

PART TWO

STATEMAKING

During the last half of the fifteenth century, the balance of economic and political power in Europe began to shift away from the Mediterranean region and the Italian city-states. The discovery and then colonization of the Americas contributed greatly to the development of the Atlantic economy, adding to the strength of Spain and then, beginning a century later, of England, transporting their rivalry across the Atlantic Ocean. The surprising English naval victory over the Spanish Armada in 1588 symbolized the subsequent shift in power from southern to northern Europe, even if Spain remained militarily stronger until the 1630s.

In the seventeenth century, when aggressive European monarchs were running roughshod over noble prerogatives and town privileges, England and the Dutch Republic both maintained their representative governments. The English Civil War led to the defeat and execution of the king in 1649, the fall of the monarchy, and in 1688, to the "Glorious Revolution," which affirmed the civil liberties of the English people and the rights of Parliament. In the largely Protestant Netherlands, which earned its independence after a protracted struggle against Catholic Spain, the prosperous merchants retained a republican form of government and helped generate the golden age of Dutch culture. In contrast, many European rulers relentlessly extended their power between 1650 and 1750, becoming absolute rulers. In principle, they were above all challenge from within the state itself, affecting the lives of more people than ever before through taxation, military service, and the royal quest for religious orthodoxy as Europe entered the era of absolutism.

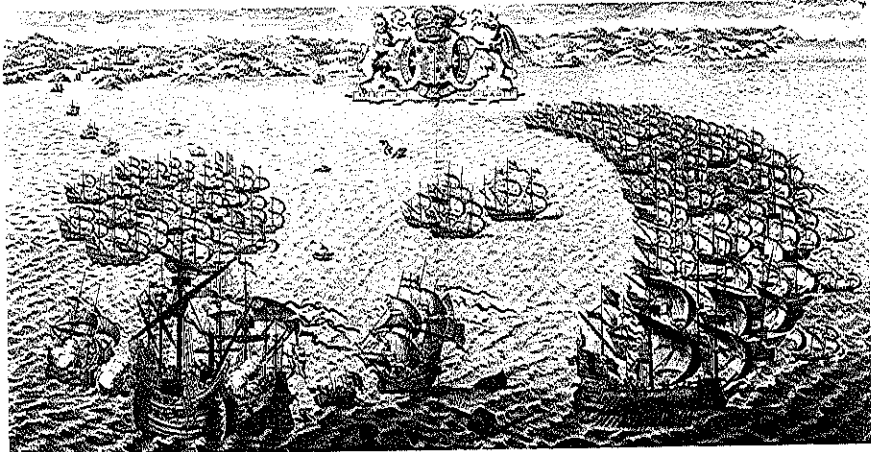
CHAPTER 5

THE RISE OF THE ATLANTIC ECONOMY: SPAIN AND ENGLAND



In 1585, Protestant England went to war with Catholic Spain. On July 30, 1588, English observers on the cliffs above the English Channel first caught sight of the supposedly invincible Spanish Armada, a force of 130 ships. On the night of August 7, the English fleet attacked King Philip II's Armada along the English coast. After the Armada anchored near Calais, the English sent ships set on fire against the Armada, which caused the Spanish ships to break their tight tactical formation. With the help of strong winds, the English then pinned the Spanish ships against the shore, and destroyed six of them, in the longest and most intense naval artillery battle, much of it at such close range that the sailors could hurl insults at each other. Superior English cannon, shot, and gunners took their toll on the Armada. More than 1,000 Spaniards died during the long battle that day. The captain of one Spanish ship that had failed to answer the flagship's call for help was hanged from a yardarm, his body hauled from ship to ship to reestablish discipline.

The English ships failed to follow up their advantage, however, letting the Spanish galleons escape. The rough winds of the Channel carried the Spanish ships away from the dangerous Flemish shoals toward the North Sea and then on a long, northern voyage up to the straits between the Orkney and Shetland Islands. This was decidedly the long way to reach the safety of Spanish ports. More than thirty Spanish ships sank in gales off the western coasts of Scotland and Ireland. When some of the ships of the Armada limped into port in Spain, the fleet's captain wrote King Philip II, "I am unable to describe to Your Majesty the misfortunes and miseries that have befallen us, because they are the worst that have been known on any voyage; and some of the ships that put into this port have spent the last fourteen days without a single drop of water." Of the 130 ships that had sailed against



English vessels attack the Spanish Armada off Calais in the English Channel in 1588.

England, only 60 could now be accounted for. At least a third had been sunk or wrecked, and many others were severely damaged.

Victory over the Spanish Armada accentuated England's rise to international dominance. English armies then crushed an Irish rebellion in 1603, ending fears of an effective Irish alliance with Catholic Spain. Despite the defeat of the Spanish Armada, however, Philip did not make peace with England, and the war between the two nations dragged on until 1604.

ECONOMIC EXPANSION

The rise of Spain, England, and the Netherlands must be seen in the context of the sixteenth-century expansion of the European economy. By 1450, the European population had begun to recover slowly from the Black Death, the disastrous plague that had swept the continent a century earlier. In general, the population continued to rise until the mid-seventeenth century, when religious and dynastic wars and new plagues led to such devastation that the period has become known as "the age of crisis." These cataclysms particularly struck Central Europe. But the Mediterranean region, too, suffered population decline, and the European population of the Turkish Ottoman Empire remained extremely sparse, about half that of France and Italy in 1600.

During the sixteenth century, the commercial and manufacturing center of Europe shifted from the Mediterranean to northwestern Europe. England and France established colonies in North America, and English and

Dutch traders ventured beyond the coast of India to the East Indies. By 1700, Venice—which, alone among the Italian city-states, had managed to retain significant trade links with Asia—had become a virtual backwater because it had failed to adapt to the global economy that was expanding across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas. Spain, France, England, and the Dutch United Provinces emerged as burgeoning colonial powers in the late sixteenth century, developing trade routes to Asia and gradually establishing empires.

Spain's preeminence did not survive the end of the seventeenth-century economic crisis. Its merchants lacked the flexibility shown by the English and Dutch to adjust to the varying demand for colonial products and to create new trading opportunities. The extraction and importation of silver dominated their efforts. Furthermore, merchants in Amsterdam and London, not those in the Spanish city of Seville, expanded trade by using innovative commercial techniques. Spanish merchants proved less able than their northern rivals to lower costs of transportation from the New World. In contrast, English textile merchants found new markets in Spain and the Mediterranean for their cloth.

Increased Agricultural Productivity

Populations cannot grow unless the rural economy can produce enough additional food to feed more people. During the sixteenth century, farmers brought more land into cultivation at the expense of forests and fens (marsh lands). Dutch reclamation of land from the sea in the Netherlands in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries provides the most spectacular example of the expansion of farm land; the Dutch reclaimed more than 36,000 acres between 1590 and 1615 alone. Modest agricultural progress was, however, limited to Western Europe, in villages with access to urban merchants, markets, and trade routes. In Russia and Eastern Europe, hundreds of thousands of serfs who were legally bound to the land labored to produce enough grain to feed the population and to generate a surplus that their lords could sell to Western European traders.

Population growth generated an expansion of small-scale manufacturing, particularly handicrafts, textiles, and metallurgy in England, Flanders, parts of northern Italy, the southwestern German states, and in parts of Spain. Only iron smelting and mining required marshaling a significant amount of capital. Rural industry was an intrinsic part of the expansion of industry. Woolens and textile manufacturers, in particular, utilized rural cottage (domestic) production, which took advantage of cheap and plentiful rural labor. Members of poor peasant families spun or wove cloth and linens at home for scant remuneration in an attempt to supplement meager family income.

Expansion of Trade

Extended trading networks developed the European economy. Improved banking and other financial services contributed to the expansion of trade. By the middle of the sixteenth century, financiers and traders commonly accepted bills of exchange in place of gold or silver or other goods. Bills of exchange, which had their origins in medieval Italy, were promissory notes that could be sold to third parties, and in this way they provided credit. At mid-century, an Antwerp financier only slightly exaggerated when he claimed, "One can no more trade without bills of exchange than sail without water." Merchants no longer had to carry gold and silver over long, dangerous journeys, nor did they have to identify and assess the approximate value of a variety of coins issued by mints here and there. Thus, an Amsterdam merchant purchasing soap from a counterpart in Marseille could go to an exchanger and pay him the equivalent sum in guilders, the Dutch currency. The exchanger would then send a bill of exchange to a colleague in Marseille, authorizing him to pay the Marseille merchant in his own currency after the actual exchange of goods had taken place. Bills of exchange contributed to the development of banking, as exchangers began to provide loans, profiting from the interest attached to them.

The rapid expansion in international trade increased the role of merchant capitalists, particularly in northern Europe, in the emerging global economy. The infusion of capital stemmed largely from gold and silver brought by

The money changer's office.



Spanish vessels from the Americas. This capital financed the production of goods, storage, trade, and even credit across Europe and overseas. Moreover, an increased credit supply was generated by investments and loans by bankers and wealthy merchants to states and by joint-stock partnerships, an English innovation (the first major company began in 1600). Unlike short-term financial cooperation between investors for a single commercial undertaking, joint-stock companies provided capital by drawing on the investments of merchants and other investors who purchased shares in the company.

Amsterdam and then London emerged as the banking and trading centers of Europe. (Not until the eighteenth century, however, did the Bank of Amsterdam and the Bank of England begin to provide capital for business investment.) Merchant towns in Castile, Catalonia, Italy, Holland, and England, as well as the Hanseatic cities of northern Germany, each had their own merchant dynasties.

The Global Economy

Trade with the Americas and Asia provided new outlets for European goods. It also brought from the New World products such as tomatoes, corn, bell peppers, rum, and spices to those who could afford them. The construction of larger ships, weighing as much as eighty tons, a size that would not be surpassed until the middle of the nineteenth century, facilitated oceangoing trade. From seaports, trade followed the major rivers—principally the Rhine, which flows from Switzerland to the North Sea; the Danube, which flows from Central Europe to the Black Sea; the Seine, which links Paris to the English Channel; and the Rhône, which carries boat traffic from Lyon to the Mediterranean. The Scheldt River estuary led from the North Sea to the powerful trading and manufacturing city of Antwerp, which already had a population of more than 100,000 people. There, vast quantities of English and Flemish goods and, increasingly, colonial products were traded for goods from the German and Italian states. Land trade routes also remained important—for example, the route from Marseille to northern France and the Netherlands, that from Valencia on the Mediterranean to Madrid and Toledo in the heart of Castile, and that from Piedmont to the western German states and the Netherlands.

Specially chartered East Indian trading companies helped mobilize investment capital in England and the Netherlands and, enjoying monopolies issued to them by each state, set out to make money. When Hugo Grotius published his treatise on the freedom of the seas in 1609, he subtitled it *The Right which Belongs to the Dutch to Take Part in the East India Trade*. Although officially independent of each government, trade companies represented the interests of the state. Above all, in England colonial trade played a major role in the development of the national economy, principally because England's manufactured goods increasingly found markets in its developing settlement colonies in North America.

Overseas trading remained a risky business, however; storms, wars, and pirates all posed considerable risks. England, Spain, Portugal, and France spent fortunes maintaining fortresses and trading ports in colonies and along trading routes. Funds available to finance global treks could quickly disappear in times of political crisis or international conflict, and distant markets for European goods, never very certain, could quickly dry up. Appropriately enough, the first English company to receive royal authorization for a monopoly on colonial trade was called the London Merchant Adventurers. Spanish kings, in particular, were notorious for declaring bankruptcy and thus repudiating all debts after borrowing money from wealthy subjects based on the expectation—sometimes in vain—of the arrival of valued colonial goods or bullion.

