have argued that Edward was a sickly child, this is not true. It was only in the early months of 1553 that his health began to decline. The Succession Acts stated that the throne should pass to Mary, his half-sister. But once again, historians disagree about the driving force behind the attempts to prevent her from gaining the throne. Most accounts suggest that it was the Duke of Northumberland who wanted to alter the succession in order to preserve his own power. He had arranged the marriage of his son to Lady Jane Grey, who was proclaimed queen a few days after Edward died on 6 July 1553. Other historians have argued that it was Edward who was behind the **devise** issued in 1553. This declared both Mary and Elizabeth illegitimate and named the male descendants of Lady Jane Grey as heirs. It was argued that Edward did this in order to preserve Protestantism by preventing the Catholic Mary from inheriting the throne. When Edward died, Jane was proclaimed queen and Mary Tudor was informed in the following letter:

Source**E A letter from the Privy Council to Mary Tudor, 9 July 1553.**

We advise you that our Sovereign Lady Queen Jane is possessed of the crown, not only by good order of old ancient records of this realm, but also by the late King Edward's letters signed with his own hand and sealed with the Great Seal of England, with nobles, councillors and judges agreeing to these letters. We must remind you that owing to the divorce between King Henry VIII and your mother, in accordance with the law of God and confirmed by acts of parliament (1534, 1537), you are illegitimate and unable to inherit the crown.

ACTIVITY

- 1 According to the letter from the Privy Council, Source E, what was the basis of Queen Jane's claim to the throne? Why might they have listed so many reasons why Mary was unable to inherit the throne?
- 2 Why might the letter mention that nobles, councillors and judges had agreed to these letters?
- 3 What was the purpose of the letter? How might this affect its reliability?

Mary did not accept the situation and as a result England came close to civil war. Northumberland had failed to arrest Mary before Edward died and she had been able to flee to East Anglia, where she was able to raise a large force. Northumberland also attempted to raise an army to capture her, but as it approached Mary's force at Framlingham Castle, many deserted and Northumberland was forced to surrender. Jane's reign had lasted just nine days. Mary was now queen and legitimacy triumphed.

The events of 1553 had shown that legitimacy, rather than religion, should determine the succession and that the rightful ruler was preferable to a usurper.



Source

F *To win the throne, Mary relied on a small group of Catholic gentry supporters, but the secret of her success was a much wider appeal to legitimacy and a careful avoidance of religious issues during the course of the crisis itself.*

D. MacCulloch (1990) *The Later Reformation in England 1547–1603*. Macmillan.

ACTIVITY

How far does MacCulloch's view about the reasons for Mary's success in Source F agree with your own knowledge of events?

Read some other historians' writing to increase your understanding of this issue.



Figure 2.4 Queen Mary I, shortly before her marriage to Philip of Spain.

How serious a threat to the power of the monarchy was a female ruler?

The accession of a female ruler raised many issues in sixteenth-century society. The only other occasion when England had been ruled by a female was in the twelfth century. Then, it had resulted in civil war as many people refused to accept Matilda as queen and backed Stephen instead. There were fears that this would be repeated as Mary would be unable to control the factions within the country, which were made worse by the religious divisions. It was also expected that a ruler would lead the army into battle and it was argued that Mary would be unable to fulfil this role. Most controversially, it was expected that Mary would marry; the problem was who. In the sixteenth century a husband made the decisions, even if his wife was queen! If Mary married an Englishman, a noble family would be placed in a dominant position and control patronage, but if she married a foreigner, the country would face foreign domination.

These latter fears were soon realised when it was announced in November 1554 that Mary was to marry Philip of Spain. Although as the most powerful ruler in Europe, Philip would be able to protect Mary, there were fears that England would be used by Spain and dragged into conflicts that did not benefit England. It is therefore not surprising that the announcement of the marriage resulted in rebellion (see Chapter 5, pages 138–139). However, with the defeat of rebellion Mary would not face other challenges to her position, and it can be argued that it was Mary herself, with a speech at Guildhall, who did much to rally the City and defeat Wyatt.

Once it was clear that Mary was not going to have children, despite her two phantom pregnancies in 1554 and 1557, she reluctantly recognised her half-sister, Elizabeth, as her heir. Mary insisted that Elizabeth should keep England Catholic, and although Elizabeth never agreed to this, when Mary died in November 1558, the throne passed unchallenged to Elizabeth.

How serious a threat to the monarchy were the issues of marriage and succession?

Elizabeth was aware that, as a female ruler, she was in a much weaker position than a man would have been. There was also the practical question of whether a woman could be head of the Church, as there was no scriptural authority for a woman to make doctrinal decisions. As Mary appeared to have proved, there were doubts whether a female ruler had the authority to impose her will. It is therefore not surprising that most people expected Elizabeth to marry. Unlike Mary, she was able to exploit her femininity and was able to woo courtiers like Leicester. She also used it to obtain an extra degree of loyalty from ministers, such as Cecil, who were aware that her gender made her more vulnerable.

Marriage and succession were the two most important policy issues of the early years of Elizabeth's reign. Despite some questions about her legitimacy, from those who did not accept Henry's divorce from Catherine of Aragon, her position as monarch was unchallenged. Her ministers were anxious that she should marry and have an heir, and she faced pressure from both the Privy Council and Parliament on these issues. Although she refused to marry or name a successor, the issue did not go away.

In some ways Elizabeth was fortunate that Mary's husband, Philip of Spain, welcomed her accession. He was still at war with France and was much happier to see Elizabeth queen than Mary Stuart, who was married to the French Dauphin. Marriage and succession were closely linked to foreign policy, as had been the case with Mary. Marriage could also be used as a diplomatic bargaining tool. The same was argued about the naming of a successor.

Many feared that if Elizabeth died childless, the country would be plunged into civil war. However, Elizabeth refused to either marry or name a successor.

Sources

Read the following extracts from speeches by Elizabeth on the issue of marriage and the succession made to her first parliament.

G *And to me it shall be a full satisfaction both for the memorial of my name, and for my glory also, if when I shall let my last breath, it be engraven upon my marble tombe, Here Lyeth ELIZABETH, which reigned a virgin and died a virgin.*

H *When my sister Mary was Queen, what prayers were made by many to see me placed in her seat ... Now then, if the affections of the people grow faint ... what may we look for when evil-minded men shall have a great foreign prince appointed the certain successor to the crown? In how great a danger shall I be ... when a prince so powerful, so near unto me, shall be declared my successor? Assuredly, if my successor were known to the world, I would never esteem my state to be safe.*

ACTIVITY

What reasons does Elizabeth give in Sources G and H for not marrying or naming a successor?

