

## Web 5.2

### Case Study 5.1: Group draft and final answers: examples

#### Group 1's Draft Answer

The extent to which Cromwell was a 'practical politician' is debatable. Arguably it can be seen that he was a power hungry tyrant. There is significant evidence in his actions that suggests this. For example he had considerable political power which was enhanced by his military status, he was key to the trial and execution of King Charles and single-handedly dissolved Parliament on several occasions. However it would be highly unfair to say that he "aimed at power." Cromwell would 'strive to compromise,' displayed by the Putney debates and his generally liberal attitude to religion. Cromwell himself was hesitant to commit regicide, as his Conservative values did not draw him to total revolution. Yet it can still be argued that 'he would seize control of the process and so reassert his influence' and was thus a clever manipulator of unfortunate situations.

Cromwell was a political leader who used force to achieve his goals. With the control of the army and as the only Member of Parliament to be allowed in the New Model Army, Cromwell acquired this power and used it to his own demises. An example of his misuse of the army's power was the single-handed abolition of both the Barebones and Rump Parliaments, Cromwell in April 1653 addressed the Rump Parliament and proclaimed, "Depart, I say and let us have done with you" (S4). This behaviour of dismissing two parliaments by using the force of the army proved what tyrannical behaviour Cromwell was being to show.

Although Cromwell was seen as a dominant parliamentary activist, he may not have been fully supporting the execution of the king. There is evidence that supports the theory that he was a conservative man and not the radical figure that groups like the Levellers and the Ranters looked up to. In the book, 'The British Republic' by Ronald Hutton, it says he would constantly "strive for compromise". This shows that he would often think about many options when making key decisions. This would highlight his conservative nature.

More than just a politician, he possessed independent views, but was hated by the Levellers and the Ranters. For example when addressing the Rump Parliament, he says 'In the name of God go!' meaning that he felt God had decided they should be dissolved. Furthermore, when addressing the first Parliament to the 'Protector of the Faith', he says 'of an honest man in those services to God' meaning he feels that God has chosen him, and he speaks for God.

Cromwell, a political figure whom "yielded necessities" can be greatly debated. Cromwell's rise to power, propelled by his campaign for "God's

Honour" gave him idealistic views influencing many of his political actions. An example of this is the Irish massacres, Drogheda especially. The blood spilt was on behalf of Cromwell defending God and protecting the English from sin. Cromwell's necessary actions were for the benefit of England – "the duty of an honest man". However it can be argued the Irish conflict may have been an action to maintain his power over England.

It is important to keep in mind that Cromwell was not a radical leader and that a revolution was never what he had in mind. This argument outweighs those which condemn him for abusing his military power. Therefore Cromwell was significantly a 'practical politician who yielded to necessities.'

### **Group 1's Final Answer**

The extent to which Cromwell was a 'practical politician' is debatable. Arguably it can be seen that he was a power hungry tyrant. There is significant evidence in his actions that suggests this. For example he had considerable political power which has enhanced by his military status, he was key, to the trial and execution of King Charles and single-handedly dissolved Parliament on several occasions. However, it would be highly unfair to say that he 'aimed at power'. Cromwell would 'strive to compromise', displayed by the Putney debates and his generally liberal attitude to religion. Cromwell himself was hesitant to commit regicide, as his conservative values did not draw him to total revolution. Yet it can still be argued that 'he would seize control of the process and so reassert his influence' and was thus clever manipulator of unfortunate situations.

Although Cromwell was seen as a dominant Parliamentary activist, he may not have been fully supporting the execution of the king. There is evidence that supports the theory that he was a conservative man and not the radical figure that groups like the Levellers and the Ranters looked up to. This was revealed at the Putney debates where Cromwell did not fully agree with the Levellers ideas about National equality. He was however open to discussion and compromise, but completely annihilated them at Ware when had refused to fight. In the book, 'The British Republic' by Ronald Hutton, it says he would constantly 'strive for compromise'. This shows that he would often think about many options when making key decisions. It was only when the second civil war began that Cromwell would seize control of the Parliamentarians and reemphasis his influence by using the army's power before reaching a settlement. This would highlight his conservative nature.

More than just a politician, Cromwell possessed independent views, but was hated by the Levellers and the Ranters. For example when addressing the Rump Parliament, he says 'In the name of God!' meaning that he felt God had decided they should be dissolved. Furthermore, when addressing the first Parliament to the 'Protector of the Faith', he says 'of an honest man in those services to God' meaning he feels that God has chosen him, and he speaks on behalf of God.

Furthermore Cromwell was a political figure whom 'yielded necessities' can be greatly debated. Cromwell's rise to power, propelled by his campaign for 'God's Honour' giving him idealistic views influencing many of his political actions. An example of this is the Irish massacres, Drogheda especially. The blood spilt was on behalf of Cromwell defending God and protecting the English from sin. Cromwell's necessary actions were for the benefit of England – 'the duty of an honest man'. However it can be argued the Irish conflict may have been an action to maintain his power over England.

