

SECTION C

Study Extracts 1 and 2 in the Extracts Booklet before you answer this question.

- 5 Historians have different views about whether there was a general crisis of government in the last years of Elizabeth I's reign. Analyse and evaluate the extracts and use your own knowledge of the issues to explain your answer to the following question.

How far do you agree with the view that, in the years 1589–1603, war undermined the stability of England?

(20) 2005

The view that war undermined the stability of England from 1589 to 1603 is something that has been disputed by historians for many years. Extract 1 supports the interpretation that war did in fact cause significant instability in England due to the amount of money spent on it and amount of men invested in it, 'costly in financial terms', 'expense of their people for foreign services'. Extract 2 on the other hand argues that a ~~significant~~ substantial amount of England actually benefited from war, 'prospered in wartime', obviously highly contrasting the view of Somerset in Extract 1. Personally, I agree with the view presented in Extract 1 as I think that it provides a more truthful interpretation of what life was like for ~~the~~ most people in society from 1589.

Extract 1 by Somerset suggests that war had a harsh financial impact on the stability of the country, 'costly in financial terms' which would have obviously



(Section C continued) decreased the stability of the country as we know that they were spending ~~more than~~ a tremendous amount of money on the Anglo-Spanish and Irish wars from 1585 to 1601. ~~They spent~~ England spent over £1.9 million on the Irish wars alone which was significantly more than the annual income of the crown which was around £300,000. This meant that they had to introduce harsh tax which would have contributed to the 'discontent' mentioned in Extract 1. However, the main reason the interpretation by Somerset gives for the undermining of the stability of the country is the ~~extensive~~ loss of extremely high numbers of men in the wars, 'men were also killed at an alarming rate', and the hardships they suffered after being discharged from their position, 'hard to find employment on coming home'. The fact that so many were killed adds to the instability of the country as it meant there were less men trained for the military to defend the country if any other enemies tried to attack. This is demonstrated by the fact that Essex took at least 170,000 men in each Irish campaign with only half of these coming home alive to continue serving the Queen's army. Somerset also notes the increased sedition towards the Queen and her subjects as a result of the number of men killed or forced to go to war, ~~because~~ ~~in fact~~ 'most slanderous speeches of those in her



(Section C continued) Highness's service', which shows how people were turning against those in central government which could have led to a rebellion which would have further negatively impacted the stability of England due to the consequences of war. In contrast, Extract 2 doesn't even mention the suffering of the men in the army or the extreme financial burden it placed on the ordinary people. Extract 1 is the most convincing argument to me as it includes dates as key evidence to support its interpretation and quotes from people in power at the time such as 'Burgheley'. Also, the information included can be corroborated and elaborated on by contextual knowledge. Furthermore, the Extract includes other factors such as 'poor harvests in the mid-1590s' which would have contributed to the hardship felt by the soldiers which further explains why there was a decrease in stability which makes it a highly comprehensive source.

On the other hand, Extract 2 by MacGurk supports the interpretation that war actually helped increase the stability of England in this time period which is a highly contrasting view to that presented by Somerset in Extract 1, who held the view that war had a



(Section C continued) detrimental effect on the English stability. Extract 2 suggests that a substantial sector of the English population actually benefited financially from war, 'many parts of the community prospered in wartime', whereas Extract 1 supported the view that war actually costed more than England had to spend on it. McGurk suggests that during wartime, there was a 'significant growth in domestic luxuries' which made the 'gentry and wealthy yeomanry' even wealthier as well as the 'opening up of new industries' etc. This could be supported by the introduction of the draperies trade, although this was introduced in the 1560s so the idea that war had an impact on this is unlikely as the trade would have been steady by this point. Although Extract 2 does acknowledge the suffering of the common people in society, 'lower orders suffered economic hardships', I don't think it takes this fact into enough account considering the common people made up over 90% of the population. McGurk focusses too much on how the wealthy minority benefited rather than how the poor majority suffered due to the negative economic consequences of war and other factors contributing to their social distress as Extract 1 does, for example when she mentions the 'poor harvests' and



(Section C continued) 'shortage of corn'. For this reason, Extract 2 provides a less convincing argument as it is not comprehensive as it only really includes 1 perspective from the rich in society and how they were affected. Also, it does not include a substantial amount of supporting evidence in the same way that Extract 1 does.

To conclude, there is no doubt that Extract 1 by Somerset provides the most convincing argument in my eyes for a number of reasons. She backs up her interpretation with a substantial amount of evidence in the form of dates and quotes which can be corroborated by my own contextual knowledge. She also takes into account the wider social context by suggesting how 'poor harvests' also contributed to the decrease of stability in England at the time. On the other hand, Extract 2 simply provides us with a very one-sided and closed minded view on how the 'rich became richer' which I cannot corroborate with contextual knowledge and it does not include the wealth of evidence that Extract 1 used to convince me of their interpretation.