Elizabeth's views contrasted with those of her advisors, who believed that the naming of a successor was the best guarantee of security. Many suitable husbands were suggested, including Philip of Spain, but as Elizabeth stated, marriage to a heretic was out of the question.

It was Elizabeth's contraction of smallpox in 1562 that brought matters to a head. Her life had been in danger and the security of the realm was seen as threatened. As a result, Parliament raised the issue in 1563 and again in 1566. In 1566 they even tried to link the question of granting a subsidy to Elizabeth's agreement. Elizabeth still refused, and after that date her wishes were reluctantly accepted.

Why did Elizabeth not marry or name a successor?

Reasons to marry	Reasons not to marry	Reasons to name a successor	Reasons not to name a successor
It would provide an heir	She wanted to marry Robert Dudley , but could not, therefore she would not marry anyone	Without a clear heir there would be a struggle for the throne	If she named a successor, that person would be the focus of opposition to her
A woman ruling on her own was seen as unnatural; she needed help	She wanted to rule on her own and not share power	If Elizabeth did not name an heir to the throne, Mary Stuart (Queen of Scots) would claim the throne and bring England back to rule by a foreign Catholic power	She would not be bullied into naming a successor; it was a matter of her prerogative
Marriage could be used to get an ally	She felt that being unmarried strengthened her position		Elizabeth was a cautious ruler; she did not want to name a successor and discover she had made a mistake
	She could use her marriage potential by remaining single		There was no suitable candidate

Table 2.1 The many reasons put forward both for and against Elizabeth either marrying or naming a successor.**BIOGRAPHY****Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester**

The son of John Dudley, the Duke of Northumberland, who had been executed in 1553. A firm Protestant, Robert was the favourite of Elizabeth and was appointed to the Privy Council in 1562. He was created Earl of Leicester in 1564. As the Queen's personal favourite, he had considerable access to her, which made him a serious rival to Cecil. There were rumours of him marrying Elizabeth.

ACTIVITY

During the rule of which monarch was the power and authority of the monarchy most seriously threatened? What criteria are you going to use to assess the threat? Try to rank the monarchs according to the threat, giving each a mark out of ten according to how serious the threat was – the higher the mark, the greater the threat.



How far did faction make the monarchy less stable?

The concept of faction is one of the most difficult issues you will have to understand in the course. In very simple terms, faction is when a group of people act together to further their own positions and influence, and undermine the positions and influence of others. These groupings are very loose and should not be confused with the discipline and organisation that surround a modern political party. Factional groups could often be temporary alliances, united only by the desire to remove those who have influence. The historian Eric Ives has defined faction as a group of people who have come together to seek ‘objectives that are seen primarily in personal terms’. These groupings were made more confusing by the religious divisions created by the break from Rome and moves away from Catholicism.

In the sixteenth century the royal court was the centre of power and influence. Those looking for promotion needed to attract the attention of the monarch, and this was often done through one of his friends or supporters. Consequently, those looking for promotion gathered around either powerful ministers or nobles and as a result rivalry between the groups developed as they jostled for influence and patronage.

It will be important to consider how far each of these factions was able to dominate the political scene, influence policy and weaken the power of the monarchy in the period. You will need to consider how far the monarch was in control or was dominated by the leading political group.

The main factional struggles in the period 1536–69 centred around the following:

- the Boleyn faction v the Aragonese faction in 1536
- the Exeter Conspiracy in 1538
- the reformers, such as Cranmer, v the conservative faction of Gardiner and Norfolk in the 1540s
- the Seymour dominance at the end of Henry’s reign until Somerset’s fall in 1549
- the dominance of the Dudleys from 1551 to 1553
- the struggle between Paget and Gardiner under Mary Tudor
- the struggle between Norfolk and Cecil during Elizabeth’s reign.

The Boleyn faction v the Aragonese faction

In the 1530s two groups emerged: those who stressed their loyalty to the former queen, Catherine of Aragon and her daughter, Mary Tudor, and those who supported the new queen and wanted to see religious reform (see pages 62–64). It might have been expected that Catherine’s death in 1536 would mark the end of the Aragonese faction, but instead it was a spur to action against Anne and her supporters. We have already seen (page 11) that the 1534 Succession Act had removed Mary from the succession, declaring her illegitimate. Their aim was to restore her to the succession. With Catherine dead, they believed that Henry could now do this without implying that his marriage had been legal. They also had other motives. Catherine and her daughter had remained firm Catholics while Anne was identified with religious change, and Catherine’s supporters had not forgiven Anne for luring Henry away from Catherine. They set out to bring about Anne’s downfall.

They were given a boost when, in January 1534, Anne miscarried. Henry started to have doubts about the legality of his marriage to Anne, and Anne's position was further weakened by the presence of Jane Seymour. The Aragonese faction began to instruct Jane in how to win and keep Henry's affections. This was an obvious threat to the Boleyns' position, and things were made worse by Thomas Cromwell's decision to back the Aragonese faction, having had disputes with the Boleyns about foreign policy.

Cromwell moved quickly. First, Anne's friends were arrested, then Anne herself. They were accused of adultery and finally of conspiring to bring about the death of the King. It was not surprising that they, along with Anne, were found guilty and executed.

How far had faction brought about Anne's downfall? There are certainly grounds for suggesting that Henry played a significant role. He was looking for an opportunity to remove her, convinced that her failure to produce a son was a sign that their marriage was not legal. He was also annoyed by her involvement in politics and religious developments, believing that a wife should keep out of such things. It is therefore possible to argue that Cromwell decided to support the Aragonese faction either because the King requested him to, or because he realised how things were developing and that he must do as the King wished if he was to save his own position.

Having brought down the Boleyns, Cromwell turned on his former allies as he feared they would attack him and bring about a religious reversal. His triumph was secured in the Second Succession Act of 1536, which banned the descendants of both Anne and Catherine from the throne and placed the succession in the hands of the children of Henry's new wife, Jane Seymour.

This was not the end of the story. Having been defeated at court, the Aragonese faction became involved in rebellion to reverse the religious changes and restore Mary to the succession (see Chapter 5, pages 126–130 for more detail). Historians such as Elton have argued that the Pilgrimage of Grace of 1536 was an attempt by a 'court faction to take the battle out of court into the nation, to raise the standard of loyal rebellion as the only way left to them if they were to succeed in reversing the defeats suffered at court and in Parliament, and in forcing the King to change his policy'.

What evidence is there that the Pilgrimage of Grace was due to faction?

