

ECO 2210Y

**Topic No. 36: The 'General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century', c.1620 - c.1740:
The Hobsbawm Thesis and its Critics**

General Readings on the General Crisis:

1. Trevor Aston, ed. Crisis in Europe, 1560-1660: Essays from Past and Present (London, 1965).
 - a) Eric J. Hobsbawm, 'The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century,' pp. 5-58.
 - b) H.R. Trevor-Roper, 'The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century,' pp. 59-96.
 - c) E.H. Kossmann, E.J. Hobsbawm, J.H. Hexter, Roland Mousnier, J.H. Elliott, Lawrence Stone, H.R. Trevor-Roper, 'Symposium: Trevor Roper's 'General Crisis',' pp. 97-116.
2. Eric Hobsbawm, 'The Seventeenth Century in the Development of Capitalism,' Science and Society, 24 (1960), 97-112.
3. Geoffrey Parker and L.M. Smith, eds. The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century (London, 1978). See the following:
 - a) Geoffrey Parker, 'Introduction,' pp. 1-15.
 - b) Niels Steensgaard, 'The Seventeenth-Century Crisis,' pp. 26-56.
 - c) Ivo Schöffer, 'Did Holland's Golden Age Coincide with a Period of Crisis?' pp. 83-109.
 - d) J.J. Elliott, 'Revolution and Continuity in Early Modern Europe,' pp. 110-33.
 - e) Ruggiero Romano, 'Between the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: the Economic Crisis of 1691-22,' pp. 165-225.
 - f) John Eddy, 'The 'Maunder Minimum': Sunspots and Climate in the Reign of Louis XIV,' pp. 226-68.
4. Theodore K. Rabb, The Struggle for Stability in Early Modern Europe (Oxford, 1975), chs. 2-4.
5. Alexandra Liublinskaya, French Absolutism: the Crucial Phase, 1620-1629 (trans. Brian Pearce, Cambridge, 1968). Chapter I: 'The Theory of the General Economic Crisis of the Seventeenth Century,' pp.1-82.
6. Immanuel Wallerstein, 'Y a-t-il une crise du XVIIe siècle?', Annales: E.S.C. XXIV (1979), 126-44; and his The Modern World System, Vol. II: Mercantilism (New York, 1980). Introduction, and chapters 1, 3, and 6.
7. G. Benecke, 'The Thirty Years' War and its Place in the General Crisis of the XVIIth Century,' Journal of European Economic History, 9 (Fall 1980), 491-500.

The Decline of Spain and Italy: Aspects of the 17th Century General Crisis?

1. Earl Hamilton, 'The Decline of Spain,' Economic History Review, 1st ser. 8 (1938), reprinted in E.M. Carus-Wilson, ed., Essays in Economic History, Vol. I (1954), pp. 215-26. A classic.

2. Jaime Vicens Vives, 'The Decline of Spain in the Seventeenth Century' and J. H. Elliott, 'The Decline of Spain,' both in Carlo Cipolla, ed. Economic Decline of Empires (1970), pp. 121-67, 168-95. Elliott's essay is also in T. Aston, ed. Crisis in Europe, 1560 - 1660 (1965), pp. 167 - 93
3. Henry Kamen, 'The Decline of Spain: A Historical Myth,' Past and Present, No. 81 (1978), 24-50.
4. J.T. TePaske and H.S. Klein, 'The Seventeenth-Century Crisis in New Spain,' Past & Present, no. 90 (1981), 116-35. See criticism by Henry Kamen and J. K. Israel, and rejoinder by TePaske and Klein in Past and Present, No. 97 (Nov. 1982), 144-56, 156-61.
5. Michael Weisser, 'The Decline of Castile Revisited: The Case of Toledo,' Journal of European Economic History, 2 (1973), 614-39. See also his 'The Agrarian Depression in Seventeenth-Century Spain,' Journal of Economic History, 42 (1982), 149-62; and 'Rural Crisis and Rural Credit in XVIIth Century Castile,' Journal of European Economic History, 16 (Fall 1987), 297-313.
6. Carlo Cipolla, 'The Economic Decline of Italy,' in his The Economic Decline of Empires (1970), pp. 196-214. Also republished in the following collection by Brian Pullan.
7. Brian Pullan, ed., Crisis and Change in the Venetian Economy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (London, 1968). Also essays by Sella and Pullan (as well as Cipolla).
8. D. Sella, 'Industrial Production in Seventeenth Century Italy: A Re-Appraisal,' Explorations in Economic History, 6 (1969), 235-53.
9. Ruggiero Romano, 'Italy in the Crisis of the Seventeenth Century,' in Peter Earle, ed. Essays in European Economic History (1974), pp. 185-98.
10. Ralph Davis, 'England and the Mediterranean, 1570-1670,' in F.J. Fisher, ed. Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England (1961), pp. 117-37.

QUESTIONS:

1. Discuss the various theses about the 'general crisis of the 17th century.' Compare and contrast the Hobsbawm and Trevor-Roper theses. Is Trevor Roper's thesis primarily political, social, or economic?
2. Explain in particular Hobsbawm's analytical framework: the 'internal contradictions' in the home, colonial, and eastern markets. How did these crises 'bring about their own solutions', in Hobsbawm's view? Which countries or regions gained the most from the 'general crisis' according to Hobsbawm? And why? Which countries do you think gained economically and which ones declined in this era?
3. Do you think that there was a 'general crisis', or a series of economic crises with a secular downswing in the European economy from the early to mid-17th century to the early- to mid-18th century? If so, what regions and sectors of the European economy were primarily affected? If so, were the primary causes endogenous or exogenous to those economies? Were the demographic and monetary features of the European economy in this era causes or consequences of a 'general crisis'?

4. What were the primary causes of the economic declines of Spain and Italy during the 17th century: were the independent phenomena, or important aspects of the 17th-Century General Crisis? How did the two economic declines differ from each other?