The major European powers had only limited means of exerting authority over their merchants and other subjects in distant places. Trading strategies followed negotiations and, often, angry confrontations between royal officials and aggressive trading lobbies. This, in addition to the daunting problems of distance, discouraged early attempts to establish the kind of full-fledged colonies in Asia and Africa that Spain and then England had in the Americas. Moreover, diseases indigenous to regions to which Europeans traveled as well as those they carried with them made life not only dangerous but often short, particularly in tropical climates.

Price Revolution and Depression

The rise in population and the economic boom of the sixteenth century brought a considerable rise in prices, particularly during the last few decades of the century. It seemed to one Spaniard that “a pound of mutton now costs as much as a whole sheep used to.” Between 1500 and 1600, the price of wheat rose by 425 percent in England, 650 percent in France, and 400 percent in Poland. Prices rose dramatically even before the arrival of silver from Latin America, a cause of continued inflation during the second half of the century. The cost of living far outdistanced wage increases as real income fell for ordinary people. Among those who suffered were small landholders in England, relatively poor nobles in France and Italy whose tenants had long-term leases, and landless laborers and wage earners in city and country alike.

Those affected adversely by the price revolution were quick to blame rapacious landlords, greedy merchants, hoarders of grain, selfish masters in the crafts, usurers, and the spirit of acquisition engendered, some believed, by the Reformation. Basic long-term causes included the infusion of gold and particularly silver brought principally by the Spanish from the Americas, currency debasement undertaken by monarchs to help finance wars, and the population increase itself, which placed more pressure on scarce resources.

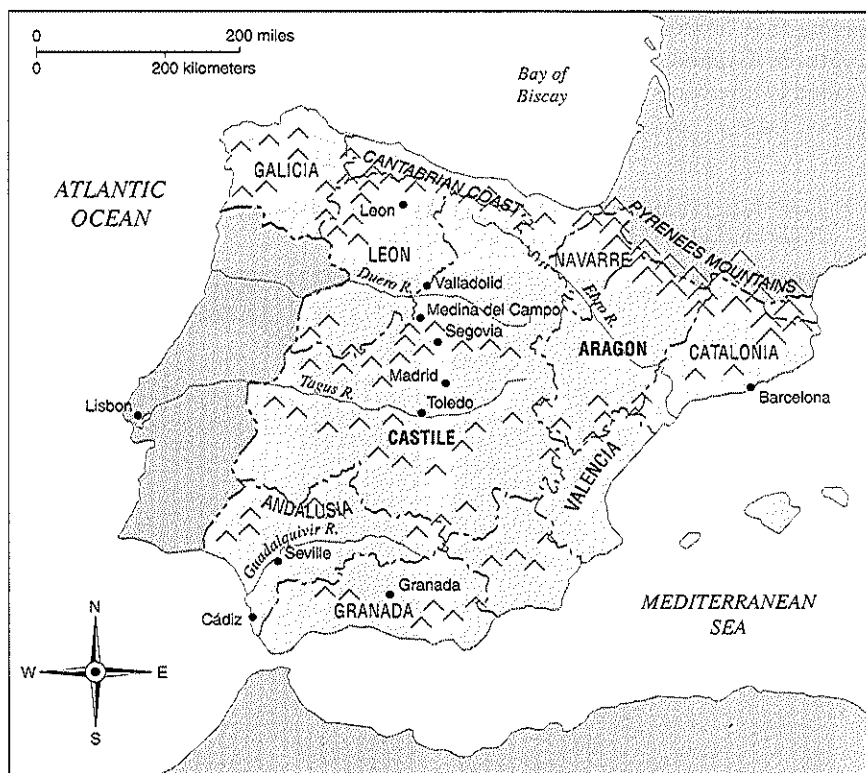
A long depression followed the economic expansion of the sixteenth century. This in itself reflected the relative decline of Mediterranean trade, sym-

bolized by the end of Venetian supremacy by 1600. The Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) also disrupted trade and manufacturing. International trade fell off dramatically. Furthermore, Spaniards had begun to exhaust the gold and silver mines of Latin America, disrupting the money supply. A leveling off of the population probably compounded the saturation of European markets. Urban growth slowed, and many of Europe's old ecclesiastical, administrative, and commercial centers stagnated. In sharp contrast, ports such as Amsterdam, Hamburg, and Liverpool grew with the expansion of the Atlantic trading system.

THE RISE OF SPAIN

Sixteenth-century Spain, the most powerful state of its time, was not one kingdom but two: Castile and Aragon. Castile was by far the larger and wealthier; its vast stretch of mountainous land across much of the center of the Iberian Peninsula contained a population of about six million

MAP 5.1 SPAIN IN THE LATE FIFTEENTH CENTURY



people, five-sixths of the population of Spain as a whole. Aragon, lying in northern Spain, had prospered during the Middle Ages because of its flourishing Mediterranean trade. It became a federation of dominions, including Catalonia and Valencia, greatly influenced by Mediterranean peoples and cultures (see Map 5.1). In contrast, Portugal was a relatively poor Atlantic state of mariners lying on the western edge of Iberia, despite its precocious development of trade routes along the West African coast and as far as the Indian Ocean and beyond. It had a population of about 1 million people (roughly equivalent to that of Aragon). Following the death of the Portuguese king without a male heir, Philip II of Spain claimed the Portuguese throne by virtue of being the only son of Isabella of Portugal, daughter of King Manuel I. Portugal was merged into the Spanish kingdom in 1580. (Portugal did not regain its independence until 1640.)

Centralization and the Spanish Monarchy

In 1469, Isabella of Castile (1451–1504) married Ferdinand (1452–1516), heir to the throne of Aragon. Castilian policies were successfully implemented to create a relatively centralized monarchy. The Castilian dialect gradually emerged as the language of Spain, giving some truth to the old saying that “a language is a dialect with an army.” In 1492, Spanish armies captured Granada, which was the last part of the Iberian Peninsula controlled by the Moors.

(Left) King Ferdinand II of Aragon was devoted to the Catholic Church.
(Right) Isabella, Queen of Castile.



Ferdinand and Isabella and their successors were known as the Catholic monarchs because of their devotion to the Church. But like other monarchs, they brought the Church, its privileges, and some of its income from tithes and the sale of indulgences under royal control. While the Reformation shook the foundations of the Church in much of Europe, it barely challenged Spanish religious orthodoxy. The Spanish Inquisition, whose original purpose had been to enforce the conversion of Islamic Moors and Jews in the late fifteenth century, served the Catholic Reformation in the late sixteenth century. The tribunal of the Inquisition interrogated and punished those accused of questioning Church doctrine. Housed in Castile, the Inquisition became a respected agent of royal as well as Church authority in some parts of Spain. Elsewhere—in Sicily and the Dutch Netherlands, above all—local people resisted the Inquisition, seeing it as another aspect of Spanish domination.

In Castile, Ferdinand and Isabella centralized the system of justice and made towns more subservient to the royal will. They stripped the Castilian nobles of some of their privileges while dispensing titles and positions. In Catalonia and Valencia, on the other hand, nobles resisted, maintaining most of their noble prerogatives. Nonetheless, because they feared a revolt of the lower classes, the Catalan and Valencian nobles became willing allies with the crown in maintaining social hierarchy and order.

Parliamentary traditions in the Spanish principalities to some extent limited the reach of the Castilian monarchy. The rulers of Spain were not able to tamper with Catalonia's traditionally less centralized constitutional traditions, which dated from the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when Catalonia itself had been a Mediterranean power. Thus, the territories of Catalonia and Valencia maintained their political institutions, principally their *Cortes* (assembly), which continued to limit the authority of the monarchy and which had to be consulted in order to achieve compliance with royal edicts. The Spanish monarchy therefore was less a "new monarchy"—at least outside of Castile—than that of France, because particularly strong institutional limits on its effective authority remained.

In Castile, disagreements between the monarchy and the *Cortes* there were frequent during the middle decades of the sixteenth century. The *Cortes* excluded nobles and included only representatives from the eighteen most important cities and towns of Castile. The Castilian *Cortes*, which maintained the right to approve special taxes, refused taxes to subsidize the monarchy for thirty-five years (1541–1575), obviously hampering the royal fiscal apparatus. The long reign of Philip II began (1556) and ended (1598) with a declaration of royal bankruptcy.

The Spanish Economy

Although income from its colonies never accounted for more than about 10 percent of the crown's total income, Spain's colonial empire in the Americas

contributed to its expanding economy. During the first years of the Spanish colonial period, Mexican gold helped finance the next wave of conquests. In 1545, Spaniards discovered the rich silver mines of Potosí (then in Peru, now in Bolivia), and a year later they uncovered more deposits in Mexico. A new refining process helped Spain triple the silver resources of Europe to its own profit. Mules carried silver extracted at Potosí on a fifteen-day journey down 12,000 feet and many miles to the port of Arica in northern Chile; then the sea voyage of several months by convoy began. Among other things, the silver paid for slaves brought from the coast of Africa. The Spanish Empire contributed considerably to the sixteenth-century European trading boom. Spain shipped colonial products and Spanish woolens to France and the Italian city-states. Spanish ships also supplied the colonies with wine, oil, European grain, shoes, and clothing.

The Castilian economy developed rapidly. The mountain ranges and central plateaus of Castile were divided between land for agricultural production and for raising sheep. The wool trade formed the basis of the Castilian export economy. The mining of silver, lead, iron, and mercury also developed in sixteenth-century Castile. Agricultural production was closely linked to manufacturing, as were sheep to the production of woolen goods. Nonetheless, 85 percent of the land of Spain could not be plowed because it was too mountainous or rocky, or could not be irrigated because of the high elevation.

Spanish royal revenue came from peasant obligations owed on royal domains as well as from taxes on commerce and manufacturing, import and export taxes, levies assessed for moving sheep through specific mountain passes, and payment from the Church for collecting tithes (the ecclesiastical tax of 10 percent of revenue). The crown imposed protectionist measures against foreign goods, banned the export of gold and silver, and attracted Italian and Flemish craftsmen to Spain.

In northern Spain, the mountains and valleys of the rainy Cantabrian coast were populated by farmers and fishermen. To the south, the Castilian provinces of Andalusia and Granada produced wheat, olives, and wine. Castilian farmers expanded production by terracing hillsides and planting them in perennials, including grapevines and olive trees. Demand for textiles increased, and farmers planted flax and hemp. Farm towns built irrigation works and processing facilities such as wine and olive presses, flax-soaking ponds, and grist and fulling mills to turn these crops into market commodities.

Spanish nobles incurred no social stigma by engaging in wholesale or international commerce until the eighteenth century. Many nobles capitalized on their revenues from farm products by building facilities to store and process the products—including flour mills, tanneries, and wine cellars, which often doubled as taverns. Several wealthy dukes became shipping magnates. They owned the tuna fishing rights on Castile's Mediterranean shore, exporting fish preserved in salt or olive oil all over Europe.

