Severe economic and social crises plagued Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Holy Roman Empire was devastated, and France emerged as the dominant nation in Europe. Conflicts between the kings of England and its parliament led to a civil war, an execution of a king, and a revolution. From such crises, constitutional monarchy emerged.

### Crises in Europe

**Main Idea** Population decline in Europe and the hysteria of witchcraft trials contributed to economic and social problems in seventeenth-century Europe.

**HISTORY & YOU** What if the number of students in your school declined by half this year? Learn how Europeans responded to economic and social problems.

From 1560 to 1650, Europe witnessed severe economic and social crises. One major economic problem was inflation, or rising prices. A growing population in the sixteenth century increased the demand for land and food and drove up prices for both.

### Economic and Social Crises

By 1600, an economic slowdown had begun in parts of Europe. Spain’s economy, grown dependent on imported silver, was failing by the 1640s. The mines were producing less silver. Fleets were subject to pirate attacks. Also, the loss of Muslim and Jewish artisans and merchants hurt the economy. Italy, the financial center of Europe in the Renaissance, was also declining economically.

Population figures in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries reveal Europe’s worsening conditions. Population grew in the sixteenth century. The number of people probably increased from 60 million in 1500 to 85 million by 1600. By 1620, the population had leveled off. It had begun to decline by 1650, especially in central and southern Europe. Warfare, plague, and famine all contributed to the population decline and to the creation of social tensions.

### The Witchcraft Trials

A belief in witchcraft, or magic, had been part of traditional village culture for centuries. The religious zeal that led to the Inquisition and the hunt for heretics was extended to concern about witchcraft. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, an intense hysteria affected the lives of many Europeans. Perhaps more than a hundred thousand people were charged with witchcraft. As more and more people were brought to trial, the fear of witches...
The Malleus Maleficarum, or the Hammer of the Witches, of 1486 was a guide for prosecuting witches during the Inquisition. It influenced witch trials in Europe for more than 200 years. Here are some excerpts:

**On the classification of witches:**
"The category in which women of this sort are to be ranked is called the category of Pythons, persons in or by whom the devil either speaks or performs some astonishing operation..."

**On extracting a confession:**
"The method of beginning an examination by torture is as follows: The jailers...strip the prisoner. This stripping is lest some means of witchcraft may have been sewed into the clothing—such as often, taught by the Devil, they prepare from the bodies of unbaptized [murdered] infants...the judge...tries to persuade the prisoner to confess the truth freely; but, if [the witch] will not confess, he bids attendants make the prisoner fast to...some...implement of torture."

grew, as did the fear of being accused of witchcraft.

Common people—usually the poor and those without property—were the ones most often accused of witchcraft. More than 75 percent of those accused were women. Most of them were single or widowed and over 50 years old.

Under intense torture, accused witches usually confessed to a number of practices. For instance, many said that they had sworn allegiance to the devil and attended sabbats, nightly gatherings where they feasted and danced. Then others admitted to casting evil spells.

By 1650, the witchcraft hysteria had begun to lessen. As governments grew stronger, fewer officials were willing to disrupt their societies with trials of witches. In addition, attitudes were changing. People found it unreasonable to believe in the old view of a world haunted by evil spirits.

**Document-Based Questions**

This painting is entitled Witches’ Sabbath: The Conjurers by Francisco de Goya (1746–1828).

1. **Describing** According to the excerpts, whom do witches serve?
2. **Comparing** Describe similarities between witchcraft trials and the Inquisition.

✔️ **Reading Check** **Explaining** What caused a decline in witchcraft trials?
The Thirty Years' War

**Main Idea**
Started over religious conflicts, the Thirty Years' War was sustained by political conflicts.

**HISTORY & YOU**
What if fierce arguments destroyed your best friendship? Learn what caused thirty years of warfare.

Religious disputes continued in Germany after the Peace of Augsburg in 1555. One reason for the disputes was that the peace settlement had not recognized Calvinism. By the 1600s, Calvinism had spread through Europe.

**Causes of the War**
Religion played an important role in the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War, called the "last of the religious wars." However, political and territorial motives were also evident. Beginning in 1618 in the Holy Roman Empire, the war first involved the struggle between Catholic forces, led by the Hapsburg Holy Roman emperors, and Protestant (primarily Calvinist) nobles in Bohemia. As Denmark, Sweden, France, and Spain entered the war, the conflict became more political. Especially important was the struggle between France and Spain and the Holy Roman Empire for European leadership.

**Effects of the War**
All major European powers except England became involved in the Thirty Years' War. For 30 years Germany was plundered and destroyed. The Peace of Westphalia officially ended the war in Germany in 1648.

