Religious change is similarly seen as having been achieved with remarkably little disruption when compared with developments on the continent.

Although there was popular unrest, this was thought to have been caused by economic stresses rather than any weakness on the part of the authorities.

The major crisis point is now thought to have been the economy, which suffered not only from government mishandling, but also from problems which were out of the governments’ control.

The period from the final years of Henry VIII’s reign to the death of Mary constituted the Mid Tudor Crisis and was overcome in Elizabeth’s reign.

The main features of the crisis are:
- A crisis of authority in which the monarchs were compromised by religious factional fighting.
- Social and economic crisis marked by poor harvests, government debasement of the coinage resulting in inflation.
- Foreign policy problems in which England’s second-rate status among the European powers was all too evident.

The abundance of political, social, and economic factors was sufficient to create a structural crisis in which the authority of monarchy and nobility was itself under threat.

**English government system:**
- England was a constitutional monarchy constitutional monarchy – a system whereby a monarch governs the kingdom within the limits of an agreed framework.
- They had to rely on the revenue from royal estates, and whatever money they could persuade parliament to grant them.
- This meant that they could rarely afford to keep a standing army of mercenaries.
- They had to rely on the goodwill of the aristocracy and gentry to raise troops from among their tenants.

**Order:**
- Order was seen as the central problem for the 16th century state.
- Monarchs had to raise money for the ever-increasing machinery of government needed to maintain peace and security.
- They would have to increase their revenue.
  - Extra taxation was unpopular and likely to provoke rebellion -> collapse of government.
- English monarchs depended on the active support of the majority of landowners (Marxist historian: bourgeois) and on the passive obedience of the great mass of the population.

**The Reign of Edward VI 1547~1553:**
- Whitney Jones (1973) – the weakness of the monarchy, accompanied by a decline into factionalism, was itself the main cause of mountain economic and social distress in the period. This fundamental lack of political authority transformed problems such as population growth, price rises, unemployment and vagrancy into crisis.
- John Warren – crisis undoubtedly peppered Edward’s reign, but these should be seen as the result of poor judgement by Somerset in particular and by unlucky circumstance, such as the death of Edward, rather than a crisis of authority stemming from fundamental weakness in monarchy.
- Michael Tillbrook – The circumstances that the new monarch had inherited in 1547 would have been difficult even for a mature adult. However, the accession of a 9 yr old king created additional problems.
Somerset’s Economic Policy:
- Haigh – the need for money to finance the Scottish war was a more important motive than the need to destroy a popular aspect of Catholicism and has suggested that the dissolution did not come as a surprise for many parishes.
- Somerset inherited an English economy that was in a very weak condition.
- Population levels had been increasing rapidly since the 1540s.
  - Prices to rise
  - Young people found it hard to find work.
- The economic problem was made worse by a fall in demand for English textiles abroad.
  - Caused growing unemployment among cloth workers.
- Somerset paid for the war against Scotland by debasing the coinage which raised £537,000 which heightened inflation and added to social distress.

Revenue:
- Revenue was the most pressing problem.
- 1547 – the government was virtually bankrupt.
  - Crippling cost of the war was the main reason for this.
- 1546 – Henry VIII had spent 2.1 million GBP on the war and borrowed a further 152,000 from continental bankers.
  - To pay for this he had sold off most of the monastic lands seized between 1530-1540 as well as some Crown lands.
  - This meant that the crown had lost most of its assets and increasingly plunged deeper into debt and became increasingly illiquid.
- 1547 – the annual revenue from Crown lands had fallen to £200,000 GBP.
- There was an urgent need to reform the taxation and customs systems.
- There was also a need to reform the way finances were administered up to date.
- Somerset and the Council did none of these things because of their preoccupation with the war.
- They were also worried that if they raised taxes this would be unpopular with elites and other taxpayers.
  - Rebellion.
- Instead, they seized more Church property and debased the coinage which led to inflation.
- Royal mints were ordered to reissue the coinage and reduce the silver content by adding copper.
  - Currency lost value which encouraged inflation.
- 1551 – silver content had reduced to 25%.
- However, these measures provided much needed revenue.
- By increasing the number of coins in circulation the government was adding to inflation.
  - Prices, particularly for grain, rose rapidly fuelling discontent among the poor.

Somerset’s Religious Reforms:
- Michael Tilbrook – Somerset himself seems to have been a genuine, albeit late, convert to Protestantism, and have welcomed religious radicals such as John Hooper and Thomas Becon.
- Eamon Duffy (The Stripping of Altars 1992) – the religious injunctions were a charter for revolution as it struck at the heart of one of the principal expressions of medieval communal religion. The injunctions which led to visitations precipitated the most sweeping changes in religion England had yet seen (radical change).
- Christopher Haig (English Reformations 1993) – Somerset had blundered into a total ban on images in London, and he had gotten away with it.
- Somerset inherited a divided church that lacked decisive leadership and a clear direction.
Anri Sakakibara