The Expansion of the Spanish Empire

Through marriage and inheritance, Spain's territorial interests reached far and wide. The Spanish throne passed to the Austrian branch of the Habsburg dynasty in 1496, with Ferdinand and Isabella's daughter, Princess Joanna, marrying Philip the Fair, the Habsburg duke of Burgundy, the son of Maximilian, the Holy Roman emperor. A year after Isabella's death in 1504, Ferdinand, hoping to produce an heir to the Spanish throne, married a niece of King Louis XII of France. But their infant son died three years later—royal families were also subject to the harsh demographic realities of the age. In 1516, the Flanders-born son of Joanna and Philip the Fair inherited the throne of Castile and Aragon as Charles I of Spain. In

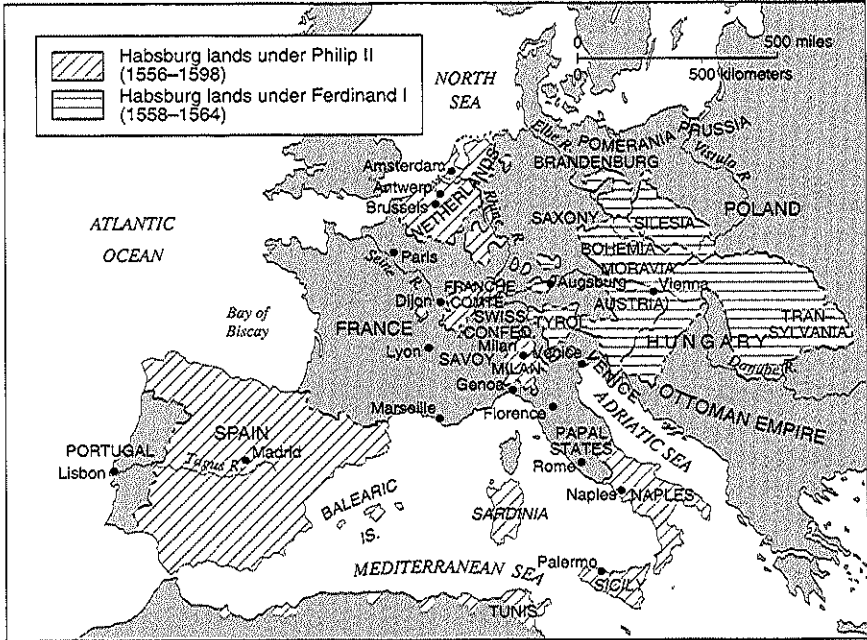


Charles V was the grandson of Ferdinand and Isabella. This portrait is by Titian (1548).

1519, he became Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (ruled 1519–1558) upon the death of his grandfather, Maximilian I. Along with Spain's American territories, he inherited Aragon's Italian possessions. The emperor only briefly resided in Catalonia and rarely visited Castile. But with far-flung dynastic interests, he demanded extraordinary taxes from his Spanish subjects to pay for his wars abroad, including the defense of the Spanish-Italian possessions of Naples, Sicily, and Sardinia against France during the 1520s.

The king's departure from Spain in 1520 was followed by open revolt against royal taxation. The revolt of the *Comuneros* (urban communities) began in Toledo and spread to other towns in northern Castile. Bourgeois and artisans opposed the royal officials Charles had imported from Flanders, but the revolt was also directed against Castilian nobles. After royal forces burned the arsenal and town of Medina del Campo in north-central Castile in August 1520, the young king suddenly switched tactics. He suspended supplementary tax collections and agreed not to appoint any more foreigners to office in Spain. When uprisings continued, Charles's army gradually restored order, brutally executing the leaders of the rebellion.

With an eye toward his succession, Charles V arranged the marriage of his son, Philip, to the English princess Mary Tudor of England in 1554. Charles



MAP 5.2 HABSBURG LANDS AT THE ABDICATION OF CHARLES V, 1558 The division of the Habsburg lands between Philip II (who had already begun to rule Spain in 1556) and Ferdinand I.

formally abdicated as Holy Roman emperor in 1558, dividing the Habsburg domains between his son Philip and his brother Ferdinand (see Map 5.2). Philip II (ruled 1556–1598) inherited Spain, the Netherlands, the Spanish colonies in the Americas, and parts of Italy. Ferdinand I (ruled 1558–1564), who was elected Holy Roman emperor, inherited the Habsburg ancestral domains, including Austria. This ended the period when one ruler held all Habsburg territories and also eliminated any possibility that a single Catholic monarch would rule all of Europe. It did not, however, end the cooperation and strong family ties between the two branches of the Habsburg dynasty. Mary Tudor's death in 1558 eliminated the intriguing prospect that England might have become part of the Spanish Empire.

Philip II inherited the problem of ruling a vast empire. Like its rivals France and England, the Spanish state developed a large, centralized bureaucracy, including royal councils, essential to the operations of the empire. The council of state and the council of war offered the king advice on matters of internal and colonial policy. Royal secretaries handled correspondence and busied themselves with the operations of the royal household. Most such officials were commoners, for whom such positions provided financial and social advantages.

The Council of the Indies oversaw the administration of Spain's vast empire, sending viceroys and other officials to enforce the royal will and assure the extraction of precious metals for the royal coffers. The monarchy sent officials, many trained in law, to the Americas. It could take two years for administrative instructions or correspondence to reach distant officials in Latin America and for their response to arrive in Spain. One official awaiting instructions put it this way, "If death came from Madrid, we should all live to a very old age."

The Age of Philip II

Spanish power peaked during the reign of Philip II. Madrid, in the center of Castile, became a capital city of nobles and bureaucrats, many of whom, in one way or another, lived off the court. The city grew from a town of about 30,000 people in the 1540s to well over 150,000 inhabitants in the 1620s. Madrid survived through a "command economy"; royal commissioners paid government-fixed prices for what they wanted from the capital's hinterland. As Spain's capital grew, it had to import supplies, which were transported from distant regions by countless mule trains that traversed rough mountain ranges and deep valleys.

Philip decided that he needed a permanent royal residence that would provide an elegant symbol of his power. Outside of Madrid, Philip built the magnificent Escorial Palace. Virtually the king's only public appearances after he became crippled by gout were elaborate religious ceremonies at the palace, carefully orchestrated to uphold the sanctity of the throne. Rituals of court etiquette affirmed a sense of authority, social hierarchy, and order that were supposed to radiate from the Escorial through Spain and to the far reaches of the empire.

Philip II led a tragic life marred by the premature deaths of four wives and a number of children. Perhaps because of sadness, he wore only black. The king himself may have contributed to the misfortunes of his offspring. In 1568, he ordered Don Carlos, his bad-tempered and irresponsible twenty-three-year-old son by his first marriage, placed under lock and key. Don Carlos seemed unfit to rule; furthermore, detesting



Philip II of Spain ruled during the height of Spanish power.



The Ottoman Empire of Suleiman the Magnificent threatened Spanish rule during the sixteenth century.

his father, he may have even entered into contact with Dutch leaders who had begun to denounce Spanish policies in their land. Don Carlos's death six months later haunted Philip, inevitably generating stories that he had ordered him murdered. The introverted king thereafter lived among the whispers of intrigue and storms of aristocratic rivalries of the noble families and factions.

With Habsburg domination of Italy secured by the 1559 Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis with France, Philip turned his attention to fighting the Turks. The Ottoman Empire had expanded into Europe following the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 (see Chapter 1), taking advantage of dynastic and religious

Wars between its European rivals. Suleiman the Magnificent (ruled 1520–1566) expanded his territories in the Balkans, where some of the Ottoman cultural heritage endures today, and into the rich plains of Hungary. The Turks also became bolder in their attacks on Spanish ships in the central and western Mediterranean. When the Turks took the Venetian island of Cyprus in 1571, the pope helped initiate the Holy League, in which Venice and Spain allied. The long naval war against the Ottoman Empire lasted from 1559 to 1577. With southern Spain virtually undefended and with the Moriscos (Moors who had been forced to convert to Christianity) rebelling (1568–1570) against taxes, the Turks might well have captured Granada. But a Spanish-Austrian Habsburg fleet defeated the sultan's larger navy in the Adriatic Sea at the Battle of Lepanto (1571), a monumental struggle in which more than 200 galleys fought, taking the lives of thousands of combatants. The Turkish threat in the western Mediterranean ended, although the possibility of the further expansion of the Ottoman Empire in southeastern and central Europe remained. In the meantime, overexpansion had already planted the seeds of Spanish imperial decline.

THE RISE OF ENGLAND

The consolidation and then the extension of the authority of the Tudor monarchy facilitated England's emergence as a power late in the sixteenth century. From the reign of Henry VII to that of Elizabeth I, the Tudor monarchs held in check the great landed magnates, putting down rebellions and extending the reach and prestige of royal government. During the same period, the English state expanded its control over Wales and Ireland while holding at bay Scottish threats to the Tudor dynasty.

The House of Tudor

Victorious in the long War of the Roses between the Lancaster and York families, Henry Tudor, the last claimant to the throne of the Lancasters, became the first Tudor monarch as Henry VII (ruled 1485–1509). Like Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon, the ambitious Henry VII set out to make the Tudor state so powerful that it could resist any challenge from noble factions and “overmighty subjects.”

Thomas Wolsey, who was archbishop of York and adviser to the king, brought to the King's Council loyal officials drawn from the ranks of the nobility and high clergy. These men met in a room known as the Star Chamber because its blue ceiling, like the night sky, was spangled with stars. The Star Chamber became one of the highest courts in the land.

Henry VII strengthened royal authority in England. He imposed tariffs protecting the cloth and wool industries, decreed acts unifying weights and measures, and put forth edicts punishing vagabondage and begging. He reduced expenses by disbanding his army, while filling royal coffers by selling monopolies (the exclusive right to import and market foodstuffs or commodities). Monopolies were extremely unpopular, however, among the middle and lower classes because they kept the prices of some products artificially high.

The king won the loyalty of most nobles. When selling offices failed as a means of assuring compliance, he resorted to the sheer coercive power of the throne. The Star Chamber enforced compliance, exacting fines and sometimes arresting the recalcitrant for real or imagined offenses. Henry obtained from Parliament writs of attainder and forfeiture, by which he could declare anyone guilty of treason, order their execution, and seize their property.

Henry VII depended not only upon the personal loyalty of local elites but also on the efficiency and prestige of about 600 unpaid justices of the peace. These men, largely drawn from prosperous landed families, dispensed justice, collected taxes, enforced troop levies, and maintained order. Their judicial authority covered every criminal offense except treason. While maintaining a strong tradition of decentralized government in England, the justices of the peace also strengthened the efficiency and

prestige of the monarchy. Gradually, the royal Assize Courts took responsibility for felony cases. Charged with enforcing parliamentary statutes and the orders of the Privy Council, which administered the Tudor state, the Assize Courts also helped extend the state's effective authority.

Henry VIII became king upon his father's death in 1509 and married Catherine of Aragon, who was Ferdinand and Isabella's daughter, as well as his brother's widow. Beneath Henry's proud and impetuous character lay a deep-seated inferiority complex that he tried to overcome with grand deeds. The single-minded Henry dreamed of standing at the head of an empire. The new king spent vast sums fighting against France for more than a decade, beginning in 1512. Cardinal Wolsey, who had been his father's trusted adviser, sought to restrain Henry's ambition. But when the House of Commons refused to provide the king with more funds, Henry simply debased the currency, giving the state more spending power at the cost of higher inflation.

Foreign wars devastated royal finances. To raise money, the spendthrift monarch heaped more financial obligations on the backs of the poor. Wolsey utilized the cynically named "amicable grant," a royal assessment first imposed in 1525 on lay and ecclesiastical revenues. Peasants in southeastern England rebelled against these new levies. They were sometimes led by rural "gentlemen." Henry responded to the threat by forcing landowners to loan money to the crown, imprisoning some of the wealthiest and confiscating their estates, and further debasing the currency, adding to inflation.

To make his monarchy more efficient, Henry shifted royal government, including control of the state's finances, from the royal household of the king's servants to a small but able bureaucracy of officials, who were loyal to both the king and Parliament. He reduced the size of the king's advisory council and formalized its structure. The Privy Council assumed oversight functions and routinely communicated with the local justices of the peace. The king appointed new administrative officials and established new revenue courts. At the same time, the general acceptance of the "king's law"—common law—gradually helped generate a sense of national unity.

