

Source O Lady Jane Grey explains to Queen Mary I the circumstances in which she was proclaimed Queen Jane in the previous month

Then came the Duke of Northumberland himself who declared to me the death of the King.

The Duke said the King had told him that he had well considered the Act in which it was ordained that whoever recognised Mary, or Elizabeth her sister, as heir to the Crown were to be considered traitors, seeing that Mary had disobeyed the King her father and her brother and was, moreover a chief enemy to the Word of God and that both were illegitimate. Therefore the King declared that he would disinherit them. Before his death, he commanded his Council that they should carry this into effect.

The Duke of Northumberland added that I was the heir nominated by His Majesty, at which words all the lords of the Council knelt before me exclaiming that they rendered me that homage because it belonged to me, being of the right line. On hearing this I remained stunned. Those present can witness that I fell to the ground weeping piteously and lamenting not only my insufficiency but the death of the King.

Letter from Lady Jane Dudley, August 1553

Northumberland was executed on 22 August despite his renunciation of Protestantism.

Source P A letter from a London merchant in which he comments about Northumberland's renunciation of the Protestant faith when on the scaffold

Today the Duke of Northumberland was executed.

As I hear, he confessed himself worthy to die because he was a great helper of this false religion [Protestantism]. Therefore God had punished us with the loss of King Henry VIII and with the loss of King Edward, then with rebellion and the sweating sickness, but still we would not convert to Catholicism. He required all that were present to remember the old learning, thanking God that he could now call himself a Christian, for this 16 years he had been none.

A great number turned with his words.

Letter from William Dalby, 22 August 1553

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

Although it may seem strange to us, the accession of a female ruler did cause serious concerns in sixteenth-century society. England had been ruled by a female ruler only once before, in the twelfth century. That had resulted in civil war as many had refused to accept Matilda as queen and supported Stephen instead.

There were a number of reasons why it was feared that a female ruler would weaken the monarchy:

- A woman would be unable to control faction.
- A woman would be unable to lead an army into battle.
- A woman was expected to marry, but this caused two further problems – the question of who Mary should marry and the sixteenth-century view that women, even a queen, should be subservient to their husbands.

Activity

Read Source O.

- 5 What can we learn about the personality of Lady Jane Grey from the source?
- 6 What, according to Lady Jane Grey, was her role in the events?
- 7 What is the purpose of the letter? How might this affect its reliability?

Read Source P.

- 8 Use your knowledge of Northumberland to assess how useful Source P is as evidence of his religious views. AS

Matilda and Stephen

Matilda was the only surviving child of Henry I, but when he died she was not present as she was in dispute with her father. Stephen was her cousin and was crowned king in 1135. Matilda was unpopular and at first it appeared as if war would be avoided, but it broke out in 1139 and continued intermittently until 1147.

- If Mary married an Englishman it would increase the power of her husband's family who would dominate court.
- If Mary married a foreigner the country would be dominated by foreigners.

Activity

1 How useful is Source Q as evidence that female rulers were a problem in the sixteenth century?

Source Q A Scottish Calvinist preacher expresses his opinion on the dangers of female rule

To promote a woman to rule a nation is unnatural and insulting to God as contrary to his revealed will and law. It is the subversion of good order and justice. No one can deny that it is repugnant to nature that the blind shall lead those who can see, the weak protect the strong, or the foolish and mad govern the discreet and give counsel to those of sober mind. Such are all women compared to man in bearing authority. For as rulers, their sight is blindness; their strength, weakness; their advice, foolishness; and their judgement, frenzy.

Extract from John Knox, *The First Blast and Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, 1558

However, it was less the fears that John Knox expressed that created instability, but Mary's decision to marry Philip of Spain. Although he was a powerful ruler and could protect Mary, she would be expected to be subservient and therefore he would be able to drag England into wars which would not benefit the nation. These fears played a significant role in Wyatt's rebellion of 1554, although it can also be argued that it was Mary's skill that defeated him, showing that female rule was also able to preserve the monarchy.

Did the marriage of Mary to Philip of Spain cause a crisis?

The question of whom Mary should marry was the first major political issue of her reign. There were only two realistic candidates, but the Privy Council was divided on the issue. The two factions were led by:

- Edward Courtenay, Earl of Devon, who was supported by Gardiner
- Philip of Spain, who was supported by Paget.

