Absolutism and Constitutionalism in Western Europe

1589-1715
Definition...Absolutism

• A form of government in which all power is vested in a single ruler or other authority
Absolutism

• Derived from the traditional assumption of power and the belief in “divine right of kings.”

• Louis XIV of France was the quintessential absolute monarch.
Characteristics of Western Absolutism

• Sovereignty of a country was embodied in the person of the rule
• Absolute Monarchs were not subordinate to national assemblies
• The nobility was effectively brought under control (unlike eastern absolutism)
• Bureaucracies on the 17th century were often composed of career officials appointed by and solely accountable to the king.
Characteristics

• French and Spanish Monarchies gained effective control of the Catholic Church in their countries.

• Maintained large standing armies (no longer relying on mercenary or noble armies.)

• Employed secret police to weaken political opponents.

• Foreshadowing totalitarianism of the 20th century?
REVIEW!

Define Absolutism

Give Four Characteristics of Absolutism

What Monarch best represented Western Absolutism?
Theory of Absolutism

- King had ultimate authority by divine right
- **Bishop Jacques Bossuet**: “God establishes kings as his ministers, and reigns through them over the people”
- **Jean Bodin**: "The sovereign Prince is only accountable to God"
- Influence of era of religious wars...

French ministers had paved the way for Louis XIV – the poster child for absolutism
French Absolutism 1589-1648
The Development of French Absolutism

- French society was divided up into three Estates.
  - First Estate - clergy (1%)
  - Second Estate - nobility (3-4%)
  - Third Estate - bourgeoisie, artisans, workers, peasants
- Social hierarchy was based on rank and privilege
- Primarily agrarian (90%)
- Population of 17 million made France the largest country in Europe (20%) therefore becoming the strongest nation.
Henry IV (Henry of Navarre)

r. 1589-1610

• Laid the foundation for France becoming the strongest European power in the 17th century.
• Strengthen govt. institutions (i.e. parlements)
• Encourage colonization in the new world.
• First King of the Bourbon Dynasty
• Degree of religious toleration (Edict of Nantes)

• Weakened the nobility (nobles of the Robe, nobles of the sword)
Henry IV

- With the help of his finance minister, the Duke of Sully he was able to increase the power of the Monarchy
- Mercantilism
- Reducing royal debt
- Reformed tax system
- Improved transportation

- Assassinated in 1610 by a fanatical monk who sought revenge for his views on religious tolerance.
- Widow, Marie de’ Medici ruled as regent.
Absolutism in France: Royal Ministers’ Role

• Boy kings Louis XIII and Louis XIV faced uneasy succession to throne
• Role of royal ministers
• Cardinal Richelieu (1624-1642)
  • Attacks power of nobles
  • Peace of Alais reduces power of Huguenots
  • System of spies
• Intendants (administrative officials)
  • Aided Swedes vs. Hapsburgs in 30 Years War
  • Raised taille and gabelle (tax on salt) to fund French involvement in 30 Years’ War – debt rising!
• Died in 1642, with Louis XIII 5 months later, leaving 4 year old Louis XIV on the throne
Absolutism in France: Royal Ministers’ Role

- Cardinal Mazarin (1642-1661)
  - Allowed by Anne of Austria – regent of Louis XIV, to continue in Richelieu’s footsteps
  - **Fronde (1648)**
    - Series of noble rebellions broke out against Mazarin
    - Fronde is put down
  - Mazarin dies, leaving power solely to 23 year old King Louis XIV
  - France poised to accept absolutism
Louis XIV – An Introduction

• “He was extremely fond of himself and his position of kingship, with an insatiable appetite for admiration and flattery. He loved magnificent display and elaborate etiquette, though to some extent he simply adopted them as instruments of policy rather than as a personal whim.”