Henry extended the power of his monarchy by breaking with Rome in the 1530s over his divorce of Catherine of Aragon. He established the Church of England (see Chapter 3), which kept some of the ritual and doctrine of the Catholic Church. Henry became head of the Church of England, dissolving monasteries and confiscating and selling ecclesiastical lands. Henry planted the seeds for future conflicts between Protestants and Catholics in England.

Fearing that the Welsh or Irish might assist Holy Roman Emperor Charles V in an attempt to invade England to restore Catholicism, Henry established English domination over Wales and direct rule over Ireland. Since the late twelfth century, English lords had gradually increased their military colonization of Ireland, pushing back the Gaelic tribes and claiming the finest land by virtue of ancient titles. The English kings delegated authority to

English nobles. Yet effective English authority remained fragile in Ireland as long as the crown's continental interests took precedence. After the English Reformation, the crown selected English Protestants for all posts in Ireland. And after a minor rebellion against royal authority, which was put down with great cruelty, in 1541 Henry proclaimed himself king of Ireland and head of the Irish Church. In exchange for the Gaelic chieftains' recognition of Henry as their king and acceptance of English law, the crown recognized them as Irish lords. Thereafter, however, the costs of administering Ireland increased rapidly, requiring more troops, as the Irish chafed at English rule. Queen Elizabeth's policy of English settlement in Ulster during the 1590s generated Gaelic resistance in the Nine Years' War (1594–1603). Resistance was led by Hugh O'Neill (1540–1616), Earl of Tyrone. English forces defeated a combined Irish and Spanish force at the Battle of Kinsale in 1601. This completed the English conquest of Gaelic Ireland. O'Neill left Ireland and ended up in Rome, where he was welcomed by the pope. Religious persecution frequently forced Catholics to hear Masses in secret in the countryside, with priests using rock slabs as altars, or "Mass rocks."

Scotland also proved to be a thorny problem for England. Although in 1503 the Scottish King James IV had married Henry VII's daughter, Margaret Tudor, relations between Scotland and England deteriorated when Henry VIII became king. When James invaded England in 1513 in support of France, Henry VIII undertook a major military campaign against the Scots. This ended with a bloody English victory at the Battle of Flodden, where James IV was killed. Nonetheless, Catholic Scotland remained an ally of Catholic France. In 1542, an English army again invaded Scotland, defeating the Scots at Solway Moss. Following James V's sudden death a month after the battle, Mary Stuart (James's six-day-old daughter) became queen of the Scots. In 1546, after Henry's war with France dragged to a halt, another English army laid waste to Scotland, sacking the capital and university town of Edinburgh.

Henry VIII died in 1547. On his deathbed, the king, whose insistence on divorce began the English Reformation, hedged his bets, leaving money to pay for Catholic Masses to be said for the eternal repose of his soul. The nine-year-old son of Henry and Jane Seymour became King Edward VI (ruled 1547–1553), governing under the tutelage of his uncle, the duke of Somerset, who served as Lord Protector. While seeking accommodation with Protestant dissenters, the young Edward undertook an aggressive campaign on behalf of the Reformed Church of England.

Wars against Catholic Scotland and France continued. The Lord Protector was intent on destroying Catholicism in Scotland. After English troops defeated a French force sent to help the Catholic cause there, the young Catholic queen of Scots, Mary Stuart (1542–1587), fled to safety, marrying Francis, the son of Henry II, the king of France. Tensions between Protestants and Catholics worsened in England. Moreover, landowners resisted



Mary Tudor, later queen of England.

paying more taxes to finance new wars. Allied with fearful Catholic nobles, the earl of Warwick overthrew Somerset in 1549. Warwick assumed the role of Lord Protector and took the title of duke of Northumberland.

Northumberland quickly betrayed the Catholic lords who had supported him. He tightened the crown's control over the Church of England and undertook a repressive campaign against Catholicism. Northumberland's influence over the sickly young king whetted his desire for power. He plotted for Lady Jane Grey (1537–1554; Henry VIII's niece and third in line to the monarchy) to ascend the throne after she married his son. After Edward's death, Northumberland proclaimed

his daughter-in-law queen of England. But most nobles rallied to the cause of Mary Tudor (ruled 1553–1558), the daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon. She seemed to them the rightful heir to the throne, despite the fact that she was Catholic.

Mary Tudor succeeded her half brother and attempted to return England to Catholicism. She restored all rituals and doctrines of the Catholic Church and she acknowledged the primacy of the pope over the Church of England. The queen abrogated Henry VIII's reforms and began to persecute Protestants, some of whom fled to France. "Bloody Mary" embellished the macabre heritage of the Tower of London with the heads of Northumberland, his son, and Lady Jane Grey, who had ruled for only nine days. Mary married Philip II, who ascended the Spanish throne in 1556. England joined Spain in its war against France, which had long rivaled the Habsburgs in Italy. Calais, the last English outpost in France, was soon lost. Sparked by widespread opposition to her Catholicism, which was popularly identified with France and Spain, a rebellion broke out against the queen. When Mary died in 1558, few in England grieved.

Elizabeth I (ruled 1558–1603), Anne Boleyn's daughter, restored Protestant rule to England when she became queen at age twenty-five, succeeding Mary, her half sister. Elizabeth's throne was threatened by religious division, which was compounded by the antagonism of Catholic France and Spain. Not many people could have expected the young queen to succeed.

Elizabeth was a woman of intelligence, vanity, sporadic fickleness, and an occasional flash of temper. She enjoyed music, dancing, hunting, and the

company of men. Tall, with reddish hair and an olive complexion, she was cautious, even suspicious, having been raised in a world of conspiracy. The queen preferred to wait out many pressing problems in the hope that they would just go away. Educated in the tradition of Italian humanism, Elizabeth learned French, German, and Italian, as well as Latin, and enjoyed translating texts from these languages into English.

Elizabeth never married. It was not uncommon for women to remain unmarried in early modern Europe—in England, about 10 percent of all women remained single throughout their lives—but it was unusual for a monarch not to marry. The question of whether Elizabeth would ever take a husband preoccupied the other rulers of Europe, as well as her subjects.

In response to a parliamentary petition that she marry and produce a direct heir, Elizabeth responded that she trusted God to ensure that “the realm shall not remain destitute of an heir.” As for her, it would be enough that at the end of her life “a marble stone shall declare that a queen, having reigned such a time, lived and died a virgin.” Elizabeth rejected one continental hopeful after another, beginning with the handsome but dull Philip II of Spain, Catholic widower of Mary Tudor. Nor was marriage the outcome of a two-year romance with the handsome Lord Robert Dudley, the death of whose wife in 1560 from a suspicious fall down a flight of stairs understandably fueled rumors for some years.

Queen Elizabeth dancing with Robert Dudley.



Elizabeth was determined to find a means to resolve religious conflict within England, which might one day threaten her reign. Elizabeth had been raised a Protestant, but she did not hold particularly strong religious convictions and rarely attended church. Although she was thought to favor some Catholic rituals, when she first encountered a procession of monks with candles and incense at Westminster Abbey, she cried out, "Away with these torches, we see very well." She dismissed many Catholic advisers.

In 1559, Parliament passed the Act of Uniformity and the Act of Supremacy, which established the lasting foundations of the Church of England, reorganizing it to have Protestant dogma but essentially Catholic structure. The Uniformity Bill imposed the *Book of Common Prayer* (1550) on religious services of the Church of England and required attendance at public worship and imposed fines for not attending services. The bill barely passed the House of Lords (which was primarily composed of Catholics), and probably would not have passed at all had two bishops not been imprisoned in the Tower of London and thus been unable to vote. The Act of Supremacy required all officials, clergy, and candidates for university degrees to take an oath acknowledging the queen as "governor" of the English Church. This title replaced that of "head" of the Church and suggested that the queen would not interfere in matters of doctrine. The Thirty-Nine Articles, enacted in 1563, provided an institutional framework for subsequent relations between state and church in England. The landed elite, strengthening its control of Parliament during Elizabeth's reign, generally supported the Church of England.

Some English Protestants wanted to carry the reforms farther than Elizabeth's religious settlement. They sought to eliminate from the Church of England what some members considered vestiges of elaborate Catholic ceremonies, such as baptismal crosses, altar rails before which the faithful knelt while receiving communion, elaborate priestly garb, and stained-glass windows.

Puritanism, the English version of Calvinism, first emerged in the late 1550s as a dissident force within the Church of England. Puritans were drawn primarily from the middle and lower classes. They insisted on a simplified but more intense religion based on individual conscience, the direct authority of the Holy Scriptures, and a community of belief in which preaching played a preeminent role. Although a few Puritans served as bishops in the Church of England, others wanted the Church of England to be separate from the English monarchy. The Tudor monarchy, on the other hand, wanted to make the Church serve its secular goals of national glory, prosperity, and public order.

A modest Catholic revival, aided by the arrival of Catholic Jesuit missionaries from the continent, accentuated religious divisions in England. Royal religious policies became harsher. Dissident Protestants suffered persecu-

tion along with Catholics. A Jesuit missionary was tortured to death on the rack in 1581, and six years later the first Puritan was executed for having spoken in Parliament on behalf of free speech in the name of his religion.

Since Elizabeth had no heirs, the Catholic Mary Stuart stood next in line for succession to the English throne. After her husband King Francis II of France died in 1560, Mary returned to her native Scotland to assume the power that her mother wielded as regent until her death that same year. The Scottish Reformation had begun in earnest when the theologian John Knox (c. 1505–1572) returned home from Geneva to preach reform. Soon after coming to the throne of England, Elizabeth



Mary, Queen of Scots.

had made peace with Scotland and France. But Elizabeth and Protestants worried that if Mary became queen of England, she would restore Catholicism to England. When Protestants forced Mary to abdicate the Scottish throne in 1568, she fled to England. Elizabeth kept her potential rival under virtual house arrest.

In 1569, Catholics in the moors and bogs of the isolated English north rebelled in the hope of putting Mary Stuart on the English throne, precipitating Elizabeth's order for her rival's imprisonment. The Catholic force marched southward, but hastily retreated upon learning that sizable English forces loyal to Elizabeth awaited them. English troops defeated a second Scottish army near the border between the two countries. Elizabeth ordered the execution of over 500 of the rebels. This "Northern Rising" ended in complete failure, and the Catholic Church's hopes for a successful Counter-Reformation in England were finally dashed. Pope Pius V excommunicated Elizabeth in 1570 from the Church to which she did not wish to belong, removing the queen's Catholic subjects from the obligation of obedience to her and encouraging several more plots against her. Two years later, French Catholics undertook the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre of Protestants in Paris (see Chapter 4), the horror of which firmed Elizabeth's resolve to resist Mary's claims to the throne at all costs. She then vowed to support the Dutch, most of whom were Protestant, in their rebellion against Catholic Spain. In 1583, she foiled a plot, which involved the Spanish and French embassies, to depose her in favor of Mary Stuart.

Four years later, under pressure from Parliament, Elizabeth ordered Mary Stuart's execution.