Plantagenets

The Plantagenet family ruled England from 1154 (Henry II) to the death of Richard III in 1485.

Courtenay was descended from royal blood as he was related to the Plantagenets and this, it could be argued, would have further helped to strengthen the Tudor dynasty. However, Mary's preference was for Philip. This would bring England closer to the Habsburgs, the family to which her mother was related, as Charles V was Catherine of Aragon's nephew. Mary raised the issue with the Council on 27 October 1553, simply announcing that it was her plan to marry Philip. Although it could be argued that the match would benefit England as Philip was powerful and would be able to protect Mary, there were serious concerns that such a marriage would drag England into the Habsburg wars that would bring the country no benefit. Despite a petition from the House of Commons, Mary ignored any opposition to her plans and on 7 December a marriage treaty was presented to the Council and approved in January 1554.

Source R The Act of Parliament for a marriage treaty between Mary I and Prince Philip of Spain sets out terms to protect English interests

This treaty greatly honours and benefits England. The prince shall enjoy, jointly, the style and honour of king. He shall happily help administer

England, preserving its rights, laws, privileges and customs. The queen shall have total control of all offices, lands and revenues, and grant them to natural born Englishmen. Sincere friendship with Spain will be happily established forever, God willing, to benefit their successors. Should no children be born and the queen die before him, he shall accept the lawful heir. The prince shall take no jewels abroad, nor ships, guns or supplies. He shall renew defences of the realm. By this marriage, England shall not entangle in war, and the prince shall observe England's peace with France.

Act for the Marriage of Queen Mary to Philip of Spain, 1554

However, despite such reassurances, it did not prevent rebellion, which broke out in January 1554. This was only six months after the defeat of the Lady Jane Grey affair and can be used as further evidence of the unrest caused by a female ruler. Plotting had begun as soon as there were rumours of a marriage and it involved members of the political elite, led by Sir James Croft, Sir Peter Carew and Sir Thomas Wyatt. These men had all held offices under both Henry VIII and Edward, but now feared that they would lose their influence and be replaced by Spaniards, who would dominate both court and government. The initial plan was for a four-pronged rising based in Devon, Leicestershire, the Welsh borders and Kent. However, it was only the latter that ultimately rose.

Source S The leader of the rising in Kent, a member of the gentry who had done well under Edward VI, explains the reasons for the rebellion

.....
 We write to you as friends, neighbours and Englishmen, concerning Queen Mary's declared intention to marry a foreigner, and request you to join us to prevent this. We swear to you before God that we seek no harm to the Queen, but merely wish her better advice. Our wealth and health depend on it. A hundred armed Spaniards have already arrived at Dover and travelled through Kent on their way to London. We require you to assemble with as much support as possible, to help us protect liberty and the commonwealth.

Thomas Wyatt, Proclamation, 25 January 1554

However, whether the proclamation represented the real cause of the rising has been a matter of debate among historians (see pages 156–58). Wyatt was a committed Protestant, and the other conspirators had links with the reformed religion. The only contemporary account of the rising was written by John Proctor, but he was writing for the government, who wanted to portray the rising as religiously motivated and divert attention from the unpopularity of the marriage and this is reflected in his comments, shown in Source T.

Source T A contemporary account, written for the government, explains the causes of Wyatt's rising

.....
 Wyatt, proceeding in his detestable purpose, armed himself and as many as he could. And, considering that the restoring of the newly-forged religion was not a cause general enough to attract all sorts to support him, he determined to speak no word of religion but to make the colour of his commotion only to withstand strangers and to advance liberty.

John Proctor, *A History of Wyatt's Rebellion*, 1554

The rebels planned to marry Princess Elizabeth to Courtenay. However, he disclosed the scheme to Gardiner and this, along with bungled planning by Carew, Croft and the Duke of Suffolk, forced Wyatt to raise his force earlier than

Activity

- 2 Read Source R and make a list of the ways the treaty was favourable to England.
- 3 Use your knowledge of Wyatt's rebellion to assess how useful Source S is as evidence of the causes of the rebellion. **AS**
- 4 What is the purpose of the proclamation? How does Wyatt try to achieve this?

