



IDX G10 [History][S]

Study Guide Issue 1

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## Chapter 16 - The Age of Absolutism (1550-1800)

### 1. Key Concepts

***Focus Question: What are the benefits and drawbacks of having an absolute ruler?***

***Test range for the first monthly: 16.2 16.3 16.5***

- **What is Absolutism?**

- A system of government where a single ruler (monarch) holds **all the power**.
- The monarch is not restricted by laws, parliaments, or customs.
- Justified by **Divine Right**: the belief that a monarch's power comes directly from God, and they are only responsible to God, not the people.

- **What was the Goal of Absolute Monarchs?**

- To control every aspect of society, including religion, the nobility, the economy, and the military.
- To build a strong, centralized state, free from internal conflicts (like noble rebellions) and external threats.

- **Major Powers:**

- Spain, France, Austria, Prussia, Russia.
- England was the exception, where Parliament limited the monarch's power.

## 16-2 France: Louis XIV, the Sun King

### 1. The Path to Louis XIV

- **Henry IV (Henry of Navarre)**
  - Brought peace after the French Wars of Religion.
  - Issued the **Edict of Nantes (1598)**, which granted religious freedom to French Protestants (**Huguenots**).
  - His goal was "a chicken in every pot" to improve life for peasants.
- **Cardinal Richelieu**
  - Chief minister to Louis XIII.
  - Weakened the Huguenots and nobles to strengthen the monarchy's power.
- **Louis XIV (r. 1643-1715) - The Sun King**
  - Became king at age 5; took full control at 23 after a noble rebellion (the Fronde) scared him.
  - Famous quote: "**L'état, c'est moi**" ("I am the state").
  - Chose the **sun** as his symbol, meaning he was the center of the nation, just as the sun is the center of the solar system.

### 2. How Louis XIV Strengthened Power

- **Weakened the Nobility:** Lured them to his palace at **Versailles**, where they focused on court ceremonies and privileges instead of rebelling.
- **Strengthened the Government:** Used **intendants** (royal officials) to enforce his policies in the provinces, reducing local noble power.
- **Built a Strong Army:** Created the largest, most powerful standing army in Europe.
- **Economic Growth:** His finance minister, **Jean-Baptiste Colbert**, used **mercantilist** policies to make France wealthy (built industries, high tariffs on imports, fostered colonies).

### 3. Versailles: Symbol of Royal Power

- A gigantic, magnificent palace outside Paris.
- Served as the king's home and the seat of government.
- Used elaborate ceremonies (like the **levée**, the king's morning rising) to show the king's importance and control the nobles.

### 4. Louis XIV's Mistakes & Decline

- **Costly Wars:** Fought many wars to expand France's borders, which drained the treasury.
- **Persecution of Huguenots:** Revoked the Edict of Nantes in 1685. Over 100,000 hard-working Huguenots fled France, hurting the economy.
- **War of the Spanish Succession:** Other European nations united to prevent the union of the French and Spanish thrones, maintaining the **balance of power**.

## 16-3 England: Parliament Triumphs

### 1. The Tudor Monarchs (Cooperation)

- **Henry VIII** and **Elizabeth I** worked *with* Parliament, keeping it under control but consulting it, especially for money.

### 2. The Stuart Challenge and Civil War

- **James I** (1603-1625): Believed in divine right, clashed with Parliament over money and power.
- **Charles I** (1625-1649): Forced to sign the **Petition of Right (1628)**, which limited his power (no taxes without Parliament's consent, no illegal imprisonment). He ignored it.
- **English Civil War (1642-1651):**
  - **Cavaliers** (Royalists) vs. **Roundheads** (Parliament).
  - **Oliver Cromwell** led the Roundheads' "New Model Army" to victory.
  - Charles I was tried and executed in 1649—a shocking event in Europe.

### 3. From Commonwealth to Glorious Revolution

- **Commonwealth (1649-1660):** England became a republic led by Cromwell as **Lord Protector**. Strict Puritan rules were enforced.
- **Restoration (1660):** The monarchy was restored with **Charles II**.
- **Glorious Revolution (1688):** A bloodless overthrow of the unpopular Catholic king, **James II**. Parliament offered the throne to his Protestant daughter **Mary** and her husband **William of Orange**.

### 4. England's Limited Monarchy

- **English Bill of Rights (1689):** Before taking the throne, William and Mary had to accept this.
  - Ensured **Parliament's power** over the monarchy (power of the purse, regular meetings, no suspending laws).
  - Protected individual rights (trial by jury, no cruel punishment).
- **Limited Monarchy:** A government where a constitution or laws limit the monarch's power.

- **Constitutional Government Evolves:**
  - **Political Parties:** Tories and Whigs.
  - **Cabinet System:** Advisors to the king who set policy.
  - **Prime Minister:** The leader of the cabinet and the majority party in Parliament.