- the demands of the Pilgrims called for the restoration of Mary to the succession
- the demands specifically attacked the rule of Cromwell and his associates
- the leaders of the rising, Darcy, Constable and Hussey, had been involved in opposition since at least 1533
- they had been plotting with the Imperial ambassador for a number of years
- the rising was well organised, suggesting that it was not a spontaneous reaction to the dissolution of the smaller monasteries.

If this interpretation is correct, Henry's position was seriously threatened by faction as the scale of the rising was far greater than any army Henry could raise, forcing him into negotiations and compromise. It was only in the early months of 1537 that Henry was able to reassert his authority and remove the ringleaders.

It might be argued that the rising weakened Cromwell's position as the King saw how unpopular his minister was, but this is not convincing as Cromwell continued to rise in power and favour until Henry's disastrous marriage to Anne of Cleves in 1540. It was this and its exploitation by his opponents that led to Cromwell's fall (see page 16).

The Exeter Conspiracy

In many ways this conspiracy was a continuation of the struggle that the Pilgrimage of Grace had revealed. As with the Pilgrimage, the Exeter conspiracy was alleged to want to restore Catholicism, but also to overthrow Henry. According to the plot, Henry Courtenay, the Marquis of Exeter, was to have conspired with Lord Montague and his brothers, Geoffrey and Reginald Pole. This was made more dangerous because the Courtenays and the Poles were both Yorkists with a claim to the throne.

Courtenay and Montague were executed, but most notoriously so was the elderly Countess of Salisbury, whose only crime was being the niece of Edward IV and Richard III.

Evidence does not support the idea of a conspiracy, but suggests that it was the work of Cromwell, who found the discovery of a threat to the King and government an ideal way to secure his position after 1536.

ACTIVITY

Read the following passage from the interrogation of John Collins, a servant of lord Montague, in 1538.

The said Collins says that he heard Lord Montague much praise the learning of Cardinal Pole. He further says that he heard Lord Montague say that knaves rule about the king and he trusted that one day the world would amend and that honest men would rule about the king. He heard Lord Montague say that he trusted to see the abbeys up again and say that Cardinal Pole should marry the Lady Mary and that she should have title to the Crown.

- 1 What accusations are made by Collins?
- 2 How convincing is this as evidence that there was a conspiracy?
- 3 Why might the accusations made by Collins be unreliable?

The reformers v the conservative faction in the 1540s

With the fall of Cromwell in 1540, Henry decided not to appoint another chief minister. The period saw an increasing struggle between the conservative and reform factions, which some historians have seen as a sign of weak royal power, particularly with Henry's declining health. However, others have argued that Henry was always in control and manipulated the struggle to maintain his power.

Conservative faction	Reform faction
Accepted Henry as head of the Church, but did not want changes in doctrine	Accepted Henry as head of the Church, but did want the introduction of Protestant doctrine
Leader was Duke of Norfolk and members included Stephen Gardiner (Bishop of Winchester)	Leaders were Edward Seymour (became Duke of Somerset) and Archbishop Cranmer
Supported the Six Articles Pleased with the removal of Cromwell Pleased when Henry married Catherine Howard, Norfolk's niece Plotted against Cranmer (1543) Plotted against Catherine Parr (1544)	Involved in the foreign wars and success in Scotland Pleased when Catherine Howard fell Associated with Catherine Parr Plotted against Gardiner (1544) Had Norfolk arrested (1546)

Table 2.2 The main elements of the struggle between the reformers and the conservatives.

ACTIVITY

Study Table 2.2. Which group appears to be victorious in the struggle? What evidence is there to support your view?

Table 2.2 seems to suggest that the factional groups were able to influence the King, yet Henry was well aware of many of the intrigues and some have even argued that he encouraged them, as he enjoyed watching noblemen and councillors fighting for domination. It also allowed Henry to maintain control, as neither group was able to dominate and the final decision was always his.

In 1540 it did appear as if the conservative faction had won. They had removed Cromwell (see pages 45–48), had the conservative Six Articles passed (see page 65) and arranged the marriage of Norfolk's niece, Catherine Howard, to Henry. Yet this was all short-lived. The first disaster was the fall of Catherine Howard. The reform faction was able to present the King with compelling evidence of her unfaithfulness. As a result she was executed, along with those accused of adultery, and Norfolk, although he escaped with his life, lost considerable influence.

The conservative faction tried to strike back by accusing Cranmer of heresy. Henry agreed to look into the accusations, but appointed Cranmer to head the enquiry! Henry then married Catherine Parr, a Protestant sympathiser who was close to Seymour. The conservative faction then accused members of her household and by implication the queen, of heresy. This incident perhaps provides the clearest example of Henry manipulating and even enjoying the factional struggle, rather than being manipulated by it. Henry allowed Catherine to be taken to the Tower to be questioned. It appears that she was told about the charges and was allowed to see her husband, where he accepted her promise to follow his religious views. However, Henry did not tell her opponents of this, so when they arrived to arrest her they were greeted with abuse from Henry for trying to carry out a treasonous act. Henry had shown a willingness to allow his wife to suffer, simply to show that he was in control. Most importantly, it was a clear signal to both sides that he was still in control of policy.

This event was followed by the triumph of the reformers. First they were able to remove Gardiner. He was accused of supporting the reinstatement of papal authority and was lucky to avoid the Tower. Doubts still surrounded him as he had been involved in the plot against the Queen, and finally the reformers were able to argue that he was refusing to grant some of his lands to the King. Even though this accusation was false, it was enough to see his removal. Meanwhile, reformers were dominating court, particularly with the appointment of Anthony Denny (see page 30) as Chief Gentleman of the King's Privy Chamber, which allowed him to control access to the King. At the same time, the reform faction was able to obtain the arrest of Norfolk and his son, the Earl of Surrey. Playing on the King's concerns about the succession, they claimed that Surrey had spoken about his family's claim to the throne and had put part of the royal coat of arms on his family emblem without royal approval. He was executed, but Norfolk survived because Henry died before ordering his death.

ACTIVITY

Consider these two interpretations of the period:

- 'The King's control weakened and left him the victim of rival groups.'
- 'For the most part, Henry knew what was happening and played the groups against each other.'

Which interpretation best describes the events of the 1540s? What is your evidence to support your view?

Faction under Edward VI

It can be argued that factional unrest under Edward had a greater impact than at any other time in the mid-Tudor period. This was particularly true from the late summer of 1549, when serious social unrest engulfed much of the country (see pages 130–135), to 1552, when Dudley emerged triumphant.