Elizabeth's Statemaking

The reach and efficiency of the English state increased under Elizabeth's guidance. Lords and other wealthy gentlemen served on the Privy Council, which consisted of between twelve and eighteen members drawn from the nobility, landed elite, and officers in the royal household. It oversaw the lord-lieutenants, a new office that gave noblemen control of local militia. England's queen, like her predecessors, used patronage to foster loyalty to the crown. The most desirable posts were at court, including those in the royal household. Some of these carried life tenures and a few were hereditary. In Elizabethan England, unlike France, churchmen did not serve in the highest offices of the realm. The most powerful officials at court, such as the Lord Chancellor, dispensed patronage by selecting officials and filling local positions in the counties. Closely tied to the satisfaction of the private interests of the landed elite, the office of the Exchequer resembled similar offices created by continental monarchs who did not have to contend with a representative body as powerful as the English Parliament, divided into the House of Lords and the House of Commons. Although it met during only three of the forty-five years of Elizabeth's reign, Parliament retained an important role in government because the crown needed its assent for new laws and new taxes.

Upon ascending the throne, Elizabeth found the crown's financial situation bleak. Revenues raised through taxation and customs dues were inadequate to finance the war against Spain and campaigns in Ireland. The sale of some royal lands, forced loans, the occasional seizure of a Spanish ship laden with silver or gold, and purveyance (the right of agents of the monarchy to buy food at below-market prices) could only be temporary expedients. The collection of "ship money" (a tax on ports, which the crown with dubious logic extended to inland towns as well) was extremely unpopular and generated resistance during the hard times of the 1590s. But by exercising frugality in the expenses of government and increasing taxation, the crown managed to replenish its coffers, another sign of a stronger and more efficient state, despite a decade and a half of expensive warfare against Spain. The English monarchy in the Elizabethan Age was relatively more efficient than that of Spain or France.

English nobles by the 1590s no longer had full-fledged private armies that could threaten the throne's monopoly on force. This contrasted with the situation in France during the same period, when the Guise and Bourbon families, among others, maintained their own armies in the wars of religion.

Foreign wars also served to increase the reach of central government in England. The second half of the sixteenth century brought regular training for the militia, which provided the bulk of troops as needed, along with

gentlemen volunteers and cavalrymen still recruited by summons. During the last eighteen years of Elizabeth's reign, more than 100,000 soldiers were impressed into service for wars on the continent and to maintain English hegemony in Ireland. Lord-lieutenants assumed responsibility for troop levies in the counties. The vast majority who were conscripted as soldiers were the poorest of the poor—unfortunate men who happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time when the press-gangs turned up to roll them out of taverns or even out of church and into the queen's service.

The monarchy imposed English law on northern England, Wales (which Henry VIII had absorbed into England), and Ireland. The emergence of a national market economy increasingly linked to London also played an important part in the nationalization of English political institutions. Within England, the sense of belonging to a nationality was certainly more advanced than anywhere on the continent. With the exception of part of Cornwall in southwestern England (where the Cornish language was spoken), the people of England spoke English, however great the variation in dialect and accents. A somewhat Anglicized Welsh elite began to send their sons to Oxford and Cambridge Universities.

The fact that Britain is an island may have made the English more xenophobic and precociously nationalistic than their continental counterparts. Strong traditions of local government and loyalties persisted in England, however, fueled by social differences and the overwhelming influence of wealthy local landed families. The county and parish remained the economic, social, and political universe of most people in England. The state still remained an abstraction until the tax collector or the press-gang arrived.

Demographic and Economic Expansion

In the last half of the sixteenth century, England emerged as a commercial and manufacturing power. The population of England and Wales grew rapidly, from about 2.5 million in the 1520s to more than 3.5 million in 1580, reaching about 4.5 million in 1610. Reduced mortality rates and increased fertility, the latter probably generated by expanding work opportunities in manufacturing and farming (leading to earlier marriage and more children), help explain this rapid rise in population. While epidemics and plague occasionally took their toll, the people in England still suffered them less often than did those on the continent. Furthermore, despite the wrenching effects of the English Reformation, the country had been spared the protracted wars of religion that occurred in France and Central Europe.

English towns grew as migrants arrived in sufficient numbers to overcome high mortality rates caused by catastrophic health conditions stemming from poor sanitation. London became the second largest city in the world, its population rising from about 50,000 in the 1520s to 200,000 in 1600, and jumping its walls to 375,000 in 1650 (only Edo [Tokyo] was larger). The next biggest towns in England lagged far behind: Norwich, Newcastle, and

Bristol boasted only about 25,000 people each. About 8 percent of the population of England lived in London by the mid-seventeenth century.

England provides the primary example of the expansion of agricultural production well before the "agricultural revolution" of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A larger population stimulated increased demand for food, as well as for manufactured goods. Through crop specialization, English agriculture became more efficient and market oriented than almost anywhere on the continent. Between 1450 and 1650, the yield of grain per acre increased by at least 30 percent. In sharp contrast with farming in Spain, English landowners brought more dense marshes and woodlands into cultivation.

The great estates of the English nobility largely remained intact, and many wealthy landowners aggressively increased the size of their holdings. Timely marriages also increased the size of landed estates. Primogeniture (the full inheritance of land by the eldest son) helped keep land from being subdivided. Younger sons of independent landowners left behind the family land to find other respectable occupations, often in the church or in urban trades. Larger farms were conducive to more commercialized farming at a time when an expanding population pushed up demand and prices. Some landowners turned a part of their land into pastureland for sheep in order to supply the developing woolens trade.

Some of the great landlords, as well as yeomen (farmers whose holdings and security of land tenure guaranteed their prosperity and status), reorganized their holdings in the interest of efficiency. Open-field farmers selected crops in response to the growing London market. Between 1580 and 1620, in a quest for greater profits, landlords raised rents and altered conditions of land tenure in their favor, preferring shorter leases and forcing tenants to pay an "entry fee" before they would agree to rent them land. They evicted those who could not afford their new, more onerous terms. They also pushed tenants toward more productive farming methods, including crop rotation. During hard years, the peasants might be forced to sell their land, while wealthy neighbors could survive with relative ease.

Many landowners utilized "enclosure" to expand their holdings. Parliamentary acts of enclosure aided landowners by allowing them to buy wastelands, consolidate arable strips of land, and divide up common lands and pasture areas. The enclosure of common lands, sold by villages to the highest bidders, over the long run would spell the end of the common rights of villagers to use the land, and the removal of tenants in order to consolidate estates marked a push toward "agrarian individualism." Enclosure drew considerable resistance, for it left many of the rural poor fenced out of common land on which they had depended for firewood, gleanings, and pasturing. Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), which describes an imaginary island where all people live in peace and harmony, blamed England's economic inequities on enclosure. Riots against enclosure were widespread in the



In this seventeenth-century woodcut, a country wife engages in domestic industry, part of the expansion of textile manufacturing that transformed England's economy.

1590s, a decade in which popular tax rebellions shook France, Spain, Austria, and Ukraine, among other places, and again in the 1620s and 1630s.

England's exceptional economic development drew upon the country's natural resources, including iron, timber, and, above all, coal, extracted in far greater quantities than anywhere on the continent. New industrial methods expanded the production of iron, brass, and pewter in and around Birmingham. But, primarily, textile manufacturing developed the English economy. Woolens (which accounted for about 80 percent of exports), worsteds (sturdy yarn spun from combed wool fibers), and cloth found eager buyers in England as well as on the continent. Moreover, late in the sixteenth century, as English merchants began making forays across the Atlantic, these textiles were also sold in the New World. Cloth manufacturers undercut production by urban craftsmen by "putting out" work to the villages and farms of the countryside. In such domestic industry, poor rural women and girls could do spinning and carding (combing fibers in preparation for spinning) of wool in their homes.

The English textile trade was closely tied to Antwerp, where workers dyed English cloth. Sir Thomas Gresham, a sixteenth-century entrepreneur, became England's representative in the bustling river port. Wining and dining the city's merchants and serving as a royal ambassador, he so enhanced the reputation of English merchants that they could operate on credit, no small achievement in the sixteenth century. At home, he convinced the government to end special privileges accorded the Hanseatic

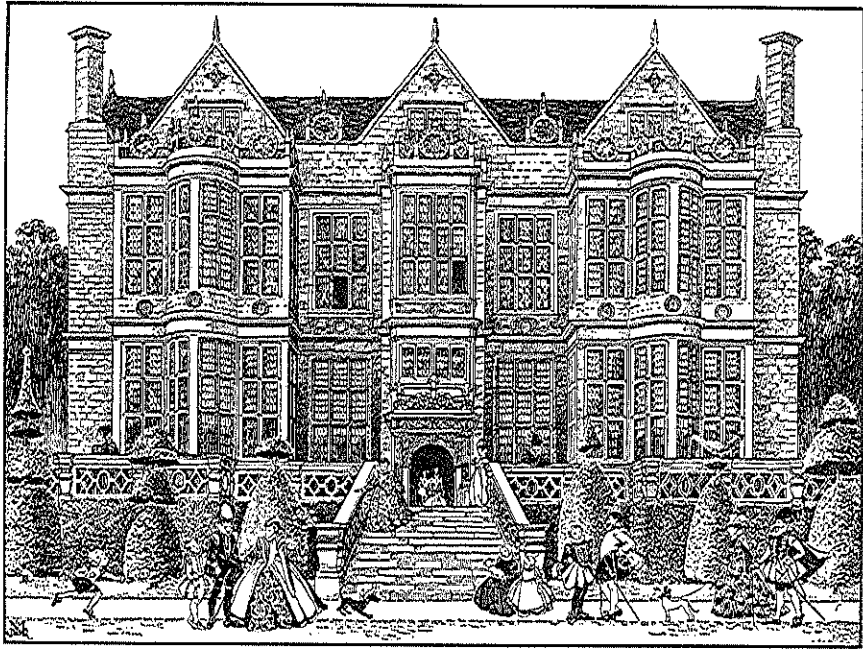
cities of northern Germany and to authorize lucrative English trading monopolies. Gresham's shrewd sense of finance saved the relatively meager royal coffers from bankruptcy on several occasions through the negotiation of timely loans.

Gresham advised the crown to explore the economic possibilities of the Americas. This led to the first concerted English efforts at colonization. Far more than Spanish colonialism, English overseas ventures were undertaken with commercial profits in mind. When the Spanish, hoping to crush the Dutch rebellion that began against their rule in 1566, closed the Scheldt River, English merchants responded by seeking new, more distant outlets for trade across the oceans. From 1577 to 1580, Sir Francis Drake (1540–1596), an explorer and privateer, sailed around Cape Horn in his search for a passage that would permit commercial ties with Asia. Sir Walter Raleigh (1554–1618), a Renaissance scholar, poet, historian, and explorer, said of Drake, "A single purpose animates all his exploits and the chart of his movements is like a cord laced and knotted round the throat of the Spanish monarchy."

English Society in the Tudor Period

English society under the Tudors reflected what a churchman writing in 1577 called "degrees of people," that is, sharply defined social groups. Contemporaries sometimes simplified English social structure by dividing people into the ranks of "gentlemen," "the middling sort," and "the poor." Ownership of land in the form of estates—inherited or acquired—conferred status, or "gentility," in England. All nobles (that is, with a noble title passed on by inheritance) were gentry, but the vast majority of gentry were not titled nobles or peers in the House of Lords. Gentry status came from the ownership of land, and gentry dominated the House of Commons. In exchange for military service, the crown granted titles that were inherited by the eldest son.

The nobility and gentry dominated England for more than the next three centuries from their country manors that commanded the surrounding countryside. Ordinary people addressed the nobleman as "your lordship" and the wealthy gentleman as "sir"; poor women curtsied to them as a mark of respect. Village bells were rung in their honor when they passed through. Wealthy landowners mediated in village disputes and provided some charity in exchange for deference. (One man of means chatted with "his people" in the street: "I asked a poor woman how many children she had. She answered 'Six.' 'Here,' I said, 'is a sixpence for them.' 'No, sir,' she said proudly, not realizing the gentleman was offering a gift, 'I will not sell my children.'") The education of gentlemen at Oxford and Cambridge Universities or through private tutoring helped shape common cultural values and social homogeneity among what was increasingly becoming a national elite.



