UNIT 9
HABSBURG SPAIN

THE REIGN OF CARLOS V
Why was Carlos V (1519-1558) also called Carlos I (1516-1556)?

Carlos became King of Spain in 1516. He was called both Carlos I and Carlos V because he received a vast dynastic inheritance from both sides of his family.

- On his mother’s side, he inherited all the territories brought together by his grandparents, the Catholic Monarchs. He was the ruler of the Crowns of Castilla and Aragón along with their territories in America, Italy and Africa. As King of Spain, he was called Carlos I.

- On his father’s side, he was a member of the Habsburg family. He inherited territories in Germany, the Low Countries, Luxembourg and eastern France. As Carlos V, he became Holy Roman Emperor in 1519.

Early opposition to Carlos V

Carlos was born in Ghent – in present-day Belgium – in 1500 and he couldn’t speak Spanish when he first arrived in Spain in 1517. Carlos was accompanied by Flemish advisers who were given key official positions.

Opposition to high taxation and foreign influence at the court caused unrest in many cities and towns:

- The Revolt of the comuneros broke out in Castilian cities in 1520. The royal army defeated the comuneros at the Battle of Villalar in 1521, and their leaders were executed.

- There was also unrest in Mallorca and Valencia, where the Germanía revolts took place between 1519 and 1523.

Carlos V’s international policies

Carlos V had so many territories across Europe that he became involved in wars and confrontations in many places:

- Against France: He fought against King François I of France for the Duchy of Milan. Carlos V won an important victory at the Battle of Pavia in 1525, but the rivalry with France continued all his lifetime.
- **Against the Turks**: The Ottoman Turks threatened the Mediterranean region and the eastern frontiers of the Holy Roman Empire. Under Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, the Turks failed to take Vienna in 1529 but they still controlled most of the eastern Mediterranean.

- **Against the Protestants**: Carlos V was a strong Catholic supporter, but at first he did little to assist the Church. However, in the 1540s he became influenced by the ideas of the Counter-Reformation. He fought and defeated the German Protestant princes at the **Battle of Mühlberg** (1547). The **Augsburg declaration** (1548) allowed Protestants some religious freedom.

By 1556, Carlos V was in poor health and exhausted. In that year, he abdicated as Holy Roman Emperor in favour of his brother Ferdinand, who received his Austrian territories. His son Felipe became the ruler of the rest of his empire.

**Imperial finances**

Carlos V’s wars were very expensive. He was only able to pay for them by raising taxes throughout his empire. The gold and silver sent from America was another source of income for the Crown.

But the Crown still had to borrow extra money from German and Italian bankers. Rising royal debt was later the cause of serious problems under Carlos’ successors.

**THE REIGN OF FELIPE II**

**The Spanish monarchy of Felipe II (1556-1598)**

Felipe II was the ruler of a great empire, although at the time people only called it a “monarchy”. Unlike his father Carlos V, Felipe II mainly lived in **Spain** and governed from there. Felipe II made Madrid his capital and built a monastery and royal residence at El Escorial, not far from his capital.

Under Felipe II, the monarchy created by the Catholic Monarchs became even more **authoritarian**. The **Cortes** were only called occasionally. The monarch was personally involved in government, which was carried out by powerful committees called Councils. Royal officials were sent to govern in each region.

**Policies in Spain**

Felipe II’s rule in Spain was authoritarian, and sometimes provoked resistance:
The defence of Catholicism: Felipe II fully supported the Counter-Reformation and wanted to keep his territories free of Protestant influence. He used the Inquisition to censor books and arrest people suspected of spreading Protestantism. Spaniards were not allowed to travel abroad or study at foreign universities.

The concept of purity of blood (limpieza de sangre) reflected religious intolerance. High public office was reserved for people who could show that they didn’t have Jewish or Muslim ancestors.

