

# The English Revolutions in the 17th Century

## 1. The Previous History

- 1534 Act of Appeals: King is the head of the Anglican Church → official enforcement of reformation → King decides the religious confession
- Elizabeth I. (daughter of Henry VIII) reforms the Anglican Bishop Church → also Protestant movements → formation of the groups of Presbyterians (Scotland) and Puritans (England) who want to cleanse the church of all Catholic traditions) → Elizabeth tried to compromise: free choice of confession
- In 1603 the royal family of The Stuarts took over the throne (of the three Kingdoms England, Scotland, Ireland): James I. and Charles I. (both Catholic)
- → arguments between the Puritans and Charles I. and William Laud (archbishop of Canterbury) who both were supporting the Catholic church, traditional values and reconciliation with Rome (and also taking part in the hugenot evictions in France) → Protestants (Puritans) feared another prohibition of their belief
- beginning of the emigration process to Northern America and also India (East India Company founded in 1600)- also because of religious reasons
- inflation and loss of the people's ability to pay taxes → small revenues
- Charles I. led war against Spain and France (to extend the economic advantage in the North Sea, Mediterranean Sea and the Caribbean) → need of money
- The Stuarts had always had serious financial problems (because of the war, inflation) → always dependent on the Parliament to raise money for him
- He asked the Parliament to raise money for the Spanish war → as they rejected, he dissolved his First Parliament in 1625
- Petition of Right in 1628 set by the third parliament: serious decrease of the King's power → no taxes without the consent of the Parliament → directly dependent! → Charles thought he could make them raise money if he accepted
- But instead: the House of Commons (especially Sir John Eliot and John Pym) complained about his orientation to Catholicism
  - a Re-Catholization and the related building of an absolute monarchy was widely feared in Parliament and population
- In 1629 Charles dissolved the Parliament and started his "Personal Rule" or "Eleven Year Tyranny"
- → almost absolutism: no control by the Parliament, his power is not limited, he doesn't stand inside law

- Further he turned ship money (once a tax for the exceptional case of danger) into a regular tax → many people considered this as a contradiction to the Petition of Rights and developed an opinion of rebellion
- Imprisonments and convictions of many Puritan preachers and followers → also religious persecutions

## 2. The English Revolution (1640-1660)

- In order to bring Ireland, England and Scotland better together (solve economic and social problems!!), archbishop William Laud and Charles I. introduced the new Book of Common Prayer → caused the Bishop Wars against Scotland
- After the English lost the first military conflicts with the Presbyterians (Scottish Protestants), Charles I. needed more financial funds → called the Short Parliament in April 1640 → a direct funding was rejected → Charles dissolved the Parliament
- After he lost the second warlike conflict and all his financial means were exhausted, Charles considered himself forced to call the Long Parliament → it was started in November 1640
- Charles I. was now dependent on the Parliament because it was his only chance to keep his leadership upright → the Parliament was now crucial for the Revolution (and it could not be dissolved without its own approval anymore)
- With the “Nineteen Propositions” the Parliament introduced several important reforms, including:
  - The Parliament’s right to raise armies, defence of the country and all foreign policy
  - The abolishment of the Royal Supreme Courts that were used to justify the monarch’s politics → therefore the setup of the High Court of Parliament that now was to debate, resolve and transact all affairs of the Kingdom
  - Strict new laws against Roman Catholics
  - Prohibition of ship money
  - The Triennial Act: the Parliament should be a constant institution of the constitution and was to be called periodically
- Bishops were excluded from the House of Lords in 1642, in 1645 the bishop office was completely abandoned
- 1641: Grand Remonstrance: sovereignty of Parliament, dissolution of the Bishop Church
- Charles I. flees from London

## 2.1 The Civil Wars as Continuation of the Revolution

- The contrary movements between the royal party and Parliament became stronger, a huge part of the English population took part in the conflict on one side (many people found their ideas in the work of Thomas Hobbes)
- The First or Great Civil War (1642-1646)
  - The Parliament was divided into two parties:
    1. The Royalists (2/3 of the House of Lords, 1/3 of the House of Commons) who wanted a reconciliation with the King, the pope in Rome and an organized National Church and the old corporative system (Ständeordnung!!)
    2. The Parliamentary Party who wanted a modern economy, over-sea trade, a sovereign parliament and a Puritan Church → join forces with the Independents (strive for a church and state independent from each other or any institution)
  - First Civil War was won by the parliamentary party with help of Scottish Prebyterian forces and Oliver Cromwell's troupe the Ironsides
  - Afterwards a party built upon mechanics in London- the Levellers- and the Independents joined forces → their common aim: a democratic reorganization
- The Second Civil War 1648 was won by the Independents and their army (separated from the Puritan part of the Parliament)