Although the reformist faction led by Somerset had triumphed in the last year of Henry's reign, his position was not unchallenged. At the same time, the range and scale of the problems he faced made him even more vulnerable. War with Scotland, financial and economic problems and religious uncertainty all made Somerset's position difficult, but his methods of government alienated many. His personal style of government meant that the Privy Council established by Henry was frequently ignored. This caused resentment among men such as Paget, Dudley and **Wriothesley**, and led to the formation of an anti-Somerset faction. This group had little in common, showing how fluid and flexible faction could be: Wriothesley was a religious conservative, Paget was neutral and Dudley was a reformer.

Wriothesley also had personal reasons to attack Somerset, as he had been removed from the Privy Council in March 1549. As a religious conservative, he would have disliked the changes under Somerset (see Chapter 3, pages 71–81) and so once again faction and religion combined to create instability. Dudley, some historians have argued, was ambitious and looking for an opportunity to replace Somerset, and Paget felt that his advice was being ignored (see page 31). The events of the summer of 1549 would provide these men with the opportunity to act.



BIOGRAPHY

Thomas Wriothesley (pronounced 'Risly')

Born in 1505, Wriothesley entered the service of Wolsey and Cromwell. He was a religious conservative, but gained considerable land and wealth from the dissolution of the monasteries. He became one of the principal secretaries in 1540 and was knighted in 1542. He was appointed Lord Chancellor in 1544. He was one of the executors of Henry's will and was created Earl of Southampton in 1547. Under Somerset he lost his position as Lord Chancellor and was removed from the Privy Council, but he was later readmitted and played a key role in Somerset's downfall.

Source

I The following description of the events of autumn 1549 is taken from from Richard Grafton's *A Chronicle at Large and Meere History of the Affayres of Englande* (1569).

After the unrest was pacified and quieted, many of the Lords of the realm, as well as councillors and others who disliked the government of the Protector, began to withdraw themselves from the Court and resorting to London, fell to secret consultation for the redress of things, but namely for the displacing of the said Lord Protector. Suddenly and why, few knew, every Lord and Councillor went through the City armed and likewise had their servants armed. At last a great assembly of Councillors was held at the Earl of Warwick's lodgings, where all the confederates in this matter came armed and finally concluded to take the Tower of London.

The Lord Protector hearing of the manner of the assembly of this council and the taking of the Tower which seemed to him very strange and doubtful, did presently the said night move from Hampton Court taking the King with him to Windsor Castle and there began to fortify the same.

ACTIVITY

Read Source I.

- 1 Who does Grafton blame for the problems of autumn 1549?
- 2 What is his evidence to support his view?
- 3 How far does this agree with your own knowledge of events?

Fearing for his position, Somerset issued a proclamation on 5 October, calling loyal subjects to Hampton Court to defend him and the King against his enemies. This forced his opponents to act and Somerset was removed. Although Dudley emerged in charge, his position was not secure, as the religiously conservative members of the faction did not trust him and were prepared to remove him because of his friendship with Somerset. Consequently, Dudley was forced to turn on his former allies in order to save himself, and by February 1550 the conservative members of the faction were removed from office as Dudley was able to win over Lord Russell and Lord St John. Dudley now had to ally himself with the more religiously radical elements on the Council, with all the implications for religious change that this would bring (see Chapter 3).

ACTIVITY

Points for discussion:

- 1 How strong is the evidence that Dudley was trying to gain power for himself?
- 2 Why was Somerset foolish in summoning the peasantry to his aid in October 1549?
- 3 Which individuals were the most important in determining the outcome of events between October 1549 and February 1550? Explain your answer.

Faction under Mary

Critics of Mary's government have argued that her Privy Council was too large and faction-ridden for government to function effectively. This interpretation is supported by the lack of formal council discussion about her decision to marry Philip of Spain. However, this view is balanced by the fact that routine administration was effective. Mary did keep some councillors who had served Edward and were willing to show her loyalty. They included Paget, but she also added men such as Stephen Gardiner, who had been released from the Tower. At the same time there was a group, known as the 'Kenninghall faction', who had helped her gain the throne and now became Privy Councillors as a reward for their loyalty.

Such a large group would have made the council unwieldy, but it was rare for all members to attend and the average size of gatherings was similar to what it had been during Northumberland's rule. Three developments helped this process:

- in 1554 the councillors established a system of committees which excluded the more casual councillors
- in 1555, Philip helped to establish an 'inner council' of nine trustworthy men
- when Philip left England in 1555 and Gardiner died, Paget was able to dominate and complete the reforms, establishing a conciliar form of government.

There were times when factional rivalries did impact on policies, most notably in the friction between Gardiner and Paget. Some have argued that the establishment of the committee system in 1554 may have been Paget's attempt to stop Gardiner from controlling the whole council. Most obviously, Gardiner's attempts to revive the heresy laws in 1554 were blocked when Paget urged the Lords to reject his proposals. This rivalry became more apparent when a similar bill, supported by Paget, was passed a few months later.

Therefore, despite concerns that the size of the council and conflicts between individuals would result in conflict and a paralysis in government, there is little evidence to support this view. There were disputes over specific issues, but for much of the time the council was able to put rivalry aside.

Cecil v Dudley and Norfolk

Historians used to explain Elizabethan politics in terms of factions and the struggles between the various groups. Although this view has changed in recent years, the role of Cecil in the factional struggles has not. Rather than using faction to promote and secure his own position, there were even occasions when he intervened with the Queen in favour of one of his opponents.

Despite this, Cecil was often the victim of attacks and therefore frequently on the defensive. This is best explained by the fact that he was usually the dominant force who was trying to

stop his opponents from bringing about change. The clearest examples of this both involved Robert Dudley.

On the first occasion, Cecil acted to prevent Dudley's marriage to Elizabeth. Before Dudley's wife had died, Cecil spread a rumour that Dudley was going to murder his wife in order to be free to marry the Queen, and after her 'accidental' death, Cecil spread rumours that Dudley was responsible. As a result, the marriage never took place, since Dudley was seen as an unsuitable husband. Some have argued that as Elizabeth was unable to marry her favourite, she was determined never to marry.

The second event was in 1569, when Dudley combined with the conservative Duke of Norfolk to try to bring down Cecil. In 1568 Norfolk was a supporter of Cecil and a rival of Dudley. It was Cecil's continued monopoly of influence that brought together the unholy alliance of Dudley and Norfolk with other councillors as they tried to end Cecil's domination of court, showing how fluid factional groupings were. There were genuine concerns that Cecil's policy was placing the country in serious danger, and there is certainly some truth in this view. The seizure of the Spanish bullion ships (see page 58) provoked hostility from Spain and led to the seizure of English ships and goods in the Netherlands ports and the banning of all trade with England. Elizabeth retaliated and trade with Spain and the Netherlands stopped. It was not just Dudley and Norfolk who attacked Cecil's policy, but many council members, and for several months they tried to turn the Queen against him.