An Elizabethan country house, late sixteenth century.

Yeomen stood beneath the gentry on the social ladder, but they could move up if they were able to purchase and maintain large estates, and they could vote in parliamentary elections.

Within the upper reaches of the "middling sort" were men considered "of sufficiency," even if they were not lords or gentlemen. They were believed by virtue of steady income to be worthy of assuming some kind of public responsibility. England's precocious economic boom in the sixteenth century increased the wealth and status of merchants and manufacturers. Wealthy merchants and artisans from the guilds served on town councils, perpetuating their influence from generation to generation.

Lower on the social scale were smallholders, farmers who owned just enough land to get by ("husbandmen"), poor clergymen depending for survival upon small fees rendered for their services, and ordinary craftsmen. The majority of the population owned neither land nor skills, and thus lay at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Most laboring families lived in rented one-room cottages. Cottagers, employed as farmhands but also often employed as spinners, weavers, carders, or nail makers, lived on bread, cheese, lard, soup, beer, and garden greens, occasionally supplemented by harvest-time feasts provided by their employers. Farm servants lived in Spartan accommodations. In London and smaller towns, the urban poor struggled to survive

as common laborers, porters, and sweepers, or in other menial occupations, living in squalor in whatever pitiful lodgings they could afford, or, for many, living without shelter.

During the sixteenth century, the rich got richer—and lived that way, dressing and eating differently from the poor. Responding to complaints that “a Babylon of confusion” might blur class lines because anyone with money could purchase the most elegant clothing, Parliament had earlier in the century decreed that only dukes, earls, and barons could wear sable cloth woven of gold and embroidered with gold and silver. Ben Jonson (1572–1637), author of scurrilous satires on London life, wrote that to become recognized as a gentleman, a man had to go to London, “where at your first appearance ’twere good you turned four or five hundred acres of your best land into two or three trunks of apparel.”

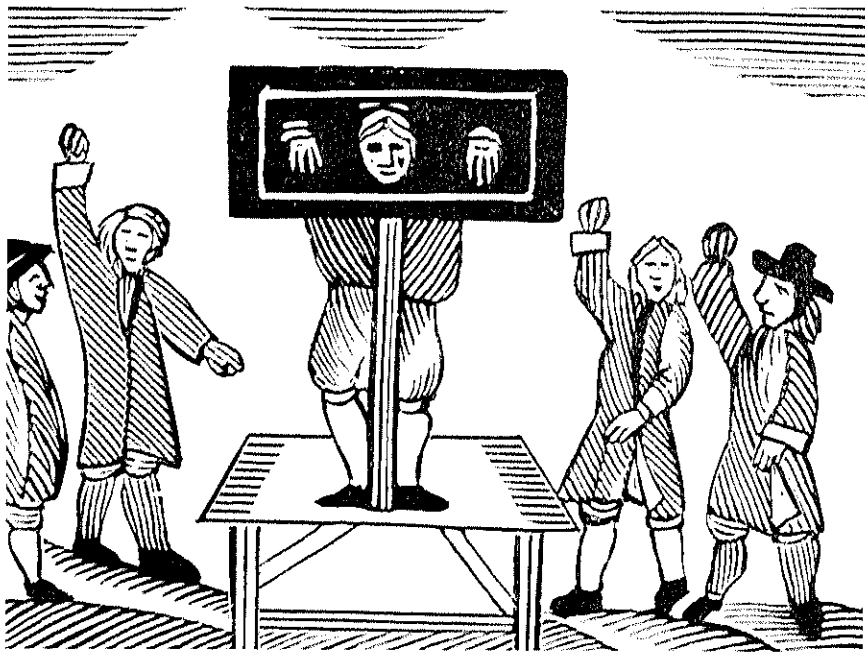
Cardinal Wolsey had earlier attempted to moderate the dietary excesses of wealthy people, including the high clergy. Copying sumptuary regulations that could be found throughout Europe since the Middle Ages, he specified the number of separate dinner courses that people of various ranks might consume, with the largest number—nine—reserved for cardinals like himself. The poor, however, ate no such meals. Soaring food and lodging prices sapped the meager earnings of craftsmen, landless cottagers, rural laborers, and unskilled workers.

There was, to be sure, some degree of social mobility in Tudor England as new economic opportunities brought greater prosperity to gentry, yeomen, merchants, and manufacturers. Some yeomen achieved gentry status. The interests and lifestyles of the middling sort gradually moved closer to those of gentlemen and their families. Some apprentices became independent masters within their trades. But social advancement remained relatively rare among the poor, whose numbers were rapidly expanding along with their impoverishment.

The Quest for Public Order

After almost a century of inflation accentuated by a rising population, harvest failures in the 1590s brought the period of economic expansion to an abrupt halt in England. Never had there seemed to be so many poor and hungry people on the roads, dressed in rags, sleeping in fields, searching for wild berries or edible roots, and begging, just trying to get by. “They lie in the streets,” one man of means observed, “and are permitted to die like dogs or beasts without any mercy or compassion showed them at all.”

Ordinary people sometimes took matters into their own hands. Food riots spread throughout much of England, as the poor seized grain and sold it at what they considered a reasonable price. Women usually made up the majority of participants in the food riots because it fell to them to try to make ends meet at the market. Such disturbances increased the resolve of the state to maintain order at all costs.



Punishing a man by exposing him at a pillory, sixteenth-century England.

The prosecution of serious crimes increased rapidly during Elizabeth's reign, peaking between 1590 and 1620. Vagrancy was the most prevalent of these offenses, as people took to the road in search of food. Vagrants were arrested and placed in stocks for three days, before being sent home. Thefts rose in number and audacity. A contemporary estimated that there were twenty-three different categories of thieves and swindlers, including "hookers," who snatched linen and clothes with a long pole from windows, "priggers of prancers" (horse thieves), and "Abraham men," who "feign themselves to be mad." The theft of goods worth more than twelve shillings could bring the death penalty, but more often offenders were publicly whipped, branded, mutilated by having an ear cut off, or sent to serve as oarsmen in the galley ships. Women were often treated more harshly than men, unless they were pregnant. Although only about 10 percent of those convicted of capital crimes were actually executed, such punishment was particularly brutal, including slow strangulation by hanging and being slowly crushed to death by weights.

The English upper classes, convinced that most crimes went unpunished, became obsessed with maintaining order, a fact reflected in several of Shakespeare's plays, in which ordinary people appear as potential threats to social order. Many Elizabethans believed that social order depended on the maintenance of social hierarchy and the securing of obedience to the moral authority of government. Thus, the Tudors formulated

a doctrine of obedience to authority, basing their arguments on religious teaching.

Elizabethan literature and drama constantly returned to the theme of a moral law based upon the necessity of social order. In Shakespeare's *The History of Troilus and Cressida*, Ulysses proclaims:

The heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre
Observe degree, priority, and place,
[. . .] But when the planets
In evil mixture to disorder wander,
What plagues and what portents, what mutiny!
[. . .] And hark what discord follows. . . .

Many in the middle and upper classes believed that the slightest offense against the monarchy contained the seeds of rebellion; in 1576, a woman was burned at the stake for saying that Elizabeth was "baseborn and not born to the crown." Fear of disturbances and challenges to authority contributed to the development of a sense of national consciousness of England's elite, just as the defeat of Spain's Armada in 1588 led to pride in being both Protestant and English.

In 1598, Parliament passed the first "poor law," followed by another in 1601. These laws recognized for the first time the principle that the needy ought to receive some sort of assistance from the community in which they live. Justices of the peace, under the supervision of the clergy, were to oversee the distribution of assistance to the poor. The poor laws also specified the establishment of poor houses for the incarceration of the poor who would not or could not work (including the aged, sick, and insane).

The Elizabethan Theater

In 1576, two theaters opened in London, followed by others in a number of provincial towns. Putting aside the repertory of religious allegories and miracle and morality plays that had been staged in royal castles, country manor houses, or entire towns, they staked their survival on their ability to attract audiences that would pay to see actors perform. More than 2,000 different plays were staged in London between 1580 and 1640, mainly romances and dramas. During that period, more than 300 playwrights produced enough work to keep 100 acting companies working in London or touring provincial towns.

The plays of William Shakespeare (1564–1616) reflected uncertainty, ambivalence, and even disillusionment about contemporary English society. He was born in Stratford-on-Avon, where his father made gloves and was able to provide him with a primary school education. Shakespeare moved with his wife to London to become an actor, and in the late 1580s he began to write plays. He found first patronage and then unparalleled



(Left) William Shakespeare (Right) The Globe Theater, London, 1616.

success, angering rivals. Shakespeare became part owner and actor in the Lord Chamberlain's Men, an acting company of the Globe theater, which held an audience of 3,000 and hence was the largest of London's six private theaters. Seats at such theaters cost at least six times more than the cheapest tickets at the public theaters, which included places for the "penny stinkards" who stood in the uncovered pit below the stage.

Audiences shouted for what they liked and hooted at what they did not. Fights were not infrequent, both inside and outside of the theater. The playwright Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593) died in a brawl in an inn under mysterious circumstances; the actor and playwright Ben Jonson killed another actor in a duel. Because of their rowdy reputations, most London theaters stood outside the city walls. London officials sometimes tried to close down the public theaters because they thought that disease spread easily among assembled crowds and because of complaints about profanity and lewdness on stage.

An Emerging Empire of Trade

During the later years of Elizabeth's reign, bitter battles for influence and power within Elizabeth's inner circle belied the appearance of relative harmony. Elizabeth died in 1603, the forty-fifth year of her reign, leaving England a substantially more unified, effectively ruled, and powerful state that had begun to look across the oceans in the interest of expanding trade. Over the next few decades, England slowly began to develop a trading and then settlement empire in North America—as did France—while gradually

extending its influence across other oceans, as well. This increasingly brought England into competition with France, which began to colonize Nouvelle France (now Quebec).

The development of English overseas trade allowed London to replace Antwerp as Europe's leading center of trade. London's Merchant Adventurers competed with Spanish and Portuguese rivals for spices and other products that fetched increasingly handsome prices at home. They traded textiles and other manufactured goods for slaves, gold, and ivory from the African and Brazilian coasts. Above all, West Indian sugar from Barbados entered the English domestic market in lucrative quantities. English merchants traded in India and Indonesia. In 1600, Queen Elizabeth chartered the East India Company with the goal of competing with Dutch traders.

To compete with the Spanish, who already had a colonial empire that stretched several thousand miles from what is now the southern United States to Tierra del Fuego at the southern tip of South America, Raleigh sought to establish a colony in Virginia between 1584 and 1587. Despite the failure of a first settlement on Roanoke Island, a permanent colony finally succeeded at Jamestown in Virginia, a full century after Spain took possession of its colonies in Mexico and Latin America. Tobacco began to reach England in the first decades of the seventeenth century. Tobacco was, to an extent, the equivalent of what silver was to the Spanish Empire, because of its great role in the economic development of the English colonies. Whereas the Spanish arrived in the Americas as conquerors, the English came intent on developing trade. Gradually, the English began to arrive in North America as permanent settlers. The Virginia Company, a joint-stock company, received in 1606 a royal charter to settle the region of Chesapeake Bay. The Virginia Company brought the first slaves to North America ten years later, although it was not until late in the century that a full slave system emerged. In 1625 the English throne proclaimed Virginia part of "Our Royal Empire." The Puritan settlement in Plymouth followed in 1620, and the Massachusetts Bay Company received its charter in 1629. Unlike the case of Spain, where colonization followed the impulse of a strongly centralized state and the Roman Catholic Church, English colonies reflected the Reformation, as Protestants, including Protestant dissidents like the Puritans, led the way as they sought religious freedom for themselves. In contrast to the Spanish Empire, English America remained extremely rural, despite the slow growth of Boston and New York (6,000 residents and 4,500, respectively, in 1692, at a time when Mexico City already boasted more than 100,000 people). The rising English population encouraged more emigrants to the New World, despite the high cost of the difficult trip across the Atlantic. In the developing colonies, settlers moved westward to take available land, pushing Native Americans farther back. Disease, along with guns, helped them. John Winthrop, the governor of Massachusetts, noted in 1634, "For the natives, they are all near dead of the smallpox, so as the Lord hath cleared our title to what we possess."