## 2.2 The Revolution over the revolution

- The victorious, Independent army performed several reforms:
  1. Pride's Purge 1648/49: Thomas Pride ordered troops to occupy the House of Commons and forced them to exclude 150 non-Independent members from Parliament, violently if necessary → the new Parliament was now known as the Rump Parliament and consisted of 50 Independent members only
  2. now standing alone in Parliament, the Independent party put King Charles I on trial because of high treason → public execution in January 1649 → practical consequences
- → the principle that the monarch is included in all law was now really transacted for the first time
- → principle of the sovereignty of the people and their representation in Parliament
- → proclamation of England as a Commonwealth republic
- → movement of Chiliasm: abolishment of monarchy and Jesus Christ as the highest ruler → but: chiliasm increased the conflict between Parliament and army and established the thought of a cleric elite to lead the country

- → graphic: state structure in 1649 after the Independents

## 2.3 Cromwell's Protectorate

- Lord Oliver Cromwell arranged the Act of Navigation: exclusion of Holland from most sea trade → first Dutch War
- Cromwell suspended the Rump Parliament in 1653 violently in order to make it possible to set up a completely new constitution → but because Cromwell recognized that he could not convince the (still existing) parliamentary party of new elections, he instead called the Nominated Assembly or "Barebone's Parliament"- a "parliament of saints"- without elections
- He assumed the title "Lord Protector of England, Scotland and Ireland" in the Instrument of Government → started a virtual dictatorship (although Parliament met regularly)
- Religious toleration of Jews, Protestants and non-Anglican-Protestants but not of Roman Catholics!
- He tried to reign on the basis of a constitution (the Instrument of Government and the Humble Petition and Advice)
- State structure during Cromwell's Protectorate: graphic: (1653)
- →but there were crucial obstacles he could not overcome:
  1. protest of various Parliament members: he had more power than the king
  2. power of the still strong and protesting army
  3. he had no legitimation for his leadership → but he himself was accepted as a leader and corporated with the army → his son and successor Richard Cromwell was in conflict with the army and was finally forced by officer Charles Fleetwood to dissolve the Nominated Assembly and finally resign his office
- Fleetwood recalled the Rump Parliament in 1659 in order to re-build the English Commonwealth and republic
- The Rump Parliament now tried to gain control over the army that was still revolting → Scottish commander-in-chief Monck finally secured the readmission of the Long Parliament members who had been excluded by Pride's Purge → the Long Parliament was back as in 1648 → it was dissolved by its members to have new elections
- the new Parliament met in March 1660 and appointed Charles II. (eldest son of Charles I.) their King
- → constitutional monarchy: The Parliament now was a constant and influential part of the constitution
- → reformed Anglican Church (mostly free of Catholic tradition)
- Jacob II. succeeds the throne in 1685

### 3. The Glorious Revolution (1688-89)

- Also called “Bloodless Revolution”, can be seen as a repetition of the English Revolution
- Dutch stadtholder William of Orange was asked by a couple of English Lords to interfere in the English politics in order to avoid a re-Catholicization of England and an alliance with Louis XIV. provoked by Jacob II.
- William marries Mary (daughter of Jacob II.) → son: William III. of Orange:
- After Jacob II.’s escape to France he is excluded from his office → 1689 William III. of Orange and his wife Mary II. ascend the throne under the condition of accepting the Declaration of Rights (later Bill of Rights) created by the Convention Parliament:
  1. “Checks and Balances” between King, the House of Lords and the House of Commons → sovereignty of the “King in Parliament”
  2. The King is not allowed to enact or abolish any law or tax
  3. Prohibition of a standing army in times of peace and its use without consent of the Parliament
  4. No Catholic may succeed the English throne
  5. in Parliament: freedom of speech, free elections and the right to petition (enacting laws)
  6. Prohibition arrestings and evictions without a reason and cruel an inappropriate punishment
- → The King was no forced to cooperate with the Parliament
- → establishment of a limited or constitutional monarchy
  
- **Conclusions:**
  1. various periods of absolutism, insecurity, almost anarchy
  2. most processes were caused by religious reasons (the English have always feared and rejected Catholicism)
  3. finally: limited monarchy within a constitution similiar to the current of Great Britain