The Peace of Westphalia divided the more than three hundred states of the Holy Roman Empire into independent states and gave them power to determine their own religion and to conduct their own foreign policy. This brought an end to the Holy Roman Empire as a political entity and Germany would not be united for another two hundred years.

**Reading Check**
Summarizing: What three major powers struggled for European leadership during the Thirty Years' War?

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**Europe after the Peace of Westphalia, 1648**

**Geography Skills**

1. **Regions**
   Compare this map to the map on page 219. Describe the effects of the Thirty Years' War on the Holy Roman Empire.

2. **Movement**
   Research what led France to become involved in the Thirty Years' War.
In addition to the Thirty Years’ War, a series of rebellions and civil wars rocked Europe in the seventeenth century. By far the most famous struggle was the civil war in England known as the English Revolution. At its core was a struggle between king and Parliament to determine what role each should play in governing England. It would take another revolution later in the century to finally resolve this struggle.

The Stuarts and Divine Right

With the death of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603, the Tudor dynasty came to an end. The Stuart line of rulers began with the accession to the throne of Elizabeth’s cousin, the king of Scotland, who became James I of England.

James believed that he received his power from God and was responsible only to God. This is called the divine right of kings. Parliament did not think much of the divine right of kings. It had come to assume that the king or queen and Parliament ruled England together.

Religion was an issue as well. The Puritans (Protestants in England inspired by Calvinist ideas) did not like the king’s strong defense of the Church of England. While members of the Church of England, the Puritans wished to make the church more Protestant. Many of England’s gentry, mostly well-to-do landowners, had become Puritans. The Puritan gentry formed an important part of the House of Commons, the lower house of Parliament. It was not wise to alienate them.

The conflict that began during the reign of James came to a head during the reign of his son, Charles I. Charles also believed in the divine right of kings. In 1628, Parliament passed a petition that prohibited the passing of any taxes without Parliament’s consent. Although Charles I initially accepted this petition, he later changed his mind. Charles realized that the petition would put limits on the king’s power.

Charles also tried to impose more ritual on the Church of England. When he tried to force Puritans to accept this policy, thousands chose to go to America. Thus the religious struggles of the Reformation in England influenced American history.

Civil War and Commonwealth

Complaints grew until England slipped into a civil war in 1642 between the supporters of the king (the Cavaliers or Royalists) and the parliamentary forces (called the Roundheads because of their short hair). Parliament proved victorious, due largely to the New Model Army of Oliver Cromwell, a military genius.

The New Model Army was made up chiefly of more extreme Puritans, known as the Independents. These men believed they were doing battle for God. As Cromwell wrote, “This is none other but the hand of God; and to Him alone belongs the glory.” Some credit is due to Cromwell. His soldiers were well disciplined and trained in the new military tactics of the seventeenth century.

The victorious New Model Army lost no time in taking control. Cromwell purged Parliament of any members who had not supported him. What was left—the so-called Rump Parliament—had Charles I executed on January 30, 1649. The execution of the king horrified much of Europe. Parliament next abolished the monarchy and the House of Lords and declared England a republic, or commonwealth.

Cromwell found it difficult to work with the Rump Parliament and finally dispersed it by force. As the members of Parliament departed, he shouted, “It is you that have forced me to do this, for I have sought the Lord night and day that He would slay me rather than put upon me the doing of this work.” After destroying the roles of both king and Parliament, Cromwell set up a military dictatorship.
The Restoration

Cromwell ruled until his death in 1658. George Monk, one of Cromwell's leading generals, realized that under any of Cromwell's successors the country would be torn apart. With his army, Monk created a situation favorable to restoring the monarchy in the person of Charles II, the son of Charles I. Charles II had lived years of exile during Cromwell's rule. With the return of the monarchy in 1660, England's time of troubles seemed at an end.

After the restoration of the Stuart monarchy, known as the Restoration period, Parliament kept much of the power it had gained earlier and continued to play an important role. One of its actions was to pass laws restoring the Church of England as the state religion and restricting some rights of Catholics and Puritans.

Resisting attempts by his mother and sister to convert to Catholicism, Charles II remained openly loyal to the Protestant faith. He was, however, sympathetic to Catholicism. Parliament was suspicious about his Catholic leanings, especially when Charles suspended the laws that Parliament had passed against Catholics and Puritans. Parliament forced the king to back down on his action.

Charles's brother James did not hide the fact that he was a Catholic. Complying with his brother's wishes, James agreed to raise his two daughters in the Protestant faith. Rather than take an anti-Catholic oath, James resigned from all of his offices. His second marriage to a Catholic gave Parliament even more concern.