However Cromwell used the army's force to achieve his goals. With the control of the army and as the only Member of Parliament to be allowed in the New Model Army, Cromwell acquired enormous power and used it to his own devices. An example of his misuse of the army's power was the single-handed abolition of both the Barebones and the Rump Parliaments. Cromwell in 1653 addressed the Rump Parliament and proclaimed, "Depart, I say and let us have done with you'. This behaviour of dismissing two Parliaments by using the army's power to force them from office proved that Cromwell was becoming dictatorship like and mimicking the tyrannical behaviour that had been displayed by the king that was beheaded for it.

It is important to keep in mind that Cromwell was not a radical leader and that a revolution was never what he had in mind. This argument outweighs those which condemn him for abusing his military power. As a landowner and an experienced MP, Cromwell would have been equally concerned with the stability of the country and the state of affairs as other politicians. Therefore his Conservative values will have overpowered those that called for great change. Despite using the army to dissolve Parliament on several occasions, Cromwell endeavoured to set up some sort of democratic republic rather than use his influence in the army to become a tyrant. Therefore Cromwell was significantly a 'practical politician who yielded necessities'.

### **Group 3's Draft Answer**

*With reference to the sources and your own knowledge, do you agree with Hutton's view that Cromwell, on the evidence of his career up to 1653, was essentially a 'practical politician who yielded to necessities'?*

There is most certainly merit to the opinion that Cromwell was a "practical politician who yielded to necessities". Necessity is a word Cromwell himself used to describe his actions, especially in relation to the regicide of the King. Cromwell strived to negotiate with the King but this became impossible after Charles's secret dealings with the Scots and Cromwell felt "necessity had forced them to proceed against the King" [S1]. It is said that Cromwell muttered "Cruel necessity" on sight of the king's body [S3]. Killing the King was the most practical way to move onto a new constitution in England. Cromwell wanted to find a kind of government that would give the country security and freedom and which would allow people to worship God in their own way and he was prepared to experiment until he found such a government. However there could be no security without a strong army and the public were in general consensus that the army was too powerful.

Cromwell needed the army on his side and the army disliked the Rump parliament and so the Rump parliament was dissolved. The Barebones parliament discussed large plans to reform the church and law – Cromwell who had promoted religious tolerance, especially among the army, then had to dissolve this parliament. Then he became Lord Protector and formed a Protectorate parliament; when this parliament tried to increase its own powers and diminish those of Cromwell and the army, Cromwell dismissed them as well. Cromwell tried to make a democratic government but in the end practicality won over and Cromwell had to abandon his previous ideas and became, in essence, King. The most practical ideas for keeping peace also kept Cromwell and the army in supreme power.

The new model army was made up of many extreme religious groups, the majority being Levellers. As Cromwell acted as a bridge between parliament and the army (being MP and commander of the army), the army hoped he would introduce radical reforms that would benefit their beliefs. However when Cromwell came into power he made hardly any changes in the way the country was run. There was some religious toleration but not for extreme groups, as he felt it was necessary that parliament didn't change too many things as it could cause chaos in the current situation. Cromwell was a practical politician as he wanted their country to be run in its best interests as a whole rather than to appease a few radicals. He would strive for compromise, but as soon as an event appeared inevitable, he would seize control.

However to say Cromwell was purely a pragmatist would do little honour to his “remarkable personality” [S2] . He had grand, modern ideas about religious tolerance. He often referred to religious liberty, or “liberty of conscience” as the principal achievement of the wars, and to an extent he did follow this through. Non-Anglicans and Jews were given freedom to worship in England as well as certain other Protestant denominations.

However practicality prevented him from granted full religious tolerance, which lost him the support of the Levellers and Diggers (and other Radical groups) who felt he had betrayed them. His military skill and force of character are not to be denied but he could only carry out the task of holding together the gains of the civil war in the most practical way, not necessarily the most preferred way. Christopher Hill sympathises with the “disillusioned” Cromwell who strived for toleration and a constitutional government but had to make do with force and intolerance. John Buchan describes Cromwell as “the most scrupulous of men [who had to] ride roughshod over his own scruples and those of others”. Although it could definitely be argued that Cromwell was a “practical politician who yielded to necessities” it seems it was against his better nature.

### Group 3's Final Answer

*With reference to the sources and your own knowledge, do you agree with Hutton's view that Cromwell, on the evidence of his career up to 1653, was essentially a 'practical politician who yielded to necessities'?*

There is most certainly merit to Hutton's opinion that Cromwell was a "practical politician who yielded to necessities". Source 2, an extract from Hutton's book, is an analytical secondary source, so his opinion is likely to be reliable and backed up by a lot of research. However Hutton himself admits to being "slightly more critical" so maybe his judgement should not be relied upon completely. However necessity is a word Cromwell himself used to describe his actions, especially in relation to the regicide of the King. Cromwell strived to negotiate with the King but this became impossible after Charles's secret dealings with the Scots and Cromwell felt "necessity had forced them to proceed against the King" [S1]. It is said that Cromwell muttered "Cruel necessity" on sight of the king's body [S3]. Killing the King was the most practical way to move onto a new constitution in England; this event supports Hutton's claim that Cromwell was a practical politician.