Although there was a factional element to this crisis, it must be noted that there was a genuine difference in policy between the two groups. However, it is unlikely that Elizabeth would have allowed the anti-Spanish policy to be pursued if she had not known how weak Philip's position was with a rebellion at home and the threat from the Turks in the Mediterranean. Yet this factional conflict did have consequences. In 1569 a rebellion broke out in northern England (see Chapter 5, pages 139–141), and the rebels had certainly been encouraged by the Spanish ambassador. It may also have prompted the Pope to finally issue the Bull of Excommunication which freed Catholics from their loyalty to Elizabeth.

If the conflict was about favour, it was Cecil who emerged victorious. His major opponent, the Duke of Norfolk, was executed in 1572 as a result of his involvement in plots with Mary Queen of Scots. If in 1569 Cecil had appeared to be friendless and virtually isolated, by 1572 he had emerged triumphant. Although the struggle did have an impact on policy, it must also be remembered that there was much co-operation in the governing of the country, suggesting that faction did little to weaken the efficiency of government and the power of the monarch.

ACTIVITY

How convincing is the argument that faction caused instability throughout the period?

In order to reach a conclusion about this question, consider the following points.

- When did faction cause instability?
- How long-lasting was the instability?
- How serious was the instability? Did it prevent government from functioning?
- Were there any periods when the monarch used factional struggles to increase their power?



How well served by ministers was the monarchy in the period 1536–69?

The main focus will be on analysing how far the rule of each of the ministers strengthened or weakened the power of the monarch. The section will centre on the following ministers:

- Cromwell
- Cranmer
- Somerset
- Northumberland
- Pole
- Cecil.

Cromwell

BIOGRAPHY

Thomas Cromwell

Born 1485

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 1503 | Joined the French army. |
| 1504–1513 | Entered the household of an Italian merchant-banker. |
| 1520 | Involved in London merchant and legal circles. |
| 1523 | Became an MP. |
| 1530 | Became a member of the Council. |
| 1532 | Appointed Master of the King's Jewels. |
| 1553 | Appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer. |
| 1534 | Appointed Henry VIII's Principal Secretary. |
| 1535 | Appointed Royal Viceregent. |
| 1536 | Appointed Lord Privy Seal. |
| 1540 | Created Earl of Essex. Arrested, imprisoned and executed. |

Cromwell was Henry's principal minister from 1532 to 1540. There is much debate about his achievements, but he did bring about many changes to the way England was governed, so much so that Elton argued that they amounted to a 'revolution in government'. However, there is also much debate about his motives. Cardinal Pole described him as 'an agent of Satan sent by the devil to lure King Henry to damnation', and said that he was simply motivated by personal greed. Cromwell, however, claimed that his beliefs and views always took second place to those of the King. Within months of Cromwell's death, Henry was agreeing and historians have suggested that he was the best minister any monarch was fortunate enough to be served by in the sixteenth century. This view appears to be given credence by a brief examination of his achievements set out below.



Figure 2.5 Thomas Cromwell.

- He brought about an administrative revolution in the structure and organisation of central government.
- Financial departments were reorganised.
- The Privy Council was created.
- The role of Parliament was increased.
- The areas and authority of statute law were increased.
- He created the concept of national sovereignty.

- He brought about a revolution in the relationship between Church and state; the independence of the Church was removed.
- Royal authority was extended in the regions; more authority was given to the Council of the North and the government of Wales was reformed.

From this summary, it does appear as if Cromwell achieved a great deal for Henry. He always appeared to put his master's needs first and abandoned his own ideas and policies if they were not favoured by the King, though some have suggested that his loyalty had other motives.

Source

J Comments said to have been made about Thomas Cromwell by George Paulet, who appeared before a Royal Commission to answer charges of slandering the minister:

...the King beknaveh him [calls him bad names/swears at him] ... twice a week and sometimes knocketh him well about the head; and yet when he hath been well pummelled about the head or shaken up as it were a dog, he will come out into the Great Chamber and shaking off the bush with as merry a countenance as though he might rule the roost.

Commission of Investigation report, 1538.

ACTIVITY

- 1 What criticisms are made of Cromwell in Source J?
- 2 What does Source J suggest about the relationship between Henry and Cromwell?

Remember the following points when considering reliability:

- What is the nature of the source?
- Why was the source produced?
- How will this affect the reliability of the source?

Source

K In 1540 Cromwell was attainted for treason and executed, as described in this extract from the Bill of Attainder of Thomas Cromwell, June 1540. The Bill of Attainder was drawn up by the House of Lords, many of whom were opposed to Cromwell because of his dominance at court and his background.

Attainder of Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex, whom the King has raised from a very base and low degree to the state of an earl and who nevertheless has been the most detestable traitor that has been since the King's reign. He has, of his own authority, set at liberty persons convicted of misprision [erroneous judgement] of treason ... and also has, for sums of money, granted licences for the export of money, corn etc. contrary to the King's proclamations; and also, being a detestable heretic, has dispersed into all shires false and erroneous books, many of which were printed beyond the seas, tending to the discredit of the blessed sacrament of the altar and other articles of religion declared by the King by the authority of Parliament.

Bill of Attainder

A declaration by Parliament that a person was guilty of treason. This would happen without a trial. The declaration also applied to the person's heirs and would mean the loss of the family estate.

ACTIVITIES

Before answering these questions, you should look carefully at the language used by the writers of Source K. You should be able to identify words which clearly show their attitude towards Cromwell.

- 1 What charges are made against Cromwell in the **Bill of Attainder**?
- 2 What area of activity does most of the Bill focus on? Why might this be the case?
- 3 What is the purpose of the Bill?
- 4 How might this affect the reliability of Source K?
- 5 How does the nature of the Bill affect the reliability of Source K?

Having looked at the list of Cromwell's achievements and the Act of Attainder, you should now consider whether Cromwell was a good servant of the monarch or just a greedy Tudor statesman.

Cranmer**BIOGRAPHY****Thomas Cranmer**

- 1489** Born in Nottinghamshire.
- 1520s** Studied at Cambridge and was a member of the 'White Horse' Group.
- c.1532** Secretly married the niece of a Lutheran Church leader from Nuremberg.
- 1533** Appointed Archbishop of Canterbury.
- 1533** Presided over Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon.
- 1534** Declared Henry head of the Church in England.
- 1536** Pronounced Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn null and void; presided over Henry's marriage to Jane Seymour.
- 1539** Opposed the Act of Six Articles, but refused to resign.
- 1541–47** Leader of the reformist party at court, survived conservative attacks.
- 1547–53** Played a leading role in the Edwardian Reformation.
- 1553** Stripped of title of Archbishop of Canterbury.
- 1554** Arrested and imprisoned for heresy.
- 1556** Burned at the stake.



