

Europe and Spain in the seventeenth century

In the seventeenth century there was a demographic, economic and social crisis in many regions in Europe.

Demographic crisis:

There was little population growth in most of Europe in the 17th century. The number of inhabitants in Europe only rose from about 70 million in 1600 to 75 million in 1700. - Population growth was low because of an increase in **mortality**: bad harvests and destruction because of wars caused constant famines, epidemics of typhus or cholera and so many more wars.

- There were also so many **migrations**: voluntary, especially to America and compulsory, as the “moriscos” in Spain.

Anyway, north-western Europe grew more than the center and the south of Europe because it wasn't much affected by epidemics and by wars.

Economic crisis:

Many rural areas suffered from low productivity because of the use of very simple techniques, less fertility, long droughts.

However, in England and in the Netherlands, new agricultural techniques were developed, which increased production.

Mediterranean regions such as Spain, Portugal and Italy lost their commercial power with their colonies. So, Spain received less precious metals from America. Consequently, the Spanish Monarchy's income fell. They continued borrowing money to pay for their growing expenses. When they were unable to pay their debts, they declared bankruptcy. However, England and the Netherlands created their own colonial empires.

Social crisis:

The States raised taxes from peasants to pay for their military expenses and the luxuries of the court. At the same time, the nobles demanded higher rents and more services from the peasants because of their income decline due to the demographic and agricultural crisis.

Consequently, peasants became poorer and had to sell their land to pay off their debts. At the same time, they organized some revolts as response to taxation as well as pressure from the nobles.

The decline of the Hispanic Monarchy:

A 17th century king was not directly involved in government, but he delegated his authority to a Valido instead.

Government of Felipe III and the Duke of Lerma:

The Duke of Lerma was Felipe III's Valido from 1598 to 1618. Thanks to his position, he accumulated enormous wealth and many posts. However, in 1618 the King withdrew his confidence.

At the beginning of Felipe III's reign, the position of the "moriscos" weakened. They were thought to be insincere in their switchover to Christianity and were suspected of collaborating with the Turks. In 1609, the "moriscos" were expelled, and around 275,000 people left the country. This was disastrous for many regions, which were depopulated.

At the same time, the Duke of Lerma developed a peace policy: in 1604 they signed peace with England and in 1609 the Twelve Years' Truce with the United Provinces took place.

Government of Felipe IV and Count-Duke of Olivares:

The Count-Duke of Olivares was Felipe IV's Valido for over 20 years. He attempted to restore Spanish military leadership in Europe. In 1625 he designed the Union of Arms to make all the monarchy's kingdoms share the military expense of a permanent army. As a consequence, in the 1640s rebellions broke out in some kingdoms as Catalonia or Portugal. In fact, in that moment Portugal became independent.

At the same time, Felipe IV started a much more aggressive policy. In 1621 Spain went back to war against the United Provinces. It intervened in the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) as an ally of the Holy Roman Empire against the German Protestant princes.

In 1648, the Thirty Years' War came to an end when the Peace of Westfalia was signed. Spain recognized the Independence of the United Provinces (Holland).

The end of the Habsburgo dynasty:

Carlos II had no children. At the end of his reign, there were two candidates ready to succeed him: Philip of Bourbon and Archduke Charles of Austria. Both wanted the immense Spanish Empire, which had territories in several continents.

Carlos died in 1700. In his will, he named Philip of Bourbon as his heir. This led to the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713), which ended with the victory of the French Bourbon dynasty.

Absolutism in France:

In the 17th century, the European monarchs tried to impose **absolutism**. They believed that they were God representatives on Earth and He had given them the right to exercise unlimited power. So, monarchs controlled all the power of the State: he passed laws, governed the territory and was the supreme judge.

Louis XIV, the Sun King (1643-1715), was the absolutist monarch that other kings imitated. He consolidated his authority in some ways:

- He exercised power personally. His ministers couldn't make decisions without his approval.
- He controlled the nobles. He brought them to the court and gave them subsidies and posts.
- He promoted political centralization. He unified the laws and taxes of the kingdom. He also appointed governors in the provinces, who were public servants with extensive powers.
- He imposed religious unity. He persecuted Calvinists and subjected the French church to the King's authority.