Cromwell wanted to find a kind of government that would give the country security and freedom and which would allow people to worship God in their own way. He was prepared to experiment until he found such a government. However there could be no security without a strong army and the public was in general consensus that the army was too powerful. Cromwell needed the army on his side and the army disliked the Rump parliament and so the Rump parliament was dissolved with Cromwell's words "You have been sat too long here for any good you have been doing" [S4]. The Barebones parliament discussed large plans to reform the church and law – Cromwell who had promoted religious tolerance, especially among the army, then had to dissolve this parliament. Then he became Lord Protector and formed a Protectorate parliament. He had high hopes for this parliament and wanted to work for the "people's interest and of the commonwealth" [S5]. When this parliament tried to increase its own powers and diminish those of Cromwell and the army, Cromwell dismissed them as well. Both of these sources are primary sources – they are actual quotes from Cromwell and so are genuine. However the fact that they are speeches to parliament could limit the amount we can read into the sources. The speeches do not necessarily reflect the truth because they are for political means and are trying to uphold an image for Cromwell and retain support among the people. This links in with Hutton's opinion that Cromwell "Like any politician he manipulated people and told half-truths" [S2]. In source four Cromwell is trying to show to the people that it is a practical decision to get rid of the rump parliament by saying they haven't done "any good". However it was actually a tactful decision to keep the army on his side. Cromwell tried to make a democratic government but in the end practicality won over and Cromwell had to abandon his previous

ideas and became, in essence, King. The most practical ideas for keeping peace also kept Cromwell and the army in supreme power.

Cromwell was a highly practical politician in the sense that he acted as a bridge between the army and parliament. He showed, according to Hutton, 'brilliance as a general' and an 'equal dynamism as a politician.' The new model army was made up of many extreme religious groups, the majority being Levellers. Due to the fact that Cromwell was in a position to benefit the army, they hoped he would introduce radical reforms that would help their beliefs. However, when Cromwell came into power in 1653 he made hardly any changes in the way the country was run. There was some religious toleration for previously discriminated groups such as the Jews, but not for extreme radical groups like the diggers, as he felt it was necessary that parliament didn't change too many things. He felt that it could cause chaos in the current situation. Cromwell was a practical politician as he wanted their country to be run in its best interests as a whole rather than to appease a few radicals. He would strive for compromise, but as soon as an event appeared inevitable, he would seize control.

However to say Cromwell was purely a pragmatist would do little honour to his "remarkable personality" [S2]. He had grand, modern ideas about religious tolerance. He often referred to religious liberty, or "liberty of conscience" as the principal achievement of the wars, and to an extent he did follow this through. Non-Anglicans and Jews were given freedom to worship in England as well as certain other Protestant denominations. Cromwell was an exceedingly religious man as almost all of the sources demonstrate. Religion and politics were irrevocably linked for Cromwell. In all the sources which are speeches made by Cromwell to parliament, he talks about God and how he is following God's will. In source 1, his speech to the House of Commons, he says that "God and necessity has forced them to proceed against the King". This shows that Cromwell was not only being practical, he was following what he thought was God's will. When Cromwell dissolved the Rump parliament he cried out "In the name of God, go!" This demonstrates again how he believes that he is carrying out God's will. In Source 5 Cromwell talks about how he endeavours to carry out his governing "in those services to God and his people's interest". This again shows that Cromwell did not detach his religion from his political actions. These sources suggest that Cromwell was acting under what he felt was god's will which would deny Hutton's claim that he was a "practical politician". Although it is not to be forgotten that all these sources are political speeches and, as aforementioned, are not to be totally relied upon because of course Cromwell would claim to be acting for God.

Overall practicality prevented Cromwell from granted full religious tolerance, which lost him the support of the Levellers and Diggers (and other Radical groups) who felt he had betrayed them. His military skill and force of character are not to be denied but he could only carry out the task of holding together the gains of the civil war in the most practical way, not necessarily the most preferred way. Christopher Hill sympathises with the

“disillusioned” Cromwell who strived for toleration and a constitutional government but had to make do with force and intolerance. John Buchan describes Cromwell as “the most scrupulous of men [who had to] ride roughshod over his own scruples and those of others”. Hutton himself admits that Cromwell did “strive for compromise” and he notes the opinion that Cromwell was a “millenarian dreamer”. These historians all seem to be in agreement that Cromwell acted out of necessity rather than for personal gain. Although it could definitely be argued that Cromwell was a “practical politician who yielded to necessities” it seems it was against his better nature.