“Le Roi Danse”
Before taking the throne, Louis built his divine reputation through his ballet dancing, with the help of Jean-Baptiste Lully. It was the Ballet de la Nuit.
Louis XIV
r. 1643-1715

• Personified the idea that sovereignty of the state resides in the ruler!
• “L’état, c’est moi,” and became known as the Sun King
• Longest reign in European history (72 years)
• French culture dominated Europe until the 20th century
The Fronde (1640s)

• Cardinal Mazarin (1602-1661) controlled France while Louis XIV was a child
• Some nobles revolted, (the Fronde) but competition between them allowed Mazarin to succeed.
• Due to this Louis wanted to control the nobles.
Louis and the Fronde

- Recruited ministers from the middle class to keep the nobles in check
- Continued the intendant system
- Would arrest government critics
- Never called the Estates General into session

- Controlled peasants through taxes, conscription, execution, slavery, and the Corvée (compulsory, unpaid labor.)
Louis, religion, and economy

- Saw himself as head of the Galican (French Catholic) Church
- **Edict of Fountainbleau (1685)** - revokes the Edict of Nantes
- "one king, one law, one faith"

- Practiced mercantilism, Bullionism
- **Finance minister, Jean Baptiste Colbert** (1661-1683) goal was to make France economically self-sufficient
  - Expanded to the New World
  - By 1683 - Europe’s leading industrial country.
  - Will eventually lead to weaknesses.
Versailles

- Grandest palace in all of Europe.
- Originally a hunting lodge for his father Louis, XIII
Louis XIV – Life at Court

- **Versailles** built outside Paris
- Reflected power of French monarchy
- Elaborate system of rules and regulations
- **Everyone** had to use flattery to get pension
- Reduced “people of quality” to his lap dogs
- Gambling, entertainment, prostitution
- **appartement**
- Lifelong imprisonment?
Bell Ringer...Identify the outcomes of...

- War of Devolution
- Second Dutch War
- War of League of Augsburg
- War of Spanish Succession
- Treaty of Utrecht

- Agenda and Objective: After note review of the Wars of Louis XIV, students will (through a graphic organizer) identify the characteristics of 17th century British society, and issues that British Absolutist monarchs faced during that time.
Wars of Louis XIV: Overview

- **Largest standing army in Europe**
- **Conscription**
- When Louis took control in 1661 (Mazarin’s death), France still faced Hapsburgs on three sides
- Spain’s weakness and the pursuit of France’s “natural boundaries”
- Costly, fruitless missions
- Concern over **balance of power** caused other European nations to form alliances vs. France
Wars!

- France was at War for **33 of the 72 years he ruled**!
- Goal was to expand France to its “natural” borders
- Enemies viewed expansion with alarm and formed European coalitions against him.
- **War of Devolution, Second Dutch War, War of League of Augsburg, War of Spanish Succession, Treaty of Utrecht**
Wars...

• War of Devolution
  • First Dutch war (1666-1667)
  • Invaded the Spanish Netherlands (Belgium) without declaring war
  • Received 12 fortified towns on the border but gave up Franche-Comté (Burgundy)
  • Marriage rights between Maria Theresa (daughter of Philip IV) and Louis the XIV

• Second Dutch War
  • Invade southern Netherlands as revenge for Dutch opposition to previous war
  • Peace of Nijmegan (1678-1679)
  • Furthest limit of expansion
  • Retook Franche-Comté, gained Alsace
Wars

• War of the League of Augsburg (1688-97)

• Was formed (1686) out of the second Dutch War

• HRE, Spain, Sweden, Bavaria, Saxony, Dutch Republic.

• 1689-England’s William of Orange (III) brought England to war against France. ***Begins an Anglo-French military rivalry until 1815.***
Wars of Louis XIV

- HRE Leopold I united Catholic nations against France
- Protestants unify under William III of Orange against Louis
- In 1686, Louis faced all of his opponents (Grand Alliance) in the War of the League of Augsburg (1688-1697)
  - “Glorious Revolution” in England sparks war
  - French success on land, failure at sea
  - Treaty of Ryswick (1697)
War of Spanish Succession (1701-1713)

• **Cause** - The will of Hapsburg King Charles II gave all Spanish territories to the grandson (Philip of Anjou) of Louis XIV