Figure 2.6 Thomas Cranmer.

There has been significant debate about Cranmer for over 400 years, with Catholic historians seeing him as failing to save the Church for Rome, while Protestant writers have seen him as establishing the Church of England and as a martyr who was burnt for his beliefs by Mary Tudor.

Of greater interest in recent years has been the debate over how and why Cranmer was able to survive a period which many others, such as Cromwell, did not. He had spent much of his early life at Cambridge University, but came to prominence with his writing in support

of Henry's divorce from Catherine. With the death of Archbishop Warham, to the surprise of many, Cranmer was made Archbishop of Canterbury in 1533. Henry undoubtedly liked Cranmer, and contemporaries also commented on the pleasure of his company. The King trusted him, particularly after his handling of the divorce, and was certain that he did not have his own policy agenda, as Cromwell had. In simple terms, he was a 'yes' man who accepted Henry's decisions and did his best to put them into practice. However, Cranmer also believed that it was his duty to offer the King advice, even when he knew it would not be well received. He argued that the disgrace of Anne Boleyn should not derail the Reformation, pleaded with the King for leniency towards Cromwell and broke the news to Henry about Catherine Howard's adultery. In theological matters, Cranmer explained in detail why Henry's objections to the Bishop's Book were ill founded.

ACTIVITY

The following passage is taken from a letter written by Cranmer to the King about Cromwell.

He that was such a servant, in my judgement, in wisdom, diligence, faithfulness, and experience, as no prince in this realm ever had ... I loved him as my friend, for so I took him to be; but chiefly I loved him for the love which I thought I saw him bear towards your Grace, above all other. But now, if he be a traitor, I am sorry I ever loved him or trusted him, and I am very glad that his treason is discovered in time; but again I am very sorrowful; for who shall your Grace trust hereafter, if you might not trust him? I pray God continually night and day, to send such a councillor in his place whom your Grace may trust, and who for all his qualities can and will serve your Grace like to him.

- 1 What is Cranmer's view of Cromwell as expressed in the passage? What is your evidence to support this view?
- 2 What do you think was the purpose of Cranmer's letter? How does this affect its reliability?
- 3 Why might such a letter be risky for Cranmer? Does this mean his views are more or less likely to be reliable?

If Cranmer was a Lutheran, as many believe, why did he survive when others such as Cromwell fell because of their heretical beliefs? The likely answer to this also explains his skill: he was able to separate his own beliefs from the policy he was asked to follow. He passed judgements of heresy on people whose beliefs were no different from his own!

For Henry, Cranmer's greatest achievement was in overseeing the divorce from Catherine, but Cranmer did influence the direction of the Reformation. He supported Cromwell's attempts to move the country in a more Protestant direction in the years after 1536, and when he was given a similar opportunity after 1543 he followed a similar policy. Having survived attempts by the conservative faction to remove him (see pages 39–41), he was able to bring in his Litany and the King's Prymer. After Henry's death, Cranmer produced the Book of Homilies, or model sermons, followed by his Prayer Books of 1549 and 1552 (see Chapter 3, pages 74–75).

Somerset

BIOGRAPHY

Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset

Born c.1506

- 1537** Appointed to Privy Council.
- 1541** Created Earl of Hertford.
- 1547** Created Duke of Somerset and Lord Protector.
- 1549** Fall of Somerset.
- 1552** Executed.



There is much debate about Somerset. Some historians describe him as the ‘good duke’ who was concerned for the poor, while to others he was a typical Tudor statesman, greedy and out to improve his own position. When in power he certainly ensured that he obtained large amounts of wealth through the sale of Chantry lands and rewarded his supporters well. He established an Enclosure Commission in 1548 to look into the complaints of the peasantry. This appeared to encourage the peasants to take the law into their own hands, with the result that by the summer of 1549 the country appeared to be drifting towards a major crisis. There were rebellions in 25 counties and Somerset appeared unable to control the situation. It was this failure that led ultimately to his fall from power in the autumn of 1549. He was abandoned by other members of the council, who blamed him for failing to prevent the unrest. On the other hand, John Dudley, who had defeated the rebels in East Anglia, had gained in popularity and was able to engineer Somerset’s arrest.

Source

L Somerset was the victim of a political coup in October 1549. The new regime blamed him for what had gone wrong in 1549, especially the bungled handling of the revolts which had allowed them to go on for so long. In fact, the policy which Somerset’s government had adopted had been the work of the whole Council. Nevertheless, it is true that on occasion Somerset had gone against the advice of his councillors, sometimes with disastrous consequences. An example was the enclosure commissions of 1548 and 1549 which, as some councillors had predicted, caused rather than stopped the revolts.

M.L. Bush (1975) *The Government Policy of Protector Somerset*. McGill-Queens University Press.

ACTIVITY

- 1 What is Bush’s view in Source L about why Somerset fell from power?
- 2 How far does Bush blame Somerset for the problems in dealing with the unrest in 1549?
- 3 How accurate is Bush’s explanation for the fall of Somerset?

Source

M Richard Grafton, a well-informed Londoner, writing in 1568 about the events of 1549.

After the rebellions were crushed, many of the lords and councillors secretly plotted to overthrow the Lord Protector. Each lord and councillor went through London armed, and had their servants likewise armed. They published a proclamation against him containing the following charges. First, that through his malicious and evil government, the Lord Protector had caused all the recent unrest in the country. Second, he was ambitious and sought his own glory, as appeared by his lavish buildings. Third, that he ignored the advice of the councillors. Fourth, that he told untruths about the council to the King.

ACTIVITY

- 1 What reasons did the proclamation against Somerset (described in Source M) give for his removal?
- 2 Look carefully at the language used in the proclamation. What words are used to describe Somerset's government and personality? Why would such words and phrases be used?
- 3 What do you think was the purpose of the proclamation?
- 4 How might this affect the reliability of the proclamation?

Although Somerset was arrested in 1549, he was released in 1550 and was able to rejoin the Privy Council. However, the following year he was accused of plotting against the Privy Council in order to regain power, and was arrested and executed in 1552.

Source

N Francis Bourgoyne, who was based in London, relates the events leading to the execution of Somerset, in a letter to the Protestant theologian John Calvin, 22 January 1552.

Somerset was the head of a conspiracy against the whole Council, and more particularly against the Duke of Northumberland, whom Somerset pursued with a deadly hatred, since Northumberland had been foremost among those who deprived him of the rank of Lord Protector. Somerset obtained some supporters from among the Council itself. They agreed that Northumberland should be murdered and they should take over the government of the kingdom. Somerset should lead the government, or even be restored to the office of Protector.

