**Key Question: Did Richard provide effective government in his absence?**

**Who were Richard’s justiciars? What other positions of authority did they have? Why was this important during Richard’s reign?**

**The Historical debate**

**Baldwin and Hollister** define the period 1189-1199 as one of ‘administrative kingship’. Richard’s rule was one of a monarchy powered by an administrative and financial machine that could operate to a fixed routine without the need for constant royal supervision. In this interpretation, Richard was the shaper of policies; the decision maker.

**Holt** argues Richard was capable of effective government and the king was involved as much as he could be, given the demands of his empire. For example Richard was involved in government as much as Philip of France was.

**Clanchy** argues Richard’s captivity did not weaken his government in England. ‘On the contrary, the effort needed to raise his ransom had strengthened the administration.’

**McLynn** states, ‘It is sometimes insinuated that England without Richard worked on a kind of automatic ‘cruise control’, but it must never be forgotten that for all Hubert Walter’s brilliance, it was the shrewd Lionheart who had talent-spotted and headhunted him for his dominant role.’

**Richardson and Sayle** point to Richard’s choice of effective and able Justiciars, Walter of Coutances, Hubert Walter and Geoffrey Fitz Peter. But the Justiciars needed to wait for the king’s final decision on policy. Richard still received petitioners even while he was overseas.

But **Carpenter** points out that Longchamp was a disaster and reflects on Richard’s lack of political judgement.

**Appleby** claims Richard was king in name only. He was only interested in money and as such undid much of the work of Henry II by selling offices and parts of the royal demesne. He concludes, ‘Richard’s neglect was England’s good fortune. Left almost to their own devices, with the king at the other end of the world and then immersed in his preoccupations with his continental lands, the barons of England developed a sense of collective responsibility for the good governance of their country that would never have come into being if their king had been constantly among them, directing the affairs of the country with a strong hand.’

**Barlow** is very critical of Richard’s attempts to provide effective administration of England, he argues Richard indulged his whims and never worried about England’s future. ‘The kingdom was accustomed to the absence of its king; and all that was necessary was to confirm a suitable and loyal administration. But Richard was incapable of making a simple and obvious settlement. He had been in revolt against his father and could not help breaking some of Henry’s most faithful men, such as the chief justiciar of England Ranulf Glanville. Richard was so greedy for money that he could not resist selling any office to the highest bidder, often in bad faith. His ignorance of English life made his touch clumsy. Government continued because the habits of English administration as confirmed by Henry II were too strong to be entirely broken by the incoherent instructions of the new king.’

**Key Question: Did Richard provide effective government in his absence?**

Using the Historical debate complete the following overview table.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Richard did provide effective government | Richard did not provide effective government |
|  |  |

**England without Richard**

**The Traditional Argument**

Richard was a bad absentee king who neglected his subjects and made unnecessary financial exactions using England as his milch cow.

**The Revisionist Argument**

Richard was no different to Henry II or John. He did his duty to liberate the Holy Land. His reign saw crucial developments in the development of the English government. His rule was bound within the context of the Angevin territories he inherited from his father.

1190-1194

This was a period of political instability in England, arguably not caused by him going on Crusade, but by his capture and imprisonment on the way back from Crusade. John force Longchamp out of office in 1191 and joined forces with Philip of France to rebel against Richard in 1193. Norman Barons took the opportunity during John’s rebellion to pursue their own independence. England’s finances were stretched, firstly by the Saladin Tithe and secondly by the ransom demand for Richard.

1194-1199

England during this period was much more stable due primarily to the role of Hubert Walter as justiciar and the fact that John had been curtailed following his failed rebellion. Yet the period of almost constant war with France over Normandy stretched the kingdoms finances and ensure the King was absent from England after a brief visit in 1194.

Therefore perhaps the truth about England without Richard lies somewhere between the two arguments. Richard’s absence did cause instability in the kingdom between 1190 and 1194 and his great financial exactions can be seen as a long term cause of the Baronial rebellion of 1215 under John. However, due to the king’s image as a great warrior and crusading knight and Richard’s clever use of patronage the majority of the barons remained loyal and refused to join John’s rebellion in England. Richard’s choice of Hubert Walter as justiciar was key to maintaining stability after 1194 even when he was demanding more taxes from the English barons.

Absentee King (Spent only 6 months of a ten year reign in England)

* Gillingham points out that the challenge which faced Richard was to defend his dominions against the expansionist ambitions of the French king. England was perfectly capable of looking after itself

Absence detrimental

* Left his realm in the care of regents who were quite incapable of working with one another, let alone of containing the threat of civil war
* During the crusade and Richards imprisonment no new assizes were issued; but on his return, there were instructions to the judges in 1194, a royal edict of 1195, concerning keeping the peace, a revised Forest Assize and an Assize of Weights and measures in 1197.
* (Barlow) His arrangement for the government of the realm was confused and imprudent
* (Vincent) All of whom owed their first promotion was not to Richard but to his father, a far better judge of character and a far better manager of men
* William of Newburgh criticized Richard for leaving the administration in the hands of William Longchamp ‘an obscure foreigner of unproven ability and loyalty’ without the consent of the magnates

Absence not detrimental

* Rolls of court of the exchequer give some indication of the massive scale of Richards’s preparations
* Hubert Walter- as archbishop of Canterbury, papal legate and chief justiciar he became the head of both ecclesiastical and state government in England
* No more than twenty men served Walter regularly as royal justices; all men were of legal expertise. The court of common bench at Westminster emerged as the chief royal forum for the hearing of civil cases.
* Most famous for record keeping- Central courts began to keep rolls recording their decisions at this time, and new type of legal record were devised concerning lands. Suggested keep a third copy of land agreement for royal archives known as ‘feet of fines.’
* ‘For the first time a form of record had been deliberately inaugurated as a continual series for archival purposes.’
* Whilst Hubert was justiciar a central record of all the letters issued in the kings name began to be kept. By 1190’s royal charters fell into three categories; charters, letters close and letters patent.
* (Gillingham) combined power, influence and political skill of their mother and the ministers whom Richard appointed should have been sufficient to keep him in check
* (McLynn) Richard was a good delegator and left England in good hands during his absence
* Dr Richard Heisner ‘prudence and foresight characterized Richard’s placement of sheriffs, not careless and reckless…Richards handling of these officials shows that he understood and appreciated their significance, demonstrating that he was a monarch who was interested in the proper and efficient functioning of his English kingdom.’
* Diceto (contemporary) ‘considered a few aspects of the government of the kingdom with a few people’
* (Barlow) Longchamp ‘Richards’s creature.’ ‘both a loyal and capable servant of the crown’
* Richard I’s impact on the future development of English Kingship was enormous and he was to be a role model for those who followed