To consider

Why might the government want to portray the unrest as due to religion?

had been planned. The middle of winter was not the best time to raise a rebellion, but he was still able to raise 3000 men. The situation was serious for Mary. A royal force was sent under the Duke of Norfolk to confront the rebels, but instead they deserted and joined the rebels. Wyatt was nevertheless very cautious in his march towards London and this gave the government the opportunity to prepare. As the rebels neared London, the Privy Council tried to raise forces to defend the capital and advised Mary to leave the city. However, Mary refused and some have seen her resolution as a major factor in the defeat of the rebel forces.

Activity

Read Source U.

- 1 What evidence is there in the source that it was Mary's actions that helped to defeat Wyatt?
- 2 What do you know about the author of the chronicle? How might this affect his view of events?

Read Sources V and W.

- 3 What do the sources show us about how the English viewed Spaniards?
- 4 How similar are the views of the two sources about Spaniards?
- 5 In what ways might the views of both passages be limited?

Source U A contemporary records Mary's reaction to the news of Wyatt's march on London

On 1 February the Queen went to the Guildhall and declared to the audience the wicked plan of the traitor Wyatt, which was utterly to deprive her of her crown, and to ransack the city. She spoke so nobly, with so good spirit, and with so loud a voice, that all the people might hear her Majesty, and were comforted in their hearts with so sweet words which made them weep with joy to hear her Majesty speak. On 3 February the Queen appointed Lord William Howard to be Captain General, with the Lord Mayor for the defence of the City.

Wriothesley's chronicle for 1554

By the time that the rebellion reached the gates of the city it was bound to fail. The rebels were halted at both London Bridge and the Tower and so crossed the Thames at Kingston, but were finally stopped at Ludgate where Wyatt surrendered. After the rebellion Mary executed less than 100 of the commoners and this might suggest that she did not consider the rebellion a serious threat, or it might be argued that she was cautious in her response for fear of provoking further unrest. Among the leaders of the rebellion Wyatt and Suffolk were executed, as were Lady Jane Grey and her husband. Croft was imprisoned, but later released, and Carew fled to France. Mary interrogated and imprisoned both Courtenay and Elizabeth, but they were also later released. The failure of the rebels, it can be argued, suggests that rebellion was not the way to solve political crises.

The rebellion did not stop the marriage, and it failed to end the dislike of Spaniards.

Source V A Spanish courtier who accompanied Prince Philip to England in 1554 records his impressions

The English hate us Spaniards worse than they hate the devil, and treat us accordingly. The Queen's councillors say publically that parliament will prevent Prince Philip from leaving the kingdom without the Queen's and their consent; for they think this realm good enough for Philip without having any other. The English are so bad and fear God so little that they handle the Spanish friars shamefully, so that the poor men do not dare leave their lodgings.

A Spanish courtier's letter, 17 August 1554

Source W The Imperial ambassador writes to the emperor about English politics in 1554

No attention is paid to the law; the Queen and her Council are neither respected nor obeyed nor feared. The people say that King Philip is not going to employ Englishmen, though he agreed to so in the marriage treaty.

They say he is sending for 10,000 Germans and 10,000 Spaniards to land in this country. They also say that monasteries will be set up again and that the pope will control religious affairs. They proclaim that they are to be enslaved, for the Queen is a Spanish woman at heart and thinks nothing of Englishmen.

The Imperial ambassador, Simon Renard, writing to Charles V, 18 September 1554

However, in assessing the impact of Mary's marriage on political stability it must be remembered that the marriage did not take place until twelve months after Mary came to the throne and that after the marriage Philip spent more time abroad than in the country. Therefore, it can be argued that, at best, Philip was a distant confidant.

Faction and instability

Despite this apparent dislike of foreigners, particularly Spaniards, among many in England, it does not appear to have had an impact on the government of the country. After Wyatt's rebellion popular unrest was limited, but some have argued that divisions within the Privy Council created instability. You have already seen that there were divisions over Mary's decision to marry Philip, but despite this, the administration of the country continued unimpeded. Some historians have argued that the size of Mary's Council meant that it was ineffective, but it was very rare for all the councillors to meet together and the average size of gatherings was very similar to that under Northumberland. The efficiency of council meetings was further aided by three developments:

- The establishment of committees in 1554 which excluded the casual councillors.
- The establishment in 1555 of an 'Inner Council'.
- Philip's departure in 1555 and the death of Gardiner allowed Paget to dominate and establish a conciliar form of government.

