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LEQ 5: In the 17th century, what political conditions accounted for the increased power of both the parliament in England and the monarchy in France?

In the second half of the sixteenth century, the Thirty Years’ War ended with the Treaty of Westphalia in which hostilities within the Holy Roman Empire came to an end, the Peace of Augsburg was reasserted, Calvinists were legally recognized, and the Swiss Confederacy along with the United Provinces of Holland became independent states. While the church lost power, the middle class, mostly composed of merchants, rose in society along with capitalism. As countries sought centralization, different patterns began to arise due to different historical circumstances (contextualization). Political conditions in the seventeenth century accounted for increased power of both the parliament in England and the monarchy in France (restatement). Politically active nobles, legal tradition, and the Stuarts played a role in the increased power of parliament in England (X). Appeased nobility, lack of political tradition, and Louis XIV played a role in the monarchy of France (Y).

1. England followed the path to a parliamentary government due to the political interests of nobles, their strictly upheld legal tradition based upon concepts of liberty, and the actions of the Stuart kings (thesis).
   1. Politically active groups, invoking traditional English liberties in their defense, effectively resisted the monarchs’ attempted intrusions throughout the century (evidence).
      1. Changes in military organization, weapons, and tactics sharply increased the cost of warfare. Because traditional sources of revenue were inadequate to finance these growing costs - as well as the costs of government - monarchs sought new sources. In this pursuit, English monarchs threatened the local political interests and economic well-being of the country’s nobility and others of great landed and commercial wealth (analysis).
   2. The English nobles maintained the notion that the king was threatening their regional power and status (evidence).
      1. The nobles strived to feel like they were held high status, especially compared to the peasants of their region. However, the Stuart kings began a pattern of selling their positions and infringing on the nobles by lessening their individual influence (analysis).
   3. The English had a legal and political tradition based on concepts of liberty to which members of Parliament and their supporters throughout the country could and did appeal in their conflict with the monarchy (evidence).
      1. In Parliament, England possessed a political institution that had long bargained with the monarch over political issues. The greatest example of this was Elizabeth the I, a politique ruler who preceded the reckless monarchies of the Stuarts. She ruled mildly and never favored extremist populaces, but rather appealed to the majority with the fairest hand and listened the parliamentary concerns. However, in the early seventeenth century, Parliament did not meet regularly and was not a strong institution. The institutional basis for it, however, was in place. Parliament was there and expected to be consulted from time to time. Its members - nobility and gentry - had experience organizing and speaking, writing legislation, and criticizing royal policies (analysis).
   4. The four Stuart monarchs of England had trouble making people trust them, focusing negative attention on the king (evidence).
      1. The Stuart kings did not always keep their word and acted on whim. They often displayed faulty judgement, for example with James I who modified import tax without Parliament’s consent. In a political situation that demanded compromise, they rarely offered any. Charles I exhibited this when dissolved Parliament after only three weeks in 1640 for not conceding to his requests. The Stuarts also offended significant groups of their subjects unnecessarily. In a nation that saw itself as strongly Protestant, they were suspected, sometimes accurately, of Catholic sympathies. Many of their opponents in Parliament therefore used this against them to gain power (analysis).
2. The French monarchy was made possibly by the appeased nobility, lack of traditionally broad liberties, and Louis XIV’s personality (thesis).
   1. In France, the nobles were treated with respect by the king and therefore were willing to give up some of their power out of trust (evidence).
      1. During the second half of the seventeenth century, Louis XIV would make the French nobility dependent on his goodwill and patronage. In turn, he would support their local influence and their place in a firm social hierarchy. However, he did accept the noble-dominated Parlement of Paris to register royal decrees before they officially became law, and he permitted regional parlements to exercise considerable authority over local administration and taxation. They eventually concluded that the best way to secure their own interests was to support the monarch (analysis).
   2. Unlike England, France lacked a similarly strong tradition of broad liberties, representation, and bargaining between the monarchy and other national institutions (evidence).
      1. The Estates General had met from time to time to grant certain revenues to the monarch, but it played no role after the early seventeenth century. It met in 1614, but thereafter the monarchy was able to find other sources of income and the Estates General was not called again until the eve of the French Revolution in 1789. Consequently, whatever political forces might have wished to oppose or limit the monarchy lacked both an institutional base from which to operate and a tradition of meetings during which the necessary political skills might have been developed (analysis).
   3. France profited from its capable rulers (evidence).
      1. Mazarin trained Louis XIV to be a hard working, if not always wise, monarch. Louis drew strong and capable ministers about himself. Louis XIV strongly upheld his famous saying, “One king, one law, one faith,” by pervading Catholicism throughout all of France. He sent out intendants to decrease the power of nobility and used Versailles to manipulate powerful gentry into believing that he was protecting their status (analysis).

The English parliamentary government in the seventeenth century was a direct result of the demanding nobility, strict political policies that they upheld, and the mistakes of the Stuart kings. On the other hand, the satisfied nobility, lack of historically protective government, and the charisma and wit of Louis XIV (thesis restatement). The centralization of both England and France is comparable to the advancements in the Dutch republic at the time. The Dutch republic developed an urban gentry and rural landowners who promoted trade and protected traditional rights (synthesis).