- Andy Wood (The 1549 Rebellions and the Making of Early Modern England 2007) – what the Norwich rebels shared with the Western Rebellion is a particular sharpness in social conflict
- Traditionally, the popular rebellions and the elite power struggle in 1549 indicate a social crises at all levels of society
  - This conclusion is no longer considered valid
  - In social terms, neither the urban nor the clerical hierarchies displayed any signs of pressure (Heard)

- By 1549, rebellions were economic in origin
- In the Midlands and East Anglia agrarian and social grievances were most important, with the Council receiving numerous reports of riots rooting from resentment of taxation being consistent
- Most of the risings died out fairly quickly, either because of insufficient support of through prompt action from the local nobility and gentry
  - The Earl of Arundel managed to calm matters down in Sussex
  - Arundel heard grievances and punished a few oppressive landlords and disorderly peasants
- Similar methods to those of the Earl of Arundel worked in Cambridge, Yorkshire and Midlands
- However, the South West lacked a resident aristocrat of Arundel’s stature who could stop rebellions
- Both Kett and Western Rebellions required significant military actions to achieve suppression and restore order

The Western Rebellion 1549:
- Michael Tilbrook – the Western Rebellion was prompted particularly by religious grievances. The rebels had little chance to experience the new prayer book and so, the actual religious grievances ran much deeper for the rebels wanted nothing less than the reversal of the entire process of religious reform
- John Guy (Tudor England 1988) – the closest thing Tudor England came to a class war
- Eamon Duffy (The Voices of Morebath 2001) described the Western Rebellion was class antagonism
- Philip Caraman – the Western Rebellion was the most formidable opposition to the Reformation that England saw
- Historians agree that the rebels showed little knowledge of either Protestant or Catholic doctrines, but suggests that such ignorance in the West Country probably reflected similar confusion among the great mass of the people
- Fletcher, Pollard, Stevenson – social tension lay at the heart of the rebellion and the rebels considered the gentry as their enemy
- Historians tended to ignore the social and economic grievances in favour of the religious
- Nicholas Fellows – it is possible to make a link between the rebels’ religious grievances and their attack upon the gentry: it was after all the gentry who had gained from the Reformation

- Only the Western Rebellion was directly linked with religion and even then, underlying economic and social discontent played an important part in causing the uprising
- To a certain extent the rebels in the west were complaining about enclosures and about the gentry, whom they accused of making use of the Reformation to seize Church land for their own enrichment
- Such views were held in other areas during the popular uprisings but only the West Country was direct opposition to the new Act of Uniformity the central issue
- The religious These changes on tradition led to the Western Rebellion of 1549, in which the rebels demanded a return to the religious teachings and practices of Henry VIII’s reign
Naval and Militia reforms:
- John Guy – Mary’s naval and militia reforms were a landmark in English military organisation.
  - There was a complete reorganisation of the new administration and finance of the navy.
    - 6 new ships built, broken ships repaired
    - Crown finances for a peacetime allocation of £14,000 to the navy.
- In the long-term these reforms laid the basis for the organisation of the navy which was crucial for Elizabeth’s death against the Spanish Armada.
- Also reformed at the end of Mary’s reign were the methods for the raising of troops which was important in a country that lacked a standing army.

Urban reforms:
- Robert Tittler – the reign witnessed a relatively perceptive urban outlook which tried to guarantee strong local government in towns.
- Michael Tillbrook – Marian government did itself become more active in areas relating to poor relief.
- 1556~1558 – there was a huge mortality rate from influenza epidemic and there were a series of harvest failures and taxation was high in order to pay for the war against France.
- Particular emphasis was placed on the enforcement of laws against grain hoarders and there was strong encouragement to convert pasture land to tillage.

Queen Mary’s Foreign Policies:
- Most historians have considered foreign policy to be central to the political development of the state. It is generally agreed that the major problem for modern government was to find fresh sources of revenue to meet their rising costs.
  - To government expenditure.
    - Increased taxation was unpopular and might lead to rebellion.
    - Borrowing or debasement of the coinage was dangerous and might result in bankruptcy or inflation, which merely added to the cost of government.
    - Alternative was for the state to adopt an aggressive foreign policy to acquire land, wealth and trade.
- By the middle of the 16th century England was neither strong nor wealthy enough to compete with the great continental powers such as the Holy Roman Empire or France.
  - This meant that it was necessary for England to ally with her more powerful continental neighbours.
- Once she came to the throne, Mary was anxious to get married.
- She regarded it as essential that she produced an heir so that a Catholic succession might be guaranteed.
  - Philip was Spanish (create foreign allies), Catholic (religiously compatible), and already politically experienced (respectable in her eyes).
- Mary believed that an alliance with the Habsburg rulers of the Holy Roman Empire, Spain and the Netherlands would strengthen her religious position both at home and abroad.
- Habsburg also ruled the Netherlands, the major industrial centre for textiles in N. Europe.
  - The English economy was dependent on the export of cloth to the Netherlands so it was essential to maintain good Anglo-Habsburg relations.
- Her decision to marry King Philip II of Spain was met with horror by parliamentarians.
  - Many ruling elites feared that England would be dominated by Spain and drawn into the Habsburg wars against France.