## 16-5 Absolute Monarchy in Russia

### 1. Peter the Great (r. 1682-1725)

- **Goal:** To **westernize** Russia and make it a modern European power.
- **Westernization:**
  - Traveled to Western Europe to learn about technology and customs.
  - Forced nobles (**boyars**) to shave beards and wear Western clothes.
  - Improved education, technology, and manufacturing.
- **Absolute Control:** Used terror to enforce his will. Strengthened **serfdom**.
- **Expansion:**
  - Fought Sweden in the **Great Northern War** to gain a port on the Baltic Sea.
  - Built a new, western-style capital, **St. Petersburg**, as his "window on the West."

### 2. Catherine the Great (r. 1762-1796)

- A German princess who became empress after her husband was murdered.
- An "**Enlightened**" ruler who supported arts and education.
- An **absolute monarch** who crushed peasant rebellions and gave nobles more power over serfs.
- **Expansion:**
  - Gained a warm-water port on the **Black Sea** from the Ottoman Empire.

With Prussia and Austria, she partitioned (divided up) **Poland**, which disappeared from the map until 1919.

## Additional informations

**This part will not be included in the test**

### 16-1 Spain: Philip II and the Golden Age

#### 1. Key Concepts

- **Charles V and the Hapsburg Empire**
  - Inherited a huge empire: Spain, the Spanish Netherlands, parts of Italy, and the Holy Roman Empire.
  - Empire was too big and scattered to manage.

- Fought constant wars against Protestants (in Germany) and the Muslim Ottoman Empire.
- **Abdicated** (gave up his throne) in 1556 and divided his empire.
  - Gave the Holy Roman Empire to his brother, Ferdinand.
  - Gave Spain, the Netherlands, and the overseas colonies to his son, **Philip II**.
- **Philip II of Spain (r. 1556-1598)**
  - **Absolute Monarch:** Hardworking, devoutly Catholic, and believed in divine right.
  - **Goals:** Expand Spanish power, strengthen the Catholic Church, and make his own power absolute.
  - Lived in the **Escorial**, a palace that reflected his power and simple, monastic lifestyle.

## 2. How Philip II Extended Spanish Power

- **Wealth from the Americas**
  - Silver and gold from Spanish colonies funded his wars and made Spain the richest power in Europe.
- **War as a Tool**
  - **Battle of Lepanto (1571):** His navy defeated the Ottoman Turks, making Spain the defender of Catholicism in the Mediterranean.
  - **Revolt in the Netherlands:** Protestant provinces rebelled against his Catholic rule and high taxes. The northern provinces (Dutch Netherlands) eventually won independence.
  - **Spanish Armada (1588):** Sent a huge fleet to invade Protestant England and punish Queen Elizabeth I for supporting the Dutch. The Armada was defeated by the English navy and storms. This marked the **beginning of the decline** of Spanish power.

## 3. Spain's Golden Age (Siglo de Oro)

- A "golden century" of art and literature (1550-1650).
- **El Greco:** Painter known for haunting religious pictures and vibrant colors.
- **Diego Velázquez:** Court painter famous for portraits of Spanish royalty.
- **Miguel de Cervantes:** Wrote **Don Quixote**, considered the first modern novel. It pokes fun at medieval chivalry.

- **Lope de Vega:** Wrote over 1,500 plays.

#### 4. Why Spain's Power Declined

- **Economic Problems:**

- Costly wars drained its treasury.
- Neglected farming and commerce, relying on New World treasure.
- Heavy taxes on the middle class.
- Expulsion of Muslims and Jews removed skilled workers.

**Inflation** from the influx of American gold and silver.

#### 16-4 Rise of Austria and Prussia

*This part will not be included in the test*

##### 1. The Thirty Years' War (1618-1648)

- A destructive religious war fought mainly in the German states (Catholics vs. Protestants).
- **Effects:**
  - Severe **depopulation** in Germany (as much as one third of the population died).
  - **Peace of Westphalia (1648):** Ended the war.
    - Weakened the Hapsburgs (Holy Roman Emperor).
    - Made German princes independent.
    - Left Germany divided into 360 separate states, preventing unification for centuries.

##### 2. Austria: A New Great Power

- The **Habsburg** family shifted focus from the Holy Roman Empire to building a strong Austrian state.
- **Maria Theresa:**
  - Faced the **War of the Austrian Succession** when Frederick the Great of Prussia seized her province of Silesia.
  - Proved to be a strong ruler, preserved her empire, and strengthened Habsburg power through reforms.

##### 3. Prussia: A New Great Power

- The **Hohenzollern** family united their lands to create Prussia.
- **Frederick William I:** Built a strong, centralized bureaucracy and a powerful, well-trained army.
- **Frederick II (Frederick the Great):**

- Used his army to seize Silesia from Austria, making Prussia a major power.
- A brilliant military leader and an "enlightened" ruler.