Western Absolutism

# Absolutism:

## Derived from the traditional assumption of power (e.g.heirs to the throne) and the belief in “divine right of kings”

# . Louis XIV of France was the quintessential absolute monarch

# B. Characteristics of western European absolutism Sovereignty of a country was embodied in the person of the ruler

# 2. Absolute monarchs were not subordinate to national assemblies

# 3. The nobility was effectively brought under control

# This is in contrast to eastern European absolutism where the nobility remained powerful

# b. The nobility could still at times prevent absolute

# monarchs from completely having their way

# 4. Bureaucracies in the 17th century were often

# composed of career officials appointed by and solely

# accountable to the king

# . Often were rising members of the bourgeoisie or

# the new nobility (“nobility of the robe” who

# purchased their titles from the monarchy)

# 5. French and Spanish monarchies gained effective

# control of the Roman Catholic Church in their

# countries

# 6. Maintained large standing armies

# . Monarchs no longer relied on mercenary or noble

# armies as had been the case in the 15th century

# and earlier

# 7. Employed a secret police to weaken political

# opponents .

# C. Philosophy of absolutism

# Jean Bodin (1530-96)Among the first to provide a theoretical basis for

# absolutist states Wrote during the chaos of the French Civil Wars of

# the late 16th century

# Believed that only absolutism could provide order

# and force people to obey the government

# 2. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679): Leviathan Pessimistic view of human beings in a state of nature: “Solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short