The English arrive in what would become Virginia.

Unlike that of the Spanish Empire's colonies in the Americas, the absorption of the emerging colonies of North America into what became an English and then a British Empire (following England's formal union with Scotland as Great Britain in 1707) proceeded at a much slower and unpredictable pace, following the vicissitudes of trans-Atlantic trade instead of conquest and tight incorporation into England. The number of ships that went back and forth between England and the American colonies doubled to more than 1,000 per year between the 1680s and the 1730s, a round-trip voyage of 100 days under the best of circumstances. There was no English equivalent of the Council of the Indies, which oversaw the Spanish Empire in the Americas. In England's North American colonies, administrative institutions, representative assemblies—eight of which had been established by 1640—and judicial systems developed at their own pace without a phalanx of royal officials. The local administration of the English colonies continued to be influenced by regional differences, without the centralized distribution of resources that characterized the Spanish Empire. A sense of political participation developed in the English colonies, at least among men of property. With this went the growing sense that the colonies were a place of liberty, as many colonists arrived seeking religious freedom. Tensions were almost inevitable between the colonies, with their emerging sense of liberty and separateness, and Britain, which tried to extract more revenues from the colonies (see Chapter 11).

Again in contrast to Spain, which developed an empire marked by the firm alliance of Church altar and an authoritarian throne, the English felt less of a mission to bring Christianity to indigenous peoples. Moreover, unlike Catholicism in the case of the Spanish Empire, the established English religion, Anglicanism, was just one religion among others in the English colonies. By 1675, only an estimated 2,500 Native Americans had been converted to Christianity. In the Spanish Empire, many colonists undertook inter-ethnic marriages and thus helped bring about a considerable mixed population, allowing social mobility for a select few. In contrast, English settlers from the beginning sought to exclude and push back the indigenous population. Fearful of cultural mixing and of those they continued to consider "savages," most of whom showed no interest in assimilation, the settlers drove them farther west.

THE DECLINE OF SPAIN

The "decline" of the overstretched Spanish Empire was first noted in 1600. Had the Spain of the Catholic kings fallen from God's favor? Castilians themselves still regarded Spain as a haven of peace and prosperity compared to the rest of Europe, which was wracked by religious wars.

The Dutch Revolt

The decline of Spanish power began with the Dutch revolt. In the Netherlands, Dutch nobles and officials resented higher taxes imposed by the Spanish crown. Above all, many Dutch were angered by the Spanish king's attempt to promote the Catholic Reformation by imposing the Inquisition in a land where most people were now Calvinists. In the early 1560s, resistance first began against the presence of Spanish garrisons.

In 1567, Philip II appointed the duke of Alba (1507–1582) to restore order in the north with 10,000 Spanish troops. The ruthless Castilian ordered the execution of prominent Calvinist nobles on the central square of Brussels, established military courts, imposed heavy new taxes, and virtually destroyed self-government in the Netherlands. But Alba's reign of terror as governor also helped transform the resistance of Dutch nobles and officials, led by William of Orange (1533–1584), into a national revolt.

In the Southern Netherlands (Belgium), Alba's Council of Troubles, known to the Dutch as the "Council of Blood," executed thousands of people from 1567 to 1573. In 1572, rebellion became full-fledged insurrection. Spanish troops dominated on land, but Dutch ships controlled the seas. When a Spanish army undertook a siege of Leiden, southwest of Amsterdam, the people of the town opened the dikes, and Dutch ships sailed over the rushing waters to drive the Spaniards away. But Spanish victories

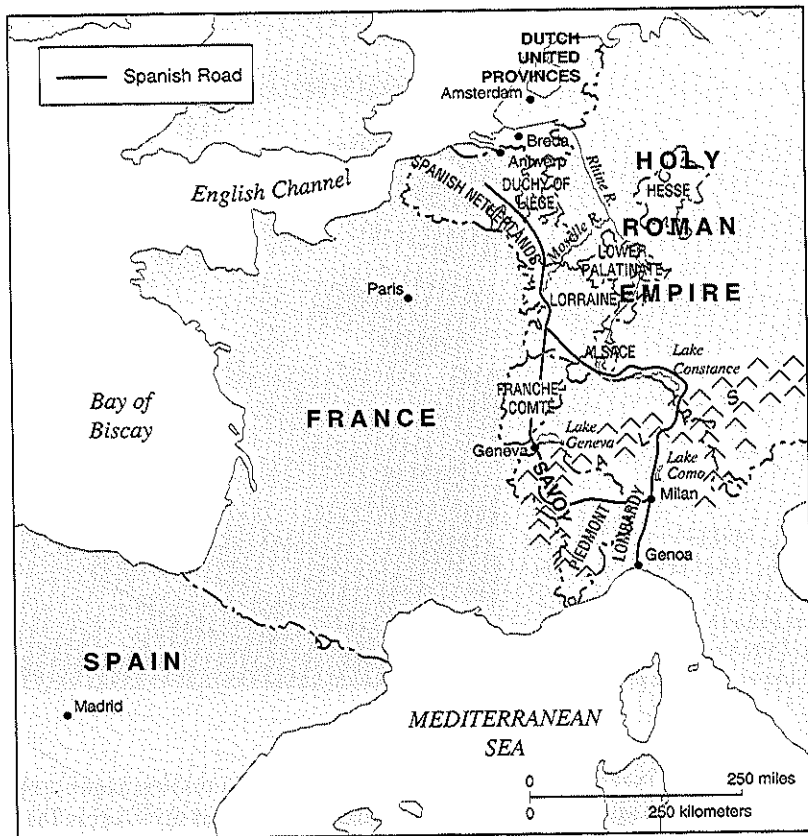
Prince William of Orange leading the revolt in the Netherlands against higher taxes from the Spanish crown. The Dutch revolt signified the decline of Spanish power.



in the Southern Netherlands followed. There Catholic nobles began to have second thoughts about continuing a struggle launched by Dutch Protestants. They detached the southern provinces from the rebellious federation. In 1579, the Dutch provinces formed the Union of Utrecht, and two years later they declared their independence from Spain as the Dutch United Provinces.

For the moment, Spain, which was also at war against France, could supply its armies because Alba's armies had recaptured some of the Southern Netherlands, while Philip II maintained peace with England. As the Dutch revolt wore on, however, the problems of fighting a war a thousand miles away plagued the Spanish king. Military contractors or entrepreneurs recruited mercenaries; Italians, Burgundians, Germans, and Walloons made up much of the Spanish army.

Spanish routes for troops, supplies, and bullion to the Netherlands had to be maintained through a combination of diplomatic charm, cunning, and coercion. As allegiances and the fortunes of war eliminated first the Palatinate and then Alsace and Lorraine as routes through which armies could pass, the Spanish forged the "Spanish Road" as a military corridor (see Map 5.3). It began in Genoa, went overland across the Alps, and then passed through Lombardy and Piedmont, Geneva, Franche-Comté, Lorraine and,



MAP 5.3 THE SPANISH ROAD The route taken by the Spanish armies, supplies, and money to the Netherlands was long and difficult, as it passed through mountainous terrain and many states.

finally, the duchy of Liège, with Spanish agents assuring supplies along the way.

Spain's acute problems of recruiting and supply were exacerbated by dubious efforts to save money—for instance, charging sharpshooters for powder and shot. The army's guarantee to carry out the written wills made by soldiers also seems to have been a curiously self-defeating approach to inspiring confidence. Desertions and mutinies—the largest involving non-Spanish troops—occurred with ever more frequency as troops demanded payment of back wages, better and more regular food, and decent medical care. By 1577, the Spanish army in the Netherlands, unpaid for months, had dwindled in size from 60,000 to no more than 8,000 men.

Throughout the long war, the superior Dutch fleet kept the Spanish ships in port. The ships of "sea beggars," as they were called, harassed Spanish ships. The English navy, allied with the Dutch in 1586, controlled the English

Channel. When the Spanish fleet sailed north in 1588, the result was the disastrous defeat of the Armada. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Dutch gradually fell back behind protective town fortifications and natural barriers formed by rivers. The war became a series of long Spanish sieges against frontier towns defended by brick fortifications, bastions, and moats—a defensive system that had its origins with the Italian city-states. With the defense having a marked advantage, towns could be conquered only by being starved out.

France withdrew from the war in 1598, and England withdrew six years later. A truce between the Spanish and the Dutch, signed in 1609, lapsed in 1621. In Holland the “war party” won the upper hand. Led by Maurice of Nassau (1567–1625), the son of William of Orange, who had been assassinated in 1584, the war party appealed to Calvinist religious orthodoxy by calling for a crusade against Catholicism that would also free the Southern Netherlands from Spanish rule. Army officers and merchant traders wanted to keep the struggle against Spain going as long as possible. It dragged on, draining the Spanish economy.

Economic Decline

Economic decline—above all, that of Castile in the middle decades of the seventeenth century—underlay Spain’s fall from a position of European domination. But decline is, of course, relative. Spain remained an important state. Yet its population, which had risen to well over 6 million people during the last half of the sixteenth century, fell by almost a quarter to about 5.2 million by the middle of the seventeenth century, as harvest failures, plague, smallpox, war, and emigration took their tolls.

The “price revolution,” the sharp rise in inflation during the sixteenth century in Europe, may well have affected Spain less than some parts of northern Europe, but it still had adverse effects on the Spanish monarchy. Gold and silver from the Americas accelerated inflation by increasing the supply of money, as did royal monetary policies of currency debasement. The monarchy, which had declared bankruptcy in 1557, suspended payments in 1575, and again in 1596, renegotiating loans at more favorable rates. From 1568 to 1598, Spain had five times the military expenditures of the Dutch, English, and French combined. The economy slipped into stagnation. To one noble it already seemed that “the ship is sinking.”

Forced to borrow money from foreign bankers at disadvantageous interest rates, the Spanish state attempted to find new sources of revenue. To raise funds, the crown imposed a tithe, or assessment of a tenth of the most valuable piece of real estate in each parish, and in 1590 the Castilian Cortes agreed to an extraordinary tax assessed on towns. An excise (sales) tax was imposed on consumption. This undermined the economy by encouraging the middle class to abandon business in favor of the acquisition of perpetual privileges—and thus tax exemptions—as they obtained noble status.

The monarchy's massive expulsion of the Moriscos in 1609 proved counter-productive. The king succumbed to pressure from the Catholic Church and from wealthy families eager to seize Moorish land. The region of Valencia lost one-third of its population, including many skilled craftsmen and farmers.

Nobles added the lands of indebted peasants to their large estates (*latifundia*), but they showed little interest in increasing the productivity of their land, in contrast to their English counterparts. They turned fields into pastureland or simply left them untended. Farmers were hampered by a state-imposed fixed maximum for grain prices, which discouraged ambitious agricultural initiatives. Spain became dependent on imported grain. Royal policies also favored sheepherding over farming—because it was easier to collect taxes on sheep than on agricultural produce. But fine woolens manufacturing suffered from competition with foreign textile imports, especially lighter cloth brought from France and the Netherlands.