- The revolt of the moriscos broke out in the Alpujarras region in 1568, after Felipe II had forbidden the use of Arabic and traditional clothing. Felipe II defeated this rebellion, and many moriscos were then forced to move away from Granada and live in other regions.

- Unrest in Aragón: Felipe II strengthened his monarchy at the expense of the rights of each kingdom. When an official called Antonio Pérez fled to Aragón to escape royal justice, Felipe II insisted that he should be sent back to Castilla. The Aragonese refused because he was protected by their laws. A revolt broke out, which Felipe defeated and used as an excuse to reduce Aragonese autonomy.

Policies in Europe

Felipe II’s international policies aimed to strengthen his territories and defend Catholicism against the Ottoman Turks and Protestantism. He was widely regarded as the most important monarch in Europe, but not all his policies were successful:

- France: Felipe II defeated the French at the Battle of Saint Quentin (1557), which was followed by the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis (1559). But this rivalry was renewed near the end of his reign.

- The Turkish Empire: Felipe II formed a Holy League with Venice, Genoa and the Papacy. This alliance defeated the Turks at the great sea Battle of Lepanto in 1571, which ended Turkish control of the eastern Mediterranean.

- Portugal: Felipe II claimed the Portuguese throne through his mother, Isabel of Portugal. He had a rival but his victory at the Battle of Alcántara won him recognition as King of Portugal in 1581. After that, his rule over Portuguese territories overseas made his empire even vaster.

- The Netherlands: There was opposition to high taxes, and Calvinism replaced Catholicism in the north. After a period of unrest, the northern provinces (the Netherlands today) declared their independence in 1579 under the name of the United
Provinces. The southern provinces (present-day Belgium and Luxembourg) stayed under Spanish rule. This was the beginning of a long war.

- **England**: Felipe II wanted to bring England back to Catholicism and stop English attacks on Spanish ships. He planned to invade England but his great fleet, the Spanish Armada or **Invincible Armada** was defeated in 1588.

It was very **expensive** to fight all these wars. Felipe II’s income was also reduced by the failing value of American gold and silver. As a consequence, the royal treasury went **bankrupt** and stopped paying its debts several times during his reign.

**THE CONQUEST AND COLONISATION OF AMERICA**

The conquest

Castilla took control of the West Indies in the late 15th and the early 16th centuries. After that, a series of expeditions gradually established Castilian rule in vast territories in America. The Spanish conquests destroyed two great empires, in Mexico and Peru:

- **The conquest of Mexico** was achieved by a small expedition led by **Hernán Cortés**, who landed on the coast of Mexico in 1519. But in fact Cortés victory was only possible because he had the support of native peoples who opposed Aztec rule. After overcoming many difficulties, Cortés defeated the Aztec emperor **Moctezuma** in 1521.

- An expedition led by **Francisco Pizarro** conquered the **Inca Empire** in the Andes. Like Cortés, Pizarro was helped by local tensions. There was a civil war between rivals for the Inca throne just before his arrival. Pizarro’s expedition defeated the Incas at the **Battle of Cajamarca** (1532) when the Inca emperor **Atahualpa** was captured and later executed.

- **Other expeditions**: There were many other expeditions across America, like the expeditions of **Diego de Almagro** and **Pedro de Valdivia** to Chile, and **Jiménez de Quesada**’s conquest of **New Granada**, which is now Colombia.

The colonisation of America

New territories were **colonised** as soon as they were conquered. Peninsular Spaniards want to settle in them. New towns and cities were founded, such as Mexico City, Lima and Bogotá.
In this way, Spanish culture, Christianity and the Castilian language all became firmly established in America. Catholic missions played a key role in spreading Christianity among the native Americans.

**How America was governed**

The conquered territories formed part of the Crown of Castilla. The same institutions that governed Spain were also set up in America.

- In the 16th century, there were two Viceroyalties called New Spain (Mexico and Central America) and Peru (South America). The **Viceroys** who governed these regions reported directly to the King.

