**To what extent did Republican rule provide stable government in the period 1649-60?**

**Factors to consider :** It is decided that the essay will be organised into the main phases of Republican rule and the reasons for stability/instability examined within each. The essay could have been organised into factors, but this would have involved visiting each of the main phases of republican rule within each factor and thus be more complex in its organisation. The fundamental problems that prevented stable government continued to be the ones that had provided the basis for the civil war, namely the difficulties of finding a political, religious and tax policy together with the complexities of managing multiple kingdoms.

**Introduction**.

The nation that emerged from the civil wars and the execution of the King in 1649 was frought with political and religious divisions, the difficulties of managing multiple Kingdoms and the ongoing economic and Social problems of financing. Throughout the period neither the RUMP Parliament 1649-1653 of the Protectorate 1654-58 in spite of their limited achievements were able to overcome such divisions and difficulties in order to provide a lasting settlement and thus ultimately for stable government. This led to the Restoration of the Stuarts in 1660.

**Part 1**

After Pride's Purge of Parliament in December 1648 and the execution of the King in January 1649, the Rump Parliament declared itself to be the sole legislative authority and elected a Council of State to govern in its name. In March 1649 the monarchy and the House of Lords were abolished and England declared to be a commonwealth governed by a single chamber Parliament. The regime was supported by the army and lesser Gentry who had taken over much of local government after the greater gentry and nobility had withdrawn their support for the regime. Such support was sufficient to easily defeat Charles II King of Scotland's invasion in 1651 at the Battle of Worcester. However this invasion also served as a reminder that the Parliament had many threats from monarchists as well as from those in the political nation who refused to co-operate. On top of this were a range of additional problems which increasingly began to perplex the Rump Parliament and prevented it from providing stable government. Firstly the support for religious independence that had been supported by the Puritans had resulted in the proliferation of religious radicalism and witnessed the emergence of more eccentric groups including the Fifth Monarchists, the Ranters and the Quakers. Although the Act of Toleration 1650 removed the requirement to attend church, the Blasphemy Act of August 1650 was aimed at restricting the religious sects. Secondly the regime depended on the army which it needed to the surpress threats from monarchists in Scotland and Ireland and Levellers in England . Control of the army and the cost of its maintenance provoked much fear in many parts of the Kingdom. Thirdly the reforms by the Rump Parliament could not be agreed upon and the Hale Commission was unable to see it's recommendations of legal reform implemented by 1653. Finally high taxation to maintain the army and to pursue Wars against Ireland in 1649, Scotland in 1651 and Dutch 1652-54, created additional divisions. A combination of these factors drove Cromwell to dissolve the Rump Parliament in 1653, the deciding factor being a perceived conservative reform of MPs that may result from a proposed holding new elections by the Rump in April 1653. This was the last straw for Cromwell who deserved the Rump in April 1653 with immediate effect.

Unsure of the next step Cromwell was advised by Colonel Lambert to introduce a new constitution. A committee of Four generals which asked the Independent churches to nominate representatives for a new Parliament was to be formed and known as the Nominated Assembly, which included members from Wales Scotland and Ireland. This Nominated Assembly was known as the Barebones Parliament. It enacted a number of moderate and relatively progressive reforms including continuing war with the Dutch, legal measures to help debtors and allowing for civil marriage. However the Nominated Assembly was divided between the lesser gentry who were more conservative by nature and the religious radicalism of the Independent churches who wished to abolish the church tithes on which the former depended. In December 1653 the moderate members met and voted to dissolve the Assembly. Whereupon Major General John Lambert produced the Instrument of Government, offering a new constitution formalised in the Protectorate of a single person, Oliver Cromwell and a single parliament designed by Lambert.