• Fear that Louis would consolidate the thrones of France and Spain

• **Grand Alliance** - England, Dutch Republic, HRE, Brandenburg, Portugal, Savoy

• After French defeats, lead to the Treaty of Utrecht.
Treaty of Utrecht 1713

- Most important treaty between the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) and the treaty of Paris (1763)!
- Maintained balance of power in Europe and ended the expansion of Louis XIV
- Spanish possessions were partitioned - Britain will gain the Asiento and the right to send one ship trade in the New World, also gained Spanish Gibraltar
- Belgium given to Austria
- Netherlands gain land as a buffer against France
- Unification of Spanish and Bourbon dynasties were prohibited. (Philip V had to give up French line of succession) Spain’s power is now in decline.
- Kings were recognized in Sardinia (Savoy) and Prussia (Brandenburg)
Wars of Louis XIV - outcome

- Was at war for 2/3 of his reign
- Were initially successful but eventually became economically ruinous
- Developed professional modern army
- Argued the 1st time in modern European history that one country was able to dominate politics.

- Led to the development of a Balance of Power system, that no country would be allowed to dominate the continent since a coalition of other countries would rally against a threatening power.
• Destroyed French economy
• 20% French died
• Huge debt placed on 3rd estate
• Tensions will sow the seeds for the French Revolution

Cost of his wars
Constitutionalism:

Government power is limited by law. There is a delicate balance between the power of government and the rights and liberties of individuals.
English society in the 17th century

- **Capitalism** played a major role in the high degree of social mobility
- The **Commercial Revolution** significantly increased the size of the English middle-class
- **Improved agricultural techniques** improved farming and husbandry
- The size of the middle-class became proportionately larger than any country in Europe, with the exception of the Netherlands

- **Gentry** - Wealthy landowners in the countryside who dominated politics in the House of Commons
- Many of the gentry had been commercially successful and had moved up from the middle-class into the upper-class
- Relied heavily on legal precedent to limit the power of the king on economic and political matters
- Were willing to pay taxes so long as the House of Commons had a say in national expenditures
Problems facing English monarchs in the 17th century

- The **Stuarts** ruled England for most of the 17th century
- Although they exhibited absolutist tendencies, they were restrained by the growth of Parliament.
- They lacked the political astuteness of Elizabeth I.

- Two major issues prior to the Civil War:
  
  1. Could the king govern without the consent of Parliament or go against the wishes of Parliament?
  
  2. Would the form of the Anglican Church follow the established hierarchical Episcopal form or acquire a Presbyterian form?
James I (VI) (r. 1603-1625)

- His view of Absolutism? (Trew Law of Free Monarchs)
- Claimed “No bishop; no king” in response to Calvinists who wanted to eliminate system of bishops in the Church of England.
- Firm believer in absolutism (such as that seen by his contemporaries in France, Henry IV and later, Louis XIII)
Religious issues

- **Calvinists** comprised perhaps the largest percentage of the population by the early 17th century while the Anglican Church lost ground.

- **Puritans** (the most reform-minded of the Calvinists) sought to “purify” the Church of England by removing many of its Catholic elements.

- **The “Protestant work ethic”** profoundly impacted members of the middle-class and gentry.

- Calvinists in particular were highly opposed to any influence by the Catholic Church.

- James I showed no favoritism towards Catholics or Calvinists.
The Gunpowder Plot, 1605

*Remember, remember the fifth of November.*
*Gunpowder, Treason and Plot.*
*I see no reason why Gunpowder Treason Should ever be forgot.*

- Catholic conspiracy?
- Attempt to reinforce Protestantism?