- Beneath the Viceroys, **Governors** were in charge of provinces. **City councils**, or *cabildos*, administered municipalities. **Alcaldes mayores** had authority at a local level, while **corregidores**, appointed by the Crown, were in charge in larger cities.

- An **Audiencia** had judicial authority over a large region. For example, the **Audiencia** of Quito covered all the territory of present-day Ecuador.

New institutions were created in peninsular Spain to meet the challenge of ruling a vast empire:

- **The Council of the Indies (Consejo de Indias)** was added to the Councils that advised the monarch. It was the highest authority on American administration and law.

- **A Trade Authority (Casa de la Contratación)** was founded in Sevilla in 1503. This body regulated trade with America and imposed taxes on goods entering Spain. It also controlled emigration.

**ECONOMY AND SOCIETY IN AMERICA**

**The economy**

America sent many of its resources to Spain between the 16th and the 18th centuries. But Spanish territories also developed their own economies and traded with each other:

- **Agriculture and livestock farming**: The agricultural workforce was mainly Indian in the 16th century. Under the *encomienda* system, the Indians were required to live and work on the land of leading Europeans. Spanish farms eventually turned into great estates called *haciendas*. 
Many crops were unknown in America before the Spanish conquest. The Europeans introduced crops such as wheat, the vine, olives and sugar cane. They also brought animals like horses and pigs.

- **Mining**: The mines of Potosí (in the Andes) and Zacatecas (in Mexico) produced huge amounts of silver. The *mita* was a system of forced labour that supplied the Indian workforce for the mines.

  In theory, all the silver mined in America belonged to the Spanish Crown. But in practice, the monarchy granted mining rights in return for receiving its own share.

- **Trade**: This was a monopoly of the Crown, regulated by the Casa de la Contratación. Large fleets of ships left Sevilla to cross the Atlantic.

  Manufactured goods and agricultural products were sent to America from Spain. The ships returned with large amounts of silver and gold. They also brought back items that were completely new in Europe like corn, potatoes, tobacco and cacao (from which chocolate is made).

### Indian decline

There was a dramatic decline in the Indian population of America after the Spanish conquest. This had the following causes:

- **Infectious diseases**, like smallpox and measles, were completely unknown in America so the Indians had no natural resistance. Many died during epidemics.

- **Conditions** were extremely harsh in mines and on plantations.

  Bartolomé de las Casas was a friar who strongly condemned the mistreatment of the American Indians. In 1542 the Crown approved the **New Laws** that decreed the gradual abolition of encomiendas and regulated the treatment of the native population.

### Society

Spanish American society was strongly hierarchical. A person’s social position was determined by their race and wealth:

- **Whites** were the dominant group. They held official positions and acquired wealth from land ownership and commerce. Many important official positions were held by **peninsular Spaniards**. But **creoles**, who were born in America, made up the majority of the white population.

- **Mestizos** were the children of whites and Indians. More men than women emigrated to America, so white men often had children with Indian women. As a result,
mestizos quickly increased in numbers until they became a significant part of the population.

- **Indians** where the largest group but in some tropical areas their numbers declined very rapidly. They were replaced by **black slaves**, who were transported from Africa across the Atlantic. In tropical areas the blacks worked in very harsh conditions on sugar and tobacco plantations.

**THE 17TH CENTURY CRISIS**

**The economy**

The Spanish economy was in difficulty in the 17th century. Wars were very expensive and the burden of taxation increased, especially in the Crown of Castilla.

- There was a severe crisis in **agriculture**. The countryside lost much of its population as a result of epidemics and conscription into the army. Consequently, agricultural production declined.

- **Craftsmanship** was affected by a fall in consumption as well as by competition from cheaper products made in other countries.

- **Trade** declined because economic crisis and war affected Castilian fairs and trade with America.