**Part 2**

The Instrument of Government served as the constitutional basis of Cromwell's power and was modelled on the Head of Proposals issued by Henry Ireton in 1647 and designed by Lambert within the Army Council. It's stated that the Lord Protector would be supported by a Council of State and a single chamber parliament of 460 members which would be elected every three years by voters with personal property of at least £200. On top of this Cromwell would remain head of the New Model Army and on his death a new Lord Protector would be elected by the Council of State. There would be a state church, but freedom of worship would be granted to all except Catholics and those who supported bishops e.g. Armenians. There were some initial successes in the 84 ordinances which were issued, but Cromwell faced the same fundamental problems of the Rump Parliament compounded by his own concern for the army and also from the bitter resentment of the Republicans who had been excluded from power after the dissolution of the Rump. When these Republicans succeeded in destabilizing the first parliament of the Protectorate by refusing to recognise the Instrument of Government, Cromwell dissolved the Parliament in January 1655.

In spring 1655 after a failed royalist Rising by John Penruddock which had broken out in Wiltshire, Cromwell decided to exercise greater control of the provinces In order to carry out a gody reformation of manners. he imposed centralised military rule over the entire country which he had divided into 11 military Districts each under the command of a major general who was responsible for local government and encouraging the reformation of manners and social stability. The major generals would to be encouraged in their attempt buy a new militia funded by a 10% tax on the estates of royalists. the effectiveness was mixed. in Lancashire Worsley and in Lincolnshire Whalley were partially successful, but in many other areas the major generals neglected many of their duties. Meanwhile Cromwell established commissions of Tri ers and Ejectors to supervise the running of the church with an emphasis on quality of preaching and flexibility of belief. The election of a Second Parliament of the Protectorate resulted in their offering Cromwell the Crown. It had been elected by a broad franchise and Cromwell's power would be defined in law. However whilst the major generals had been reasonably effective much opposition had resulted. The reasons for this opposition can be found in the objection of the political nation to military government and it's central imposition, the replacements of local elite with outsiders, the curtailing of social activities and the new taxes that had been arranged in order to facilitate their control. Hence the Second Parliament was now determined on the replacement of the Major Generals and Cromwell accepted the idea of a new constitution. When this proposal came in the form of the Humble Petition and Advice 1657 it proved to be based on the restoration of the Monarchy or Protector. It consisted of government by a Monarch, the Houses of Lords and Commons to govern with the Monarch, the provision for a hereditary succession, Parliament to control the army and offices of state to be approved by Parliament, along with regular elections and some limited religious toleration . The Humble Petition and Advice was welcomed by royalists who saw in it the first step towards a Stuart restoration.

**Part 3**

The Humble Petition and Advice would have done much to restore stability and made provision for a succession. Cromwell recognised the need to compromise and sympathized with the ideas behind the Humble Petition and A dvice and agonised over wether to accept the Crown. He decided not to accept the offer because of his desire for a godly reformation and because of the opposition of the army including many of those closest to him. Whether or not the experiment could have produced a genuine constitutional monarchy and a lasting stable political settlement was forstalled by Cromwell's death in September 1658 which marked the end of the opportunity. Cromwell was succeeded by his son Richard who hastily summoned the brief Third Protectorate Parliament in January 1659. However Richard lacked support within the army and was unacceptable to the Council of Offices who forced him to resign and then recalled the Rump who proved to have learnt little from their earlier failures. With the ruling minority disintegrating rapidly the initiative was taken by General George Monck who had fought for the royalists in the civil war but later for Cromwell in the wars against the Scotch and the Dutch. He marched his forces to London to restore a free Parliament on the understanding that the ultimate outcome would be the restoration of the Stuarts. The experiment in republicanism was over, brought down by a combination of the same political, religious and social divisions in the kingdom that had brought about the civil wars and the failure of successive republica government to resolve and bring about stability.

**Conclusion** The experiment in republican government in the years 1649-60 had failed to bring about a lasting and stable religious and political settlement. Cromwell had clung to power throughout by his support from the Council of Officers in the Army and witnessed the failure of to resolve political and religious divisions within the kingdom after the purge of Parliament and divisions between those that remained and as a result of republican opposition to the Protectorate and the opposition of the political nation to military rule. The abortive attempt of his son to effectively establish a modicum of unity and in particular the unwillingness of the Army to support him brought about the conditions for the Restoration. However the political, religious and social divisions that had so firmly established themselves in the multiple kingdoms by 1660 were not ultimately to be resolved by the Stuarts either and were to provide the context to understand the emergence of a further Glorious Revolution in 1688 after the collapse of the restored Stuarts 1660-88.