In November 1605, the infamous Gunpowder Plot took place in which some Catholics, most famously Guy Fawkes, plotted to blow up James I. The story is remembered each November 5th when ‘Guys’ are burned in a celebration known as "Bonfire Night".
James I - issues

- Twice dissolved Parliament over issues of taxation and parliamentary demands for free speech.
- Elizabeth I left behind a large debt.
- A series of wars (including the 30 Years’ War) were costly and required large gov’t revenues.
- James unwisely flaunted his wealth (not to mention his male lovers) and thus damaged the prestige of the monarchy.
Charles I  
(r. 1625-1649)

- Like James, he claimed “divine right” theory of absolute authority for himself as king and sought to rule without Parliament
- Also sought to control the Church of England.
- Tax issues pitted Charles I against Parliament
- Charles needed money to fight wars
- To save money, soldiers were quartered in English homes during wartime (this was very unpopular)
- Some English nobles were arrested for refusing to lend money to the government
- By 1628, both houses of Parliament were firmly opposed to the king
• Parliament attempted to encourage the king to grant basic legal rights in return for granting tax increases

• Provisions:
  • Only Parliament had right to levy taxes, gifts, loans, or contributions.
  • No one should be imprisoned or detained without due process of law.
  • All had right to habeas corpus (trial)
  • No forced quartering of soldiers in homes of private citizens.
  • Martial law could not be declared in peacetime.

Petition of Right (1628)
Absolute Rule

- Charles dissolved Parliament in 1629
- Parliament had continued to refuse increased taxation without its consent
- also had demanded that any movement of the gov’t toward Catholicism and Arminianism (rejection of Church authority based on “liberty of conscience”) be treated as treason.

- Charles’ rule without Parliament between 1629 and 1640 became known as the “Thorough”
- absolute monarch during these 11 years
- He raised money using Medieval forms of forced taxation.
- Religious persecution of Puritans became the biggest reason for the English Civil War.
In response...

• The “Short Parliament”, 1640
• A Scottish military revolt in 1639-40 occurred when Charles attempted to impose the English Prayer Book on the Scottish Presbyterian church
• Parliament was re-convened in 1640 but refused to grant Charles his new taxes if he did not accept the rights outlined in the Petition of Right and grant church reforms
• disbanded Parliament after only a month
War!

- **The English Civil War**
- After you watch the video clip...Come up with three reasons why war broke out in England. Who leads England after the beheading of Charles I?
“Long Parliament”

• Desperate for money Charles finally agreed to certain demands by Parliament.
• Parliament could not be dissolved without its own consent
• Parliament had to meet a minimum of once every three years

• The leaders of the persecution of Puritans were to be tried and executed
• Common law courts were supreme to the king’s courts.
• Refused funds to raise an army to defeat the Irish revolt
The English Civil War

- **Immediate cause** - Charles tried to arrest several Puritans in Parliament because not willing to give the king an army due to Irish rebellion.
- In March 1642 Charles declared war against his opponents in Parliament.

- **Cavaliers** supported the king
- **Roundheads** (Calvinists) opposed the king
• Puritan Independent and military leader of the Roundheads, eventually led his New Model Army to victory in 1649

• Charles surrendered himself to the Scots in 1646

• A division between Puritans and Presbyterians (and non-Puritans) developed late in the war.

• Parliament ordered the army to disband; Cromwell refused.

• **Pride’s Purge (1648):** Elements of the New Model Army (without Cromwell’s knowledge) removed all non-Puritans and Presbyterians from Parliament leaving a “Rump Parliament” with only 1/5 of members remaining.

• New sects emerged

• **Levellers:** Radical religious revolutionaries; sought social & political reforms—a more egalitarian society

• **Diggers:** denied Parliament’s authority and rejected private ownership of land

• **Quakers:** believed in an “inner light”, a divine spark that existed in each person
• Charles I was beheaded in 1649

• First king in European history to be executed by his own subjects
Cromwell

• The Interregnum: 1649-1660 rule without king
• The Commonwealth (1649-1653): a republic that abolished the monarchy and the House of Lords
• In reality, became a military state

• The Protectorate (1653-1659), Oliver Cromwell
• Lord Protector (in effect, a dictatorship)
• Dissolved the “Rump Parliament” in 1653
• England divided into 12 districts, each under the control of a military general
• Denied religious freedom to Anglicans and Catholics
• Allowed Jews to return to England in 1655 (Jews had not been allowed since 1290)
• The press was censored, sports were prohibited, theaters were closed
• This seriously alienated many English people from Cromwell’s military rule