Therefore, although there were clashes, most notably between Gardiner and Paget, it appears that this did not impact on the government's efficiency. There were disputes over specific issues, such as the revival of the **heresy** laws (see page 133), but most of the time the Council was able to put rivalry aside. However, it must also be remembered that factional rivalry was not peculiar to Mary's reign, and it was not always a bad thing, as Elizabeth's reign will show (see pages 198–200).

Source X The Venetian ambassador gives an assessment of developments in England in Mary's reign

Knowing of the divisions among her councillors, the Queen, in order not to be deceived, ordered that Cardinal Pole should have everything referred to him, since she trusts him and distrusts almost all others. The Catholic religion seems daily to increase and take root, through the Queen's authority and the Cardinal's diligence. Monasteries are being built, churches are full, the ancient rites and ceremonies are again performed. But except for a few, most pretend to reject Protestantism and on the first opportunity would return to it. The Queen is greatly grieved by the conspiracies and plots formed against her daily. When she punishes the ringleaders, she provokes hatred since the offenders are excused by almost everyone.

The Venetian ambassador writing to the Senate of Venice, 13 May 1557

Activity

Read Source X.

- 1 What is the ambassador's view of the Council and events in England?
- 2 How does this challenge the view in the text?
- 3 Why might the ambassador have such views?
- 4 What are the problems in relying on the views of ambassadors? How might this affect the reliability of their evidence?

One of Mary's hopes from her marriage to Philip was to secure a Catholic succession, but that did not occur, in part because of Mary's age but also because Philip spent very little time in England. She was also unable to persuade Elizabeth to agree to maintain Catholicism. However, as much as Mary did not want it, Elizabeth succeeded to the throne upon Mary's death. This was as Henry's will demanded and therefore, despite the difficulties of both a minor and a female ruler, the Tudor monarchy had survived and, initially at least, Elizabeth's right to the throne was not challenged.

How stable was the monarchy in the period from 1547 to 1558?

The previous sections have covered the main political challenges to the stability of the monarchy and the next two chapters will consider other challenges. However, it would be useful to consider how far the events you have studied threatened the Tudor monarchy and government and whether its survival was ever in any doubt. The summary diagram at the bottom of the page summarises the challenges and why they did not threaten the stability.

There is evidence to support both claims. Arguments that there was a political crisis include the following:

- Somerset was only able to seize power through manipulating Henry's will.
- The nature of government changed under Somerset so that it was run through his household.
- The rebellions of 1549 resulted in the political elite abandoning their support of the government.
- Somerset's overthrow in the autumn of 1549 created instability.
- The struggle for power between Northumberland and the Catholic faction.
- The Lady Jane Grey affair resulted in the raising of armed forces.
- Wyatt came close to toppling Mary.

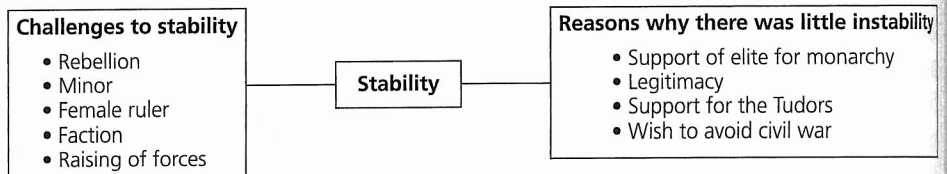
However, the argument that there was not a crisis is also convincing:

- The legitimate monarch always triumphed.
- The crown passed peacefully from Henry to Edward and from Mary to Elizabeth.
- Even during factional struggles, government continued.
- Henry VIII's will was upheld.
- Somerset's attempted coup was short-lived.
- Lady Jane Grey was queen for only nine days.
- The ruling elite supported the rightful monarch; even in 1553 they supported Mary once Northumberland left London.

To consider

What is meant by the term crisis?

The number of issues raised in this chapter might suggest that the monarchy was under threat and that there was constant instability, but how serious were the challenges, how long did they last and did they prevent the efficient government of the country?



▲ Stability.