When Charles died, leaving no heirs to the throne, James II became king in 1685. James was an open and devout Catholic. Religion was once more a cause of conflict between king and Parliament. James named Catholics to high positions in the government, army, navy, and universities.

Parliament objected to James's policies but stopped short of rebellion. Members knew that James was an old man. His Protestant daughters Mary and Anne, born to his first wife, would succeed him.

PEOPLE in HISTORY

Charles I
1600–1649 King of England

"Hurt not the ax, that may hurt me," the condemned man on the scaffold told the executioner, pleading for a quick, painless death. The condemned man was Charles I, King of England. As he spoke the final words of his reign and his life, he asked those gathered to witness his beheading to remember him as "an honest man and a good king." After a reign of 24 years, during which he frequently clashed with Parliament, his forces were defeated and he was condemned to death.

With his death on January 30, 1649, Parliament sent the world a message about the "due right" of kings. How did King Charles I want to be remembered after his death?

Oliver Cromwell
1599–1658 English Revolutionary

After visiting the coffin of executed King Charles I, Oliver Cromwell called it a "cruel necessity." More than any other individual, Cromwell was responsible for that "necessity." As a member of Parliament with no military experience in 1640, he became the most capable commander in the civil war between the king and Parliament. As Lord Protector of England, Ireland, and Scotland following Charles' execution, Cromwell quarreled with Parliament himself and ruled largely without it for eight years. History rates him an enigma, whose rule was both enlightened and cruel. Soon after the monarchy was restored in 1660, Cromwell's body was exhumed and hung in London's Tyburn Square.

What did Cromwell call the death of King Charles I?
However, in 1688, James and his second wife, a Catholic, had a son. Now, the possibility of a Catholic monarchy loomed large.

**A Glorious Revolution**

A group of English nobles invited the Dutch leader, William of Orange, to invade England. In their invitation, the nobles informed William that most people throughout the kingdom wanted a change. The invitation put William and his wife Mary, the daughter of James II, in a difficult position. Based on Mary’s relationship to James, it would be appalling to rise up against her father, the king of England. However, William, a foe of France’s Catholic king Louis XIV, welcomed this opportunity to fight France with England’s resources.

William began making preparations to invade England in early 1688. He made his plans as secretly as possible and thus kept them largely hidden from James. Not until early October did James realize William’s intentions. In November 1688, William’s forces landed at Torbay and began their march toward London. James responded by sending forward his army. Following the desertion of many of his soldiers and the defection of his daughter Anne and her husband, James retreated to London. There he made plans for his wife and son to flee to France where James later joined them.

With almost no bloodshed, England had undergone a “Glorious Revolution.” The issue was not if there would be a monarchy but who would be monarch.

In January 1689, Parliament offered the throne to William and Mary. They accepted it, along with a Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights set forth Parliament’s right to make laws and to levy taxes. It also stated that standing armies could be raised only with Parliament’s consent. Under the Bill of Rights, it was impossible for kings to oppose or to do without Parliament. The rights of citizens to keep arms and have a jury trial were also confirmed. The Bill of Rights helped create a system of government based on the rule of law and a freely elected Parliament. This bill laid the foundation for a limited, or constitutional, monarchy.

Another important action of Parliament was the Toleration Act of 1689. This act granted Puritans, but not Catholics, the right of free public worship. Few English citizens, however, would ever again be persecuted for religion.

By deposing one king and establishing another, Parliament had destroyed the divine-right theory of kingship. William was, after all, king by the grace of Parliament, not by the grace of God. Parliament had asserted its right to be part of the English government.

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**Vocabulary**

1. Explain the significance of: inflation, witchcraft, Holy Roman Empire, Bohemia, James I, divine right of kings, Puritans, Charles I, Cavaliers, Roundheads, Oliver Cromwell, commonwealth, restoration, convert, James II.

**Main Ideas**

2. Explain what contributed to the economic and social problems of sixteenth-century Europe.

3. Illustrate the causes and effects of the Thirty Years’ War by using a chart like the one below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thirty Years’ War</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cause</td>
</tr>
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4. Explain why Oliver Cromwell first purged Parliament and then declared a military dictatorship.

**Critical Thinking**

5. The BIG Idea Drawing Conclusions

Which nation emerged stronger after the Thirty Years’ War? Did 30 years of fighting accomplish any of the original motives for waging the war?

6. Distinguishing What are the differences, if any, between a military dictatorship and a king ruling by “divine right”?

7. Analyzing Visuals Examine the painting on page 223. How does Goya portray the witches? What details in the painting indicate that witches were feared?

**Writing About History**


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