Anyway, the main aim of Louis XIV's foreign policy was to consolidate France's hegemony. France fought wars with Spain, the United Provinces and the Holy Roman Empire. French territories were extended, mainly at the expense of the Habsburgs. In addition, Louis conquered some territories in America such as Quebec.

The rise of Parliament in England:

In the first half of the 17th century, the kings of the Stuart dynasty attempted to govern their territories in Great Britain and Ireland as absolute monarchs, without Parliament. However, this decision was very unpopular. This discontent, together with the revolts which broke out in Scotland over religious matters, led to a revolution in 1640. The confrontations turned into a civil war in 1642. This ended with the fall of the Stuart dynasty: Charles I was executed and the monarchy was abolished. One of the leaders of Parliament, Oliver Cromwell, came into power and established a dictatorship. After Cromwell's death, Parliament restored the monarchy. However, a second revolution, the Glorious Revolution, took place in 1688. This led to the deposition of King James II and, a year later, to the approval of a **Bill of Rights**. This Bill restricted the king's power and set out the rights of Parliament, laying the foundations for the separation of powers. It meant that a parliamentary monarchy had triumphed in England.

The Dutch Republic:

The United Provinces were a group of small territories which fought against Spain to obtain their Independence from 1568 to 1648 and finally they got it with Westphalia peace in 1648. In that moment, they created a Republic formed by seven provinces, which had their own Parliaments. Representatives from all the provinces met at the States General, where they took joint decisions.

They became a great economic power. This was mainly the result of the growth of their trade. So, the Dutch became the main intermediaries in maritime trade between the northern and the southern Europe. In fact, two large companies were founded: the Dutch East India Company and the Dutch West India Company. These companies monopolized Asian and American trade and obtained large profits. However, later, the Dutch fought the English in several colonial wars and lost much of their power. At the same time, the development of trade led to the rise of a rich bourgeoisie, formed by important merchants, bankers and shipyard owners.

The Scientific Revolution:

The importance that humanists attach to reason helped to promote the development of science in the 17th century.

Thinkers of that time believed that truth could be attained through the use of reason (rationalism) and experimentation (empiricism).

The scientific method was developed in the 17th century and it is still used today.

According to this method:

- First the hypothesis is formulated.
- Then it is tested by comparing it with reality through experiments and tests.
- Finally, it is confirmed, rejected or revised, according to the results obtained during the testing stage.

Galileo Galilei	He is considered the modern father of philosophy.
Johanes Kepler	He formulated the laws of planetary motion.
Isaac Newton	He demonstrated the existence of atmospheric pressure.
E. Torricelli	He reaffirmed the heliocentric theory formulated by Copernicus.
René Descartes	He formulated the law of universal gravitation.
William Harvey	He discovered the circulation of the blood.

1. The dynastic union ...
 - a) implied the creation of a single State, Spain, with unique courts and a single currency.
 - b) implied that Catholic kings ruled their territories together, but each kingdom maintained its laws and institutions.

- c) implied that Castilla and Aragon were completely independent, without any political link.
2. The battle of Lepanto...
- a) supposed the incorporation of Milan to the monarchy, although the wars with France continued.
 - b) forced the French to sign the peace of Cateau-Cambrésis. In its honor the monastery of San Lorenzo del Escorial was built.
 - c) meant the defeat of the Turks and the Mediterranean under the Catholics control.
3. What was the Union of Arms?
- a) The peace treaty signed in 1609 between Spain and the United Provinces.
 - b) The treaty between Louis XIV and Charles II to put Felipe de Borbón on the Spanish throne.
 - c) A political reform that forced all the kingdoms of Spain to collaborate with the monarchy.
4. The peace of Westfalia ...
- a) was signed in 1604 and ended the war between England and Spain.
 - b) was signed in 1659 and ended the war between France and Spain.
 - c) was signed in 1648 and ended the Thirty Years' War.
5. Absolutism...
- a) allowed the decentralization of the French administration and its division into departments.
 - b) considered that the power of the king was granted by God and had no limits.
 - c) promoted Catholicism in France, whose Church came to depend on the Pope of Rome.
6. The Bill of Rights...
- a) is the name given to the period of Oliver Cromwell's dictatorship.
 - b) is the declaration of rights that was approved in 1689, limiting the bases of the power of the English king.
 - c) was the writing with which the English revolution began in 1640.