- The **Royal Treasury** was in difficulties. It needed to raise money to pay for the Court and allow the monarch to fight his wars. At the same time, income fell because silver and gold imports from America declined. The monarchy raised some money by increasing taxes and selling noble titles, but these measures were not very successful.

**Control of trade routes**

After the defeat of its Invincible Armada, the Spanish fleet no longer controlled the Atlantic and it became easier for the English, French and Dutch pirates to attack Spanish ships. Many of these attackers were called privateers, which meant that they were backed by governments. The **privateers** deliberately targeted Spanish treasure ships in the Caribbean or near Spain. Atlantic trade did not actually decline. But as a result of these attacks and tax fraud by merchants much less money entered the Royal Tresaury.
Demography

There had been continuous demographic growth in Spain in the 16th century. But population stopped rising in the 17th century and even declined in the centre and south of the Peninsula. Total population fell from 8.2 million inhabitants in 1600 to 7 million in 1700.

There were several causes: epidemics, wars, emigration to America and the expulsion of the moriscos.

Society

Spanish society was dominated by an aristocratic outlook. It was considered more prestigious to own land than work in commerce, and there was no respect for those who worked with their hands. Unlike north-west Europe, Spain did not have a dynamic bourgeoisie. During the 17th century, many social groups were affected by the economic crisis.

- The nobility grew in numbers because the Crown sold noble titles to raise income. Nobles increased the taxes and obligations to their peasants.
- The clergy also became more numerous. But some people only entered the Church to escape from poverty and hunger.
- The bourgeoisie suffered the effects of the crisis because so many industries were ruined.
- The peasants were also badly affected because of increased taxation, rising debt and the impact of war.

Habsburg Rule in the 17th Century

The Reign of Felipe III (1598-1621)

Felipe II’s great empire was inherited by his son Felipe III. But Felipe III was not as energetic as his father. He left political decisions to a royal favourite, or valido, who governed on his behalf.

- Felipe III’s main favourite was the Duke of Lerma, who was more concerned with his own personal interests than ruling the country.
- The Spanish economy was badly affected by financial problems. In 1607 the government declared itself bankrupt once again. The Duke of Lerma’s most disastrous decision was the expulsion of the moriscos in 1609. The moriscos were a hard-working minority, and the economy was damaged by their departure.
- In foreign affairs, there was a pause in the continuous wars of the previous century. Peace was signed with England in 1604. The Twelve Years’ Truce was signed with the Dutch rebels of the United Provinces (1609).

The reign of Felipe IV (1621-1665)

Felipe IV’s valido, the Count-Duke of Olivares, tried to maintain Spain’s position as the leading power in Europe.

Olivares aimed to reform the Spanish state. Until then the Crown’s income came mainly from the Crown of Castilla, and Olivares tried to make all the kingdoms contribute. He devised a project called the Union of Arms that required all the different territories to make significant military contributions depending on their size.

There was resistance to Olivares’ measures. Cataluña broke out in a revolt in 1640, requesting support from France. The Duke of Braganza declared himself King of Portugal. After a war royal rule was restored in Cataluña in 1652, but Portugal separated definitively from Spain in 1668.

In the Thirty Years’ War, the Spanish defeat in the Battle of Rocroi (1643) was the end of Spain’s reputation as the leading military power in Europe. By the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), which ended the war, Spain recognised the independence of the United Provinces. But war continued with France until 1659.

The reign of Carlos II (1665-1700)

Carlos II was only two years old when he succeeded Felipe IV and his mother ruled as a regent. He was so sick and incapable that the great issue of his reign was who would succeed him. Other European monarchs intrigued to gain control of the Spanish Empire.

Before Carlos II died in 1700 he named Philip of Anjou, a member of the French Bourbon dynasty, as his heir. Philip became Felipe V of Spain, but he was only confirmed as monarch after the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714) in which the Low Countries, England and Austria all supported the rival candidate. Carlos II’s death marked the end of the Spanish Habsburg dynasty.