# anarchy results

# . Central drive in every person is power

# b. His ideas became most closely identified with Voltaire in the 18th century: “Enlightened Despotism”

# Hobbes ideas were not very popular in the 17th century

# Hobbes did not favor “divine right” of kings, as

# was favored by Louis XIV in France and James I and Charles lin England

# Those with constitutional ideas saw Hobbes’ ideas as too authoritarian

# 

# 3. Bishop Jacques Bossuet (1627-1704)

# Principle advocate of “divine right of kings” in France during the reign of Louis XIV.

# Believed “divine right” meant that the king was

# placed on throne by God, and therefore owed his

# authority to no man or group

# The development of French Absolutism (c. 1589-1648)

# France in the 17th century

# In the feudal tradition, French society was divided

# into three Estates made up of various classes.

## First Estate: clergy; 1% of population

## 

## Second Estate: nobility; 3-4% of population

## Third Estate: bourgeoisie (middle class), artisans, urban workers, and peasants.

# 2. This hierarchy of social orders, based on rank and privilege, was restored under the reign of Henry IV.

# 3. France was primarily agrarian: 90% of population lived in the countryside.

# 4. Population of 17 million made France the largest country in Europe (20% of Europe’s population).

# accounted for France becoming the strongest

# nation in Europe.

## Henry IV (Henry of Navarre) (r.1589-1610)

### Laid the foundation for France becoming the

# strongest European power in the l7” century.

## Strengthened the social hierarchy by strengthening

# government institutions: parlements, the treasury,

# universities and the Catholic Church

## First king to actively encourage French colonization

# in the New World: stimulated the Atlantic trade

# 2. First king of the Bourbon dynasty

## Came to power in 1589 as part of a political

# compromise to end the French Civil Wars.

# b. Converted from Calvinism to Catholicism in order

# to gain recognition from Paris of his reign.

## Issued Edict of Nantes in 1598 providing a degree

# of religious toleration to the Huguenots (Calvinists)

# 3. Weakening of the nobility

## The old “nobility of the sword” not allowed to

# influence the royal council

# b. Many of the “nobility of the robe”, new nobles

# who purchased their titles from the monarchy,

# became high officials in the government and

# remained loyal to the king (e.g. Sully).

# 4. Duke of Sully (1560-1641): Finance minister

## His reforms enhanced the power of the monarchy

## Mercantilism: increased role of the state in the

# economy in order to achieve a favorable balance

# of trade with other countries

# . Granted monopolies in the production of

# gunpowder and salt

# . Encouraged manufacturing of silk and

# ta pestries

# . Only the government could operate the mines

# c. Reduced royal debt

# . Systematic bookkeeping and budgets

# . In contrast, Spain was drowning in debt

## Reformed the tax system to make it more

# equitable and efficient.

## Oversaw improved transportation

# ‘ Began nation-wide highway system

# . Canals linked major rivers

# . Began canal to link the Mediterranean Sea to

# the Atlantic Ocean

# 5. Henry was assassinated in 1610 by a fanatical monk

# who sought revenge for Henry’s granting religious

# protections for the Huguenots.

## Led to a severe crisis in power

## Henry’s widow, Marie de’ Medici, ruled as regent

# until their son came of age.

# C. Louis XIII (1610-43)

### As a youth, his regency was beset by corruption &

# mismanagement

## Feudal nobles and princes increased their power

## Certain nobles convinced him to assume power

# and exile his mother

# 2. Cardinal Richelieu (1585-1642)

## Laid foundation for absolutism in France

# . Like Henry IV, he was a politique (he placed

# political issues ahead of religious principles)

# b. Intendant System

# . Used to weaken the nobility

# . Replaced local officials with civil servants—

# intendants—who reported directly to the king

# . Intendants were largely middle-class or minor

# nobles (“nobility of the robe”)

# . Each of the country’s 32 districts had an

# intendant responsible for justice, police and

# finance

# . Gov’t became more efficient and centrally

# controlled

# c. Built upon Sully’s economic achievements in

# further developing mercantilism

# d. Increased taxation to fund the military

# e. Tax policies were not as successfully as Sully’s

# . Resorted to old system of selling offices

# . Tax farmers ruthlessly exploited the peasantry

## Richelieu subdued the Huguenots

# . Peace of Alais (1629): Huguenots lost their

# fortified cities & Protestant armies

# . Calvinist aristocratic influenced reduced

# . Huguenots still allowed to practice Calvinism

# Louis XIV (r. 1643-17 15) — the “Sun King”

## Quintessential absolute ruler in European history

### Personified the idea that sovereignty of the state

# resides in the ruler

## “L’état, c’est moi” (“I am the state”)

## He became known as the “Sun King” since he

# was at the center of French power (just as the sun

# is the center of our solar system).

# 2. Strong believer in “divine right” of kings

# (advocated by Bishop Bossuet)

# 3. He had the longest reign in European history (72

# years)

# . Inherited the throne when he was 5 years old

# from his father Louis XIII (Henry IV was his

# grandfather)

# 4. France became the undisputed major power in

# Eurore during his reign

## French population was the largest in Europe (17

# million); accounted for 20% of Europe’s

# population

# . Meant that a massive standing army could be

# created and maintained

## French culture dominated Europe

# . The French language became the international

# language in Europe for over two centuries and

# the language of the well-educated (as Latin

# had been during the Middle Ages)

# . France became the epicenter of literature and

# the arts until the 2O century

## The Fronde (mid-late 1640s)

### Cardinal Mazarin (1602-1661) controHed France

# while Louis XIV was a child

# 2. Some nobles revolted against Mazarin when Louis

# was between the ages of 5 and 11.

# 3. Competition among various noble factions enabled

# Mazarin to defeat the nobles.

# 4. Louis never forgot the humiliation he faced at the

# hands of the nobles early on and was determined to

# control the nobility.

## Government organization

### Louis recruited his chief ministers from the middle

# class in order to keep the aristocracy out of

# government

# 2. Continued the intendant system begun by Richelieu

# 3. Checked the power of French institutions that might

# resist his control

## Parlements were fearful of resisting him after the

# failure of the Fronde

# b. Officials who criticized the government could be

# arrested

# c. Louis never called the Estates General into session

# 4. Control over the peasantry (which accounted for

# about 95% of the population)

## Some peasants kept as little as 2O% of their cash

# crops after paying their landlord, government

# taxes and tithes to the Church

# b. Corvée: forced labor that required peasants to

# work for a month out of the year on roads and

# other public projects

# c. Idle peasants could be conscripted into the army

# or forced into workhouses

## Rebellious peasants could be executed or used as

# galley slaves on ships

# D. Versailles Palace

### Under Louis XIV, the Palace at Versailles became the

# grandest and most impressive palace in all of Europe

## The awe-inspiring scale of the palace reinforced

# his image as the most powerful absolute ruler in

# Europe.