• Cromwell died in 1658 and his son, Richard, was ineffective as his successor.
• The Stuarts under Charles II were restored to the throne in 1660.
The Restoration

- A Cavalier Parliament restored Charles II (r. 1660-1685) to the throne in 1660.
- The king’s power was not absolute and agreed to a significant degree of religious toleration, especially for Catholics to whom he was partial.
- He was known as the “Merry Monarch” for his affable personality.
- Development of political parties:
  - Tories - Nobles, gentry and Anglicans who supported the monarchy over Parliament.
  - Whigs - Middle-class and Puritans who favored Parliament and religious toleration.
• **The Clarendon Code**
  
  • Instituted in 1661 by monarchists and Anglicans
  
  • Sought to drive all Puritans out of both political and religious life
  
  • **Test Act of 1673** excluded those unwilling to receive the sacrament of the Church of England from voting, holding office, preaching, teaching, attending universities, or assembling for meetings.

• Charles seemed to support Catholicism and drew criticism from Whigs in Parliament

• Parliament passed the *Habeas Corpus Act* in 1679 to limit Charles’ power
With Scotland

- Scotland again gained its independence when Charles II assumed the throne in 1660.
- Charles reneged on his 1651 pledge that acknowledged Presbyterianism in Scotland and in 1661 declared himself the head of the Church of Scotland.
- He sought to impose the Episcopal form of church hierarchy in Scotland, similar to the Anglican Church.
- Thousands were killed in Scotland for resisting Charles’ dictatorship.
- Last few years of Charles’ reign in Scotland was known as the “Killing Time”.
James II

• Inherited the throne at age 55 from his brother, Charles II.

• He sought to return England to Catholicism

• Appointed many Catholics to high positions in gov’t and in colleges
The Glorious Revolution
1688-1689

• was the final act in the struggle for political sovereignty in England.
• Parliament not willing to sacrifice constitutional gains of the English Civil War and return to absolute monarchy.

• Two issues in particular drove Parliament to action:
  • James’s II reissue of Declaration of Indulgence (granting freedom of worship to Catholics)
  • Birth of a Catholic heir to the English throne in 1688
• In late 1688, James fled to France after his offers for concessions to Parliament were refused.

• **William and Mary** were declared joint sovereigns by Parliament.

• James’ daughters, Mary and Anne, were Protestants

• Parliament invited Mary’s husband, the Dutch William of Orange, to assume the throne.

**William III and Mary II**
• **Toleration Act of 1689**
  - Granted right to worship for Protestant nonconformists (e.g. Puritans, Quakers) although they could not hold office.
  - Did not extend religious liberties to Catholics, Jews or Unitarians (although they were largely left alone)

• **Act of Settlement, 1701**
  - If no heir, the Crown would pass to the granddaughter of James I, or to her Protestant heirs.
  - The Stuarts were no longer in the line of succession
  - When Anne died in 1714, her Hanoverian heir assumed the throne as George I.
• Act of Union, 1707
  • United England and Scotland into Great Britain
  • The Scots desperately desired access to England’s trade empire
  • Scottish Presbyterians feared that the Stuarts might attempt to return to the throne in Scotland.
What is the purpose of Government?
How should a ruler rule over his subjects
(Precursor to the Enlightenment)
The Bill of Rights (1689): Compare with ours. Similarities?

- England became a **constitutional monarchy**
- This became the hallmark for constitutionalism in Europe
- King could not be Roman Catholic.
- Laws could be made only with the consent of Parliament.
- Parliament had right of free speech.
- Standing army in peace time was not legal without Parliamentary approval.
- Taxation was illegal without Parliamentary approval.
- Excessive bail and cruel and unusual punishments were prohibited.
- Right to trial by jury, due process of law, and reasonable bail was guaranteed.
- People had the right to bear arms (Protestants but not Catholics)
- Provided for free elections to Parliament and it could be dissolved only by its own consent.
- People had right of petition.
Absolutism (Divine Right) vs. Constitutionalism review!

