

# 17th century europe: crisis and resolution

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17th Century Europe: Crisis and Resolution 17th Century Europe: Crisis and Resolution The early European past saw a severe regression which was followed by a state of settlement. During the period of crisis which is considered between 1500 and 1800, Europe saw Renaissance and the age of Enlightenment. The question arises as to why Europe experienced major drifts despite the smooth sailing economic advances. This question remains by far the most controversial and nobody can give a concrete answer to it. However no one can either deny the religious aspect and how it affected the progress in Europe. While the Renaissance was a Catholic phenomenon, the age of Enlightenment was originated by the Protestants. Speaking in terms of economic and intellectual progress, Protestant countries took over the Catholic countries in Europe around the year 1620 which is considered the end of Renaissance (Trevor-Roper 1968). Neither the government nor the laymen had any clue as to their own region's economic conditions with the exception of some Italian cities. This led to a disadvantageous conclusion of the century when the government could have given incentives to move forward in the direction of progress based on the statistical records if they maintained any. Hence the seventeenth century marked the major " secular depression in industrial Europe" (Munck 1990). The first few decades of the seventeenth century saw a stable change occurring in both social and economic sectors. However, in the later years to come, the prices of grain and other necessities for the population rose to increase famine in major parts of Europe. For instance in Vienna during the 1620s the prices of staple bread cereal, rye was priced twenty times more than its lowest cost almost a decade ago. The era which is being discussed is famous for receiving many controversies in the name of the royal kingdom. Unfortunately the corrupt <https://assignbuster.com/17th-century-europe-crisis-and-resolution/>

churches which were taking money from the people in the form of charity were spending it on themselves leaving the rest of the population to starve on the streets. This led to retaliation from the bourgeoisies (Wiesner 2006). The Protestant societies had somehow started appearing more intellectually forward-looking and economically sound. The Protestant entrepreneurs not only industrialized France, but also Europe during the rule of Louis-Philippe's, Napoleon III and the Third Republic. According to Karl Marx, Protestantism was a capitalistic ideology. However, Weber and Sombart called it the "spirit of capitalism" which affected the new "Protestant ethics". Sombart further exemplified that these modern capitalists were originally Jews who had fled from Lisbon and Seville to Amsterdam and Hamburg (Trevor-Roper 1968). The crisis of the seventeenth century was a result of many other factors as well. The political and economic achievements gained in one part of Europe were not the same as in the other parts. Just like in the Protestant countries, in Catholic, the Calvinists were the great entrepreneurs. It is studied that they alone can run the industry and commerce in Europe (Wiesner 2006). According to Max Weber the Calvinism was an ideology of the "worldly asceticism" which went against the real definition of their lifestyle. They lived magnificently but portrayed a non-feudal approach and stinginess in life (Trevor-Roper 1968). Major deteriorating phases emerged in Europe especially in Ireland, Scotland, Portugal, England and Catalonia. Other affected areas included, France, Sicily, Naples, Denmark, and Sweden. These places underwent civil war and major shortage in food and grain. The most bitter and destructive Thirty Year War in Germany which gave this phase a title, "the general crisis of the seventeenth century" had led several people to believe that there would be no coming back from this downfall. This,

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however, was not true since the revolutions did come and the Restoration period did bring many changes and improvement in the whole of Europe (Munck 1990). Hence the regression faced by the Europeans happened for the best. They fought against it with brevity although many million lives were lost because of the causes of the crisis. The roots of the crisis were essentially religious. However this has never been a final verdict. There may be several other causes of the emergence of the crisis in the seventeenth century which are still being analyzed by historians and sociologists. They believe that the ideological impact of capitalism and its modern traces were seen in the emerging classes of Protestants and Calvinists. There are many people who believe that the rise and fall of the stability in Europe was also based on the outcry of the poor who had risen to power against the elite. They were searching for the right channel to be heard and taken care of. This became possible with the coming of industrialization in Europe when modern features gave rise to new employment opportunities. Bibliography Munck, T. (1990). *Seventeenth century Europe: State, conflict and the social order in Europe 1598-1700*. Basingstoke: Macmillan. Trevor-Roper, H. R. (1968). *The crisis of the seventeenth century; religion, the Reformation, and social change*. New York: Harper & Row. Wiesner, M. E. (2006). *Early modern Europe, 1450-1789*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.