# b. The palace had originally been a hunting lodge for

# his father, Louis XIII.

# c. The Baroque architecture was largely work of

# Marquis Louvois; the gardens were designed by

# LeVau

# d. The façade was about 1/3 of a mile long; 1,400

# fountains adorned the grounds

## The royal court grew from about 600 people

# (when the king had lived in Paris) to about 10,000

# people at Versailles

## The cost of maintaining Versailles cost about 60%

# of all royal revenues!

# 2. Versailles Palace became in effect a pleasure prison

# for the French nobility

## Louis gained absolute control over the nobility

## Fearful of noble intrigue, Louis required nobles to

# live at the palace for several months each year in

# order to keep an eye on them

# c. Nobles were entertained with numerous

# recreational activities such as tournaments, hunts

# and concerts

# . Elaborate theatrical performances included the

# works of Racine and Moliere

# E. Religious Policies

### Louis considered himself the head of the Gallican

# Church (French Catholic Church)

# . While he was very religious, he did not allow the

# pope to exercise political power in the French

# Church

# 2. Edict of Fountainbleau (1685)—revoked Edict of

# Nantes

## Huguenots lost their right to practice Calvinism

## About 200,000 Huguenots fled France for England,

# Holland and the English colonies in North America

# 3. Louis supported the Jesuits in cracking down on

# Jansenists (Catholics who held some Calvinist ideas)

# F. Mercantilism

### State control over a country’s economy in order to

# achieve a favorable balance of trade with other

# cou ntries.

# . Bullionism: a nation’s policy of accumulating as

# much precious metal (gold and silver) as possible

# while preventing its outward flow to other

# countries.

# 2. French mercantilism reached its height under Louis’

# finance minister, Jean Baptiste Colbert (1661-

# 1683)

# 3. Colbert’s goal was economic self-sufficiency for

# France

## Oversaw the construction of roads & canals

## Granted gov’t-supported monopolies in certain

# industries.

# c. Cracked down on guilds

# d. Reduced local tolls (internal tariffs) that inhibited

# trade

# e. Organized French trading companies for

# international trade (East India Co., West India

# Co.)

# 4. By 1683, France was Europe’s leading industrial

# country

## Excelled in such industries as textiles, mirrors,

# lace-making and foundries for steel manufacturing

# and firearms.

# b. Colbert’s most important accomplishment:

# developing the merchant marine

# 5. Weaknesses of mercantilism and the French economy

## Poor peasant conditions (esp. taxation) resulted in

# large emigration out of France

# b. Louis opted for creating a massive army instead of

# a formidable navy

# . Result: France later lost naval wars with

# England

# c. War in later years of Louis’ reign nullified Colbert’s

# gains

# . Louis was at war for 2/3 of his reign

# Wars of Louis XIV

## Overview

### Wars were initially successful but eventually became

# economically ruinous to France

# 2. France developed the professional modern army

# 3. Perhaps the first time in modern European history

# that one country was able to dominate politics

# 4. A balance of power system emerged

## No one country would be allowed to dominate the

# continent since a coalition of other countries would

# rally against a threatening power.

## Dutch stadtholder William of Orange (later King

# William III of England) was the most important

# figure in thwarting Louis’ expansionism

## War of Devolution (First Dutch War), 1667-68

### Louis XIV invaded the Spanish Netherlands (Belgium)

# without declaring war.

# 2. Louis received 12 fortified towns on the border of the

# Spanish Netherlands but gave up the Franche-Comté

# (Burgundy)

## Second Dutch War (1672-78)

### Louis invaded the southern Netherlands as revenge

# for Dutch opposition in the previous war.

# 2. Peace of Nijmegan (1678-79)

## Represented the furthest limit to the expansion of

# Louis XIV.

# b. France took Franche-Comté from Spain, gained

# some Flemish towns and took Alsace

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

### In response to another invasion of the Spanish

# Netherlands by Louis XIV in 1683, the League of

# Augsburg formed in 1686: HRE, Spain, Sweden,

# Bavaria, Saxony, Dutch Republic

# . Demonstrated emergence of balance of power

# 2. William of Orange (now king of England) brought

# England in against France.

# . Began a period of Anglo-French military rivalry

# that lasted until Napoleon’s defeat in 1815.

### (Study Device: This could be viewed as a

# “second Hundred Years’ War”: 1689-18 15)

# 3. War ended with the status quo prior to the war

# . France remained in control of Alsace and the city

# of Strasbourg (in Lorraine).

## War of Spanish Succession (170 1-13)

### Cause: The will of Charles II (Hapsburg king) gave all

# Spanish territories to the grandson of Louis XIV

# . European powers feared that Louis would

# consolidate the thrones of France and Spain, thus

# creating a monster power that would upset the

# balance of power

# 2. Grand Alliance emerged in opposition to France:

# England, Dutch Republic, HRE, Brandenburg,

# Portugal, Savoy

# 3. Battle of Blenheim (1704)

## A turning point in the war that began a series of

# military defeats for France

# b. England’s army, led by the Duke of Marlborough

# (John Churchill—ancestor of the 20th century

# leader Winston Churchill) and military forces of

# Savoy (representing the HRE) were victorious

# 4. Treaty of Utrecht (1713)

## Most important treaty between the Treaty of

# Westphalia (1648) and the Treaty of Paris (1763)

# . Maintained the balance of power in Europe

# . Ended the expansionism of Louis XIV

# b. Spanish possessions were partitioned

# . Britain was the biggest winner

### Gained the asiento (slave trade) from Spain

# and the richt to send one English ship to

# trade in Spain’s New World empire

### Gained the Spanish territories of Gibraltar

# and Minorca.

# ‘ Belgium (Spanish Netherlands) given to Austria

# . Netherlands gain some land as a buffer against

# future French aggression

# c. Though Louis’ grandson was enthroned in Spain,

# the unification of the Spanish and Bourbon

# dynasties was prohibited.

# d. Kings were recognized as such in Sardinia (Savoy)

# and Prussia (Brandenburg)

## Costs of Louis XIV’s wars:

### Destroyed the French economy

### 2O% of the French subjects died

### Huge debt would be placed on the shoulders of the

# Third Estate

# . French gov’t was bankrupt

# 4. Financial and social tensions would sow the seeds of

# the French Revolution later in the century.