“Conquered by you, the New World has conquered you in turn, and has weakened and exhausted your ancient vigor,” a Flemish scholar wrote a friend in Spain. The Spanish colonies themselves became a financial drain on the crown because of the cost of administering and defending them. The flow of Latin American silver, which had paid less than a quarter of the crown's colonial and military expenses, slowed to a trickle beginning in the 1620s. Spain had never really developed commerce with the empire to the same extent as the English, who had made trade the basis of their maritime empire, enormously developing the colonial market. In the Spanish Empire, the market for Spanish goods, already limited by the poverty of the colonies, shrank with the precipitous decline in the Indian population (caused, above all, by disease; see Chapter 1). Unlike in the English colonies, emigration to the New World from Spain had slowed to a trickle by the early eighteenth century, in part because economic opportunities in Spanish-held territories were relatively limited. This was compounded by the prohibition of non-Spanish migration to Spain's American colonies. The colonies had also developed their own basic agricultural and artisanal production and relied far less on Spanish goods. The Atlantic ports of northern Castile suffered competition not only from Seville and Cádiz, but from Spain's own colonies, and above all, from England and the Netherlands.

Although the burden of taxes in Castile increased by four times between 1570 and 1670, the Spanish crown proved less efficient in collecting taxes than the monarchs of France and England. Increased taxes on the poor generated more discontent than income. Spain's Italian subjects resisted contributing money for distant wars that did not concern them. No more tax income came to Spain from the Netherlands.

Contemporary Spaniards lapsed into a morose acceptance of decline. The novelist Miguel de Cervantes (1547–1616) had fought and been wounded



El Greco's *Burial of the Count Orgaz*, 1586.

with the king's armies at the Battle of Lepanto (1571). Several years later, he was captured by Turkish pirates and spent five years as a slave before managing to return to Spain. *Don Quixote* (1605–1615) is on one level a humorous tale of a zany noble intent on bringing true chivalry back to Spain, accompanied by his sensible, subservient squire, Sancho Panza. On a deeper level, however, it is the story of national disillusionment in the face of perceived national decline. The dramatist Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600–1681) portrayed in his plays the floundering Spanish aristocracy struggling to preserve its honor. Nobles and churchmen, the two pillars of Spain, purchased the paintings of the increasingly gloomy Greek-born artist El Greco (1541–1614). His *Burial of the Count Orgaz* (1586) shows figures gazing up at a vision of celestial glory, the splendor of which is heightened by the dismal scenes below them on earth.

An Empire Spread Too Thin

Spain's mounting economic problems were exacerbated by the fact that the empire's interests were spread so widely, not only in Europe, but across the seas. Philip IV (1605–1665), who succeeded to the throne in 1621, was intelligent and had a keen interest in the arts, but he was stubborn. He chose

as his chief adviser Gaspar de Guzmán, the duke of Olivares (1587–1645), an Andalusian noble whose family had, like Spain itself, suffered reverses. The short, fiery, and increasingly obese Olivares sketched ambitious plans to shape the rebirth of Spanish might. Confronted with the economic strength of the Dutch rebels, as well as that of the English, Olivares sensed that Spain could not remain a power without a marked economic resurgence. "We must devote all our efforts," he had written, "to turning Spaniards into merchants," like the English. The Count Duke, as he was called, mastered his master, convincing the indolent king that only hard work and reform could restore the glories of the not-so-distant past. He would tutor the king, whose chamber pot he once ceremoniously kissed, in the fine art of monarchy.

The Count Duke espoused the growth of monarchical power and state centralization. His motto "one king, one law, one money" generated resistance, in the latter case because of the by then notorious instability of the Castilian currency. Olivares sought to subject all of Spain to the laws and royal administration of Castile, promising the king that, if he did so, he would become the most powerful prince in the world.

Olivares wanted to force Dutch capitulation to restore the monarchy's reputation, afraid that the Dutch rebellion might begin a chain reaction that would destroy the empire. He persuaded the king to allow the truce with the Dutch to lapse in 1621, thus necessitating massive expenses for land and sea warfare. To preserve the "Spanish Road," Olivares sought to bolster, at great expense, Spanish interests in northern Italy and in Austria. But France cut the Spanish supply routes in Savoy in 1622 and then in Alsace nine years later. Intermittent hostilities with France lasted from 1628 to 1631.

Spain could now ill afford such conflicts. In 1628, Dutch pirates captured a Spanish fleet loaded with silver. This enormous loss made it imperative that the crown find new resources with which to wage war. But for the first time, Castile's monarchs could not establish credit with foreign investors. Increased taxation, the flotation of short-term loans through bonds, the sale of yet more privileges, and the imposition of new financial obligations on Aragon and the Italian territories all proved inadequate to the task of financing expensive wars.

Its interests gravely overextended, Spain's position weakened. English ships began to nip at its imperial interests in the Americas. Dutch warships took on the proud Spanish galleons in the West Indies. Three decades of intermittent warfare with France began in 1635, as the Thirty Years' War (see Chapter 4) became a struggle between competing dynasties. As more and more bullion from the Americas had to be diverted to pay military expenses in the Netherlands and Italy, the monarchy demanded new contributions from Catalonia and Portugal (which had been merged with Spain in 1580), as Spain had assumed the expensive and ultimately extremely damaging responsibility for protecting Portuguese shipping around the world. Tumultuous tax riots broke out in Portugal, where the upper classes resisted Spanish authority.

Olivares's decision to demand more taxes from Catalonia proved fateful. Faced with resistance, he ordered the arrest of several Catalan leaders. Catalan nobles put aside their differences, and a full-scale revolt against Castilian rule began in 1640. Catalan and French forces together defeated the Spanish army. A year later, Andalusian nobles were foiled in a plot to create an independent kingdom there. Nobles in Madrid hatched plots against Olivares. Portugal reasserted its independence in 1640. Three years later, Philip packed off the despondent Olivares into exile.

However, the illusion of Don Quixote was maintained—that the restoration of traditional aristocratic and ecclesiastical values would restore Spanish power and prestige. Olivares established two court academies intended to train young nobles in the art of government. Heeding the advice of churchmen, he censored the theater and books, prohibiting certain kinds of fancy clothing and long hair. Over the long run, Spanish rulers weakened parliamentary traditions. Soon the Cortes was convoked only on ceremonial occasions. The crown continued to extend its reach and solidify its authority against possible provincial rebellions. In Catalonia, Barcelona surrendered to royal troops in 1652. Catalan nobles accepted the supremacy of the crown in exchange for an affirmation of social hierarchy and royal protection against ordinary Catalans who resented their privileges. The Aragonese nobles, too, accepted this compromise.

Ironically, given the intense perception of Spanish decline, the last years of Philip IV and the reign of his pathetic successor, Charles II (ruled 1665–1700), sustained a period of great cultural accomplishment in the arts and literature. But this, too, may have been generated by the prevailing mood of introspection. Olivares put dramatists and a small host of other writers to work in the name of glorifying the monarchy and imparting a sense of purpose that he hoped would revive Spain. Philip IV added more than 2,000 canvases to what already was a rich royal art collection, including many by Italian masters. He covered the palace walls with grandiose paintings of battle scenes. Diego Velázquez (1599–1660), the court painter, undertook forty somber portraits of the vain king, a commentary on the monarchy's fading glory and disillusionment.



King Philip IV of Spain.

In the meantime, the Dutch rebels, aided by increased commercial prosperity, had fought the Spanish armies to a draw. The Treaty of Münster, which was part of the Westphalia settlement of 1648 that ended the Thirty Years' War, officially recognized Dutch independence after a struggle that had lasted three-quarters of a century. The provinces of the Southern Netherlands, which were overwhelmingly Catholic, remained a Habsburg possession.

The Spanish monarchy, overstretched by its vast empire in the Americas, had not learned that it could not fight effectively on a variety of fronts. In contrast, the French monarchy was concentrating its efforts in Italy, for the moment realizing the wisdom of fighting on one front at a time. Thus, subsequent Spanish victories in the north against French armies were not enough, for when the French turned their attention to Spain, they held their own. The Treaty of the Pyrenees, signed between France and Spain in 1659, established the border between these countries that has lasted, with only a few minor changes, until this day. Spain also gave up Milan to Austria, and Naples and Sicily to the Italian Bourbon dynasty. The Portuguese, aided by the English, turned back several halfhearted invasions by Spanish armies, and in 1668 Spain recognized Portugal's independence. Ten years later, France occupied the Franche-Comté, the last major Spanish holding in northern Europe. By 1680, when the depression that had lasted almost a century ended, Spain was no longer a great power. This was because of agricultural and manufacturing decline, to be sure, but, above all, because the Spanish crown had overreached its ability to maintain its vast and distant empire.

CONCLUSION

The development of trade across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas was part of European economic expansion during the sixteenth century. Following the union of the crowns of Castile and Aragon, Spain grew into a great power. Philip II expanded the Spanish Empire, which, in the Americas stretched from what is now the southwestern United States to the southern tip of Latin America, and in Europe included the Netherlands and several Italian states. In England, the Tudor monarchy overcame the country's religious divisions in the wake of the English Reformation to strengthen its authority. In this, it resembled the ruling Valois dynasty of France, another "new monarchy" that had enhanced its reach, efficiency, and prestige. Burgeoning trade, manufacturing, and agriculture in the Elizabethan Age underlay England's growing prosperity, even as social polarization, reflected in the crises of the 1590s, became more apparent.

The surprising English naval defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 symbolized not only the rise of England but in some ways anticipated the decline of Spanish power. Spain's rulers had expanded their vast empire and imper-

ial interests beyond the ability of the state to sustain them. When silver from the Americas slowed to a trickle, Spain's own limited natural resources and inability to collect taxes efficiently, combined with demographic stagnation that began early in the seventeenth century, as well as, arguably, resistance from Aragon and Catalonia, prevented a revival of Spanish preeminence. The long revolt of the Netherlands ended with recognition of Dutch independence in 1648. That the Dutch Republic and England, two trading nations, had emerged as European powers reflected the shift of economic primacy to northwestern Europe.

ENGLAND AND THE DUTCH REPUBLIC IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY



England and the Dutch Republic were anomalies in the seventeenth century. At a time when aggressive European monarchs were forging absolute states (see Chapter 7), these two seafaring, trading nations maintained representative governments.

The Stuart monarchs' flirtation with absolutism in England brought bitter discord, resistance, and civil war. In the Dutch Republic, which had earned its independence in 1648 after a long war against Spanish absolute rule, the prosperous merchants who dominated the economic and political life of the country brushed aside the absolutist challenge of the House of Orange, which wanted to establish a hereditary monarchy.

In both England and the Netherlands, religious divisions accentuated the struggle between absolutism and constitutionalism. Both the protracted revolt of the largely Protestant Dutch against Catholic Spain and the English Civil War echoed the religious struggles between Catholics and Protestants during the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) in Central Europe (see Chapter 4). The Dutch had risen up in open rebellion in 1566 in part because the Spanish Habsburgs attempted to impose the Catholic Inquisition on what had become a Protestant country. In England, Kings James I and Charles I attempted to return the English Church to the elaborate rituals that many people associated with Catholicism, thereby pitting the monarchy against Parliament. This constitutional crisis led to the defeat and execution of Charles I in 1649, the fall of the monarchy, and in 1688, to the "Glorious Revolution," which brought King William III and Queen Mary to the throne. Parliament, which historically represented landed interests, suc-