Having looked at the fall and execution of Somerset, you should now decide whether Somerset was more interested in personal wealth than in serving the King.

Northumberland

BIOGRAPHY

John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland

Born in 1504, Dudley held various posts under Henry VIII. In 1542 he became Viscount Lisle, and during the 1540s developed a military reputation with victories on land and sea against the French and Scots. On Henry's death in 1547 he became Earl of Warwick and Lord Great Chamberlain. In 1549 he crushed Kett's Rebellion. In October 1549 he was involved in the removal of Somerset, and in January 1550 became Lord President of the Council. In October 1551 he was created Duke of Northumberland. In 1553 he attempted to change the succession and was executed following the failure of the Lady Jane Grey affair.

As with Somerset, there is much debate about Northumberland. His reputation was low. He was seen to have conspired with the conservative group on the Council to remove Somerset, and then turned on them to increase his own power. Having brought Somerset back into the Council, he had him executed. Finally he conspired against Mary, then on the scaffold renounced his Protestantism in a vain attempt to save his life. More recent work has focused on the positive aspects of his rule, arguing that it restored stability and order after the rebellions and was welcomed by property-holders and landowners. His action against the conservative councillors was forced on him to save his own position before they turned on him, and Somerset was executed because he tried to regain his former position. Although it is more difficult to defend Northumberland's actions in 1553, it has been suggested that he was only carrying out the young King's wishes.

Source

O Robert Wingfield, a Suffolk gentleman and Catholic supporter of Queen Mary, assesses Northumberland's role in the attempt to change the succession, writing in 'The Life of Queen Mary', 1553.

The Duke of Northumberland was an ambitious man. After a notable victory outside Norwich in 1549 against the peasants, who had been stirred up against the better sort by idle men, Northumberland sought to control both the King and the kingdom. In 1553 the King showed signs of imminent death. He dared not make any protests, but fell in with the Duke's wishes to alter the succession. The dying King spoke to the nobles and lawyers: 'It is our resolve, with the agreement of our noblemen, to appoint as our heir our dear cousin Jane. For if our sister Mary were to be queen, all would be over for the religion we have established.'

ACTIVITY

Read Source O.

- 1 Who does Wingfield believe was behind the plot to alter the succession in 1553?
- 2 What is Wingfield's view of Northumberland?
- 3 Why might Wingfield's view of Northumberland be unreliable?
- 4 What reason does Wingfield give for the attempt to alter the succession? Why might he portray it in these terms? How reliable is his view?

Although Wingfield argues that the preservation of the Protestant religion was the most important reason for the attempt to alter the succession, he also suggests that ambition played a role. This view is supported by the fact that Northumberland had married his son, Guildford, to Jane Grey, which allowed him to continue to dominate politics even after the death of Edward. This would also suggest that Northumberland was the driving force behind the plot. However, the failure of the plot suggests that the driving force behind it might have been the young King Edward, rather than the ambitious Duke. Northumberland was an experienced soldier and would have ensured that Mary was captured before Edward died.

Source

P A modern historian writes about the attempts to alter the succession.

Edward VI contracted tuberculosis in 1553, and with his heir under the terms of his father's will well known to be a Catholic, disaster loomed for the Protestant cause. Between them, the young king and Northumberland determined to alter the succession to secure Protestantism. That they did not succeed is one of the great surprises of sixteenth-century English politics.

D. MacCulloch (1990) *The Later Reformation in England 1547–1603*. Macmillan.

ACTIVITY

- 1 What is MacCulloch's view about the cause of the attempt to alter the succession in 1553?
- 2 Who does MacCulloch believe was behind the plot?

Having looked in detail at the events of 1553, you should now consider whether Northumberland was a power-hungry politician or an able statesman who acted in the interests of the young King.

Pole



BIOGRAPHY

Cardinal Pole

- 1500** Birth of Pole (his mother was Countess of Salisbury).
- 1515** Educated at Oxford University.
- 1530** Refused to be Archbishop of York.
- 1531** Opposed Henry's divorce.
- 1532** Went abroad to study.
- 1536** Attacked Henry's supremacy.
- 1537** Made a cardinal and **papal legate** to England.
- 1538** Brother executed by Henry.
- 1541** Mother executed.
- 1554** Pole returned to England.
- 1555** Pole appointed Archbishop of Canterbury.
- 1558** Death of Pole.

papal legate

An envoy of the Pope. Pole was the Pope's representative in England.

Pole's return to England in 1554 marked a further move in the restoration of Catholicism. Having been abroad for over 20 years, he was somewhat out of touch with political developments in England. Pole was responsible for the reconciliation of England with Rome, but this came at a price: Mary had to compromise over the return of former monastic lands, so there could not be a full-scale restoration of monasticism in England (see Chapter 3).

There was little doubt that Pole's aims were similar to Mary's. Both wanted to eradicate Protestantism, both wanted to resolve the financial position of the Church and ensure that there was better clerical education and discipline. On Gardiner's death in 1555, Pole became archbishop of Canterbury. This gave him the opportunity to increase the level of persecution, resulting in 274 executions in the last three years of Mary's reign, though the impact of the persecutions is now considered to have been minimal (see Chapter 3, pages 85–88). In his attempts to restore church finance, Pole was slightly more successful and this was essential if sufficient resources were to be available to reorganise the Church. He was able to establish seminaries to train priests in every diocese, but a shortage of money meant that the only one was at York. Consequently, many priests remained uneducated and lacking in zeal, so that the changes had limited impact.

Pole was also unable to mount a propaganda campaign to counter the large number of Protestant pamphlets that were starting to appear. He failed to inspire the clergy and bishops to greater efforts and his task was not helped by the death of Pope Julius III in 1555. The new Pope, Paul IV, disliked Pole: he stripped him of his title of legate and ordered him back to Rome. Pole refused to go, but the papacy refused to recognise his authority, which meant he could no longer appoint bishops. As a result, by 1558 seven dioceses lacked bishops. Many must have questioned the wisdom of returning to Rome.

Although Pole had pursued the policies Mary wanted, he had done little to win over the majority of the population. It is almost symbolic of his ultimate failure that he died on the same day as Mary.

Cecil



BIOGRAPHY

William Cecil

1520	Born in Lincolnshire, the son of a family of minor gentry.
1543	Became an MP.
1550	Appointed Surveyor of Elizabeth's Estates.
1550–53	Secretary of State under Northumberland.
1553	Fell from power under Mary.
1558	Elizabeth appointed him Secretary of State.
1561	Appointed Master of the Court of Wards and Liveries.
1568	Leicester and Norfolk plotted to reduce his power.

