

Restoration period: A Historical Overview

- Charles II's accession in 1660 ending the period known in Latin as '**Interregnum**'
- The arrival of Kingship ended two decades of Civil Wars across Britain
- Profound hope was restored among people that peace shall be established.
- Yet conflicts in minor measure continued between three kingdoms.
- Radical differences in religious and political affiliations continued.
- It was also a period of colonial expansion.

More facts on Restoration

- In the **Declaration of Breda**(1660) Charles II promised “liberty to tender consciences” (religious toleration)
- **Act of Uniformity** (1662): it required that ministers agree to an **Episcopalian form** of church government, with Bishops running the Church as opposed to a **Presbyterian form** run by the congregations’ membership. It excluded both the radical Protestants and Roman Catholics. Charles II tried to overturn this act, but Parliament made it a law in 1663. Those who refused to accept the act came to be called ‘**Dissenters**’
- The conflicting religious affiliations of these two groups were compounded by the differences between the three kingdoms.
- Ireland had a majority of Roman Catholic population; Scotland had a **Presbyterian** church structure; and England had an **Episcopalian** church structure.
- **The Treaty of Dove**: A secret alliance Charles II made with Louis XIV, the Catholic King of France, for religious toleration and accommodation of Roman Catholics. It sparked off further controversies and conflicts as those that ended his father’s reign and life.

Other developments

- Glorious Revolution (1688)/(The Blood-less Revolution): The overthrow of the Catholic king, James II, who was replaced by his Protestant daughter Mary and her Dutch husband, William.
- Act of Settlement (1701): An act of Parliament of England in 1701 on the question of reservation of the succession to the thrones of England and Ireland to protestants only.
- Accession of George I
- Jacobite Rebellions by supporters of Stuart Monarchy (1689, 1715 and 1745)

All these movements illustrate a repeated pattern of concern over the religion of the King and the relationships between various kingdoms united by the Stuarts. By and large it was a period of political stability.

The Exclusion Crisis

- In 1673, the **Test Act** was passed to exclude Roman Catholics and Dissenting Protestants from government offices except the House of Lords.
- The law required government officials to swear that they believed that no transubstantiation happens during communion at church.
- James I, Duke of York and brother of Charles II, did not comply with the act and he continued to be a staunch Catholic.
- 1670 witnessed various conspiracy acts on the religious future of England.
- **Popish Plot:** It was developed by the Jesuits to bring a Roman Catholic back to the English throne. Massive protests took place in the streets, characterized by 'Pope burnings' (effigies of Pope as many as 200,000 were set ablaze).
- **Exclusion Act:** Anthony Ashley Cooper, the first Earl of Shaftesbury and member of the House of Commons, put forward an act in the parliament in 1679 to ensure that no Catholic ascends the throne of England. Thus the political crises of this period came to be known as the Exclusion Crisis.

Exclusion Crisis ctd.

Earl of Shaftsbury's role in conspiracies

- Three times between 1679 and 1682, Shaftsbury's Whig majority in the Commons passed Exclusion Bills, only to be refused by Charles II
- In 1681, Popish Plot collapsed as its originators confessed their schemes and roles.
- Shaftsbury was accused of treason and was ousted from office. He fled to Holland and died in 1683.
- A few of Shaftsbury's followers made another plot to dethrone Charles II and his brother James and to enthrone Charles' illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth. The plot was aborted and two conspirators were beheaded

James II

- In 1685 Charles II died and it marked the End of Restoration.
- James II, Charles' Catholic brother ascended to the throne of England.
- The new King appointed Catholics to be officers of army in violation of the Test Act of 1673.
- He normalized England's diplomatic relations with Rome.
- **Declaration of Indulgence:** James II made this declaration which suspended all preceding requirements for participation and allegiance to the Church of England. However, It allowed free exercise of religion.
- His toleration proved to be a cover for further expansion of Roman Catholicism in the soil of England.
- His Protestant daughter Mary and her husband William supported the Test Act of 1688.
- James amended his Declaration of Indulgence and required it to be read in every Sunday church service.
- Three bishops did not comply with this declaration and they were tried but acquitted. This testifies the fact that the public sympathy was not on the king's side.

Glorious Revolution (Bloodless Revolution 1688)

- When a son (James Francis Edward) was born to James II, he vowed to bring him up as a Catholic.
- Unlike the Civil Wars and the Exclusion crisis, both the Whigs (Political faction that supported constitutional monarchism) and Tories (defenders of Stuart Kings) were united against the king's arbitrary stand.
- Unlike the Civil wars of 1640s and the Exclusion crisis, this was without much violence or bloodshed, hence the name Bloodless revolution.
- **Seven members of the House of Lords invited William of Orange and his wife Mary Stuart (daughter of James II) to the throne of England. Meanwhile, fearing protesters, James II fled to Kent.**
- In 1689, a Convention Parliament decided to install William and Mary on the throne of England. They accepted the deal by a Declaration of Rights. William and Mary arrived with a large army which was employed to bring Scotland and Ireland under their control.

The Bill of Rights

- In December 1689, William's Declaration of Rights was passed as an Act of Parliament known as Bill of Rights.
- It is regarded as one of the important political documents in the history of England.
- The act declares the rights and liberties of the subject and settles the succession of the crown.
- It specifies a series of limits on the power of monarchy.
- The Government is a form of contract.
- The monarch cannot suspend laws, raise funds or keep a standing army without the consent of the Parliament.
- The monarch has no right to curtail the right for free speech in the Parliament or prevent the subject's petition.
- The divine right of King is discredited by the act.
- The act thus represents a new step in the relation between Parliament and King.
- Tradition treats the events of 1688 as perhaps the most signal event in Whiggish vision of British history- a narrative of increasing rights and stability.

Other political developments

- In 1694, Queen Mary died.
- William III, Mary's husband, succeeded Mary.
- William died in 1700 and Anne, Mary's sister succeeded.
- In 1701 Parliament passed an act of Settlement that stated that after the death of Anne's last child the monarchy must pass to the family of Sophia, Duchess of Hanover (Germany) provided that the descendant was a Protestant.
- In 1703, Scotland declared its right to name its next monarch(James Francis Edward Stuart, known as 'Old Pretender', son of James II)
- **Act of Union (1707)** By this Act England and Scotland merged parliaments.
- It is this combination of England, wales and Scotland that made Britain 'great'.
- Queen Anne thus was the first ruler of Great Britain.