**Absolute!**

- King is law (Rex is Lex!)
- Mercantilism (royal control of the economy)
- Uniform religion
- Money needed to finance

**Constitutionalism!**

- King is bound by laws not above (Magna Carta)
- Mercantilist capitalism (free enterprise)
- Some religious toleration
- Bill of Rights
Hobbes v. Locke

- As you read their positions, identify similarities and differences in the chart provided.
John Locke

• **Two Treatises of Civil Government, 1690.**

• Philosophical defense for the “Glorious Revolution” in England.

• State of nature: humans are basically good but lack protection

• This contrasts with Hobbes’ view of humans in a state of nature: nasty and brutish
Enlightenment Ideas About Government

- Sources of Government’s Power
  - Consent of governed; will of majority

- Structure of Government
  - Separation of powers; checks and balances

- Power of Government
  - Absolute power or limited power?

- When Government Fails
  - People have right to overthrow the government

- Government and the Economy
  - Laissez faire; free market

- Goal of Government
  - Material well-being; social justice

- Purpose of Government
  - To protect natural rights
• Governments provide rule of law but only through the consent of the governed
• The purpose of government is to protect "natural rights" of the people: life, liberty and property
• Right to rebellion: People have a right to abolish a government that doesn’t protect natural rights.
LEVIATHAN
Or
THE MATTER, FORM, AND POWER OF A COMMONWEALTH, ECONOMICALLY AND CIVIL.
By Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury
Review: Responses to the Revolution

• Thomas Hobbes (1588 – 1679)
  • Leviathan (1651)
  • People form a commonwealth
  • People have no right to rebel

• John Locke (1632 – 1704)
  • Two Treatises of Government
  • Inalienable Rights: Life, Liberty and Property
  • People and Sovereign form a government
  • If government does not fulfill its duties, people have the right to revolt
The Golden Age- 1\textsuperscript{st} half of 17\textsuperscript{th} century

- Govt. dominated by the bourgeois whose wealth and power limited the power of the state
- Govt. consisted of an organized confederation (7) with a stadholder (executive) and military leader.
- Religious toleration (Dutch reform, Arminian, Catholic, Jews) fostered a cosmopolitan society
- Amsterdam became the banking and commercial center of Europe (Dutch East India Company)
- No govt. controls or monopolies that interfered with free enterprise.
- War of Succession created economic decline.
Spain in the 17th Century
Foundations of Absolutism

• The Golden Age of Spain was in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century under Ferdinand and Isabella

• Foundations were laid by Charles V (1519-1556) and will reach its zenith under Philip II (1556-1589)

• Under Philip II
  • Madrid became capital of Spain
  • Built Escorial Palace to demonstrate power
  • Spanish Inquisition continued to persecute those who were seen as heretics.
Decline of Spanish Economy (17th Century)

- Was hurt by the loss of the middle class Moors and Jews
- Spanish trade with its colonies fell 60% 1610-1660 (due to English and Dutch competition)
- Spanish treasury was bankrupt
- National taxes hit peasantry hard. Led to overcrowding in cities as well decreased food production
- Inflation
- Poor work ethic
Political and Military Decline

• Symbolically, England’s defeat of the Spanish Armada is seen as the beginning of the end of the Spanish Empire
• Poor leadership by Philip III, Philip IV, and Charles II
• Defeated in the 30 years’ War—lost the Netherlands, and Portugal gains independence

• Treaty of the Pyrenees (1659) marked the end of Spain as a great power
• War of Spanish Succession—lost most of its European possessions.
Political and Military Decline

- Symbolically, England’s defeat of the Spanish Armada is seen as the beginning of the end of the Spanish Empire.
- Poor leadership by Philip III, Philip IV, and Charles II.
- Defeated in the 30 years’ War—lost the Netherlands, and Portugal gains independence.
- Treaty of the Pyrenees (1659) marked the end of Spain as a great power.
- War of Spanish Succession—lost most of its European possessions.
The Culture of Absolutism: The Baroque