Elizabeth relied heavily on William Cecil and took his advice on many issues. It was his advice she listened to in 1560, both over sending an expedition to Scotland and not marrying Robert Dudley.

Source

Q The following description of William Cecil was written by the Spanish ambassador to the King of Spain.

The principal person in the Council at present is William Cecil, now Lord Burghley. He is a man of mean sort, but very astute, false, lying, and full of artifice. He is a great heretic and such a clownish Englishman as to believe that all the Christian princes joined together are not able to injure the sovereign of his country. By means of his vigilance and craftiness, together with his utter unscrupulousness of word and deed, he thinks to outwit the ministers of other princes.

ACTIVITY

- 1 What is the ambassador's view of Cecil?
- 2 Why might he have this view?
- 3 Why might his view be unreliable? Think about the origin and purpose of Source Q.

Most historians agree that Cecil was the greatest of Elizabeth's ministers; he worked with her for most of her reign, demonstrating a talent for administration. It was Cecil who promoted policies of moderation, particularly in religion, but they brought him into conflict with Leicester, who wanted a more openly anti-Catholic policy (see page 36).



Figure 2.7 William Cecil, Elizabeth's principal secretary of state.

Source

R Read the following passage written by William Cecil to his son, Robert, just before William's death. It outlines how he saw his relationship with Elizabeth.

I do hold, and always will, this course in such matters as I differ in opinion from Her Majesty: as long as I may be allowed to give advice I will not change my opinion, but as a servant I will obey Her Majesty's commandment, presuming that she being God's chief minister here, it shall be God's will to have her commandment obeyed.

ACTIVITY

- 1 What advice does William Cecil give to his son?
- 2 Using your own knowledge, how far do you agree that William Cecil followed the advice he gave his son and was a faithful servant to the Queen in the period 1558–69?

How well did Cecil serve the monarchy?

He persuaded Elizabeth to aid the Scottish rebels in 1560 (see below). This secured the success of the Reformation in Scotland and drove the French out, helping to undermine the 'auld alliance' between France and Scotland and secure England's northern frontier.

- In 1568 he persuaded Elizabeth to seize Spanish treasure ships while they sheltered in English ports. He argued that the money did not belong to the Spanish until it reached the Netherlands and therefore still belonged to the Genoese bankers; Elizabeth was free to borrow it.
- Contemporaries commented on how much work he did.
- He drafted Elizabeth's correspondence with foreign ambassadors and agents.
- He was her main advisor in foreign affairs.
- He managed the business of the Houses of Parliament.
- He followed a cautious economic policy, which would enable England to withstand the cost of war later in Elizabeth's reign.
- He helped to create an effective intelligence service at home and overseas.
- He created an excellent propaganda system which helped secure the throne for Elizabeth and acceptance of the Religious Settlement (see pages 90–91).

Nevertheless, the picture of the honest servant who advised the Queen has been challenged, and it has been suggested that he was the 'power behind the throne'. Three incidents in the early years have been used to support this interpretation. First, letters have been found in which he told English ambassadors abroad what to write to the Queen so that she received the version of events that he wanted, and secondly, reinterpretation of the agitation behind the issue of succession in Parliament in 1563 and 1566 makes it clear that Cecil was trying to pressurise Elizabeth into accepting his views. The third and clearest example of Cecil imposing his will on the Queen was in 1559, when he conspired with fellow councillors to persuade her to accept armed intervention in Scotland to support Protestantism against Mary of Guise, the Regent, even though Elizabeth had stated that she was opposed to such a policy.

ACTIVITY

Read the following extract from a modern historian about William Cecil.

His labour and care were so incessant and his study so great as, in cases of necessity, he turned neither for meat, sleep or rest, till his business was brought to some end. This industry caused all his friends to pity him and his very servants to admire him.

A.G.R. Smith (1990) *The 'Anonymous Life' of William Cecil, Lord Burghley*.

- 1 What impression does the extract give of Cecil?
- 2 Using your own knowledge, would you agree with the assessment?



Reaching judgements

In the examination it is important to reach a judgement in all the questions you answer. The exercises below are designed to help you develop this important skill.

Now that you have examined the role of the ministers in the period 1536–69, you should think about the following:

- What criteria are you going to use to judge the service the ministers gave?
- Which minister best served the Tudor monarchy? Why do you think this?
- Which minister was most interested in acquiring personal wealth? What is your evidence?

Overall, do you think the Tudor monarchs were well served by their ministers in this period? To help you answer this question, you might draw up a chart similar to the one below.

Minister	Evidence that they served the monarchy well	Evidence that they did not serve the monarchy well
Cromwell		
Cranmer		
Somerset		
Northumberland		
Pole		
Cecil		

You could consider giving each minister a mark out of ten, according to how well they served the monarch, and explaining why you have given them this mark.

Did the challenges you have studied cause a political crisis?

Arguments that they did:

- Henry's last years were dominated by factional struggle and royal authority was weakened.
- Somerset seized power through a political coup and the manipulation of Henry's will.
- Somerset was able to divert government through his own household and his use of proclamations.
- Somerset's government lost the support of the political elites, shown in his failure to manage the rebellions of 1549.
- The fall of Somerset led to an autumn of instability.
- Northumberland was able to control the King through the Privy Council.
- The Lady Jane Grey affair led to rival armies being raised.
- Wyatt's Rebellion was a serious challenge to Mary.

Arguments that they did not:

- The permanent machinery of state always functioned.
- The ruling elites supported the legitimate monarch.

- The factional rivalry was no greater than it had been under either Henry VII or in the early years of Henry VIII.
- The Crown passed to Henry's children, as stipulated in the Third Succession Act and his will.
- The crisis of October 1549 when Somerset tried to seize Edward and was subsequently overthrown was short-lived.
- The attempt to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne lasted only nine days, and when Northumberland left London the support of the political elite swung behind Mary.
- Administration continued even when leadership was weak.
- The Crown passed peacefully from Henry VIII to Edward VI.
- Northumberland was an able politician who brought stability and reform.
- The Crown passed peacefully from Mary to Elizabeth.

ACTIVITY

Having studied the challenges of the period, you should be able to form your own view of how stable and well served the monarchy was. Draw up a chart like the one below. Consider the following periods and give each one a mark out of ten for how stable it was.

Date	Evidence of stability	Evidence of a crisis	Mark/10	Explanation
1530s				
1540–47				
1547–50				
1550–53				
1554–58				
1558–69				

You should also consider what type of challenge posed the greatest threat to the monarchy.