

AP EUROPEAN HISTORY - UNIT 3

From Simple Studies, <https://simplestudies.edublogs.org> & @simplestudiesinc on Instagram

By Janessa Yan for use by Simple Studies

Absolutism and Constitutionalism

There were three key ‘power groups’ involved in the struggle for control of the new nation-states that were replacing the ‘New Monarchies’ of the prior generation:

- The king and his allies (usually referred to as the ‘Court’)
- The nobles (the ‘Country’)
- The upper class men / middle class men (below the nobles)
 - ‘Gentry’ in England
 - The noblesse de robe in France
 - The Junkers of Prussia
 - The boyars of Russia
- Their allies opposed the concentration of power in the hands of the king, and the rising middle class (wealthy, untitled, professing to speak for the ‘people’ but really looking out for their own interests; an important faction within the ‘gentry’ in England, the bourgeoisie in France, and the ‘burghers’ of central Europe).
- As states became more powerful and centralized in the 17th century, the single most important factor in determining what form of government - in essence, who would be sovereign – was the power and willingness of the nobility to challenge the ruler either independently or in alliance with other groups, specifically the rising middle classes.
- 17th century as “age of crisis”: Little Ice Age, economic collapse, Wars of Religion/Thirty Years’ War, peasant uprisings, dynastic struggles
- Property-owning classes were biased in favor of strong states.

- The core issue is the struggle over sovereignty, a monopoly on the power to make and enforce the law, including the use of force.
 - Different models of political sovereignty arose:
 - Absolutism: King > law (ex. Louis XIV)
 - Constitutionalism: King < law (English Bill of Rights [1689])
 - Republicanism: no king
- For all states, the goal is the same:
 - Defend and expand territory (borderlands, local challenges to their authority, & colonies)
 - Tax revenues
 - Centralized bureaucracies (law & order, protection of property, military revolution)
 - Mercantilist economies (domestic production, colonies)
- All states face obstacles to achieving those goals:
 - Infrastructure (roads, canals & waterways, coastlines & “blue water” navies)
 - Control of information of all kinds, communications
 - Pre-existing power structures (nobles & estates, Church, provincial assemblies, town councils, guilds, groups operating outside state control [Cossacks in Russia])
- **All kings, as New Monarchs, preferred to be absolutists**
 - Rulers would identify their main rivals and look for allies in order to control them so no one can stand in the way of their sovereignty
- The rise of the middle class as an independent, wealthy power group, due to the revival of trade and commerce (Atlantic trade, population growth);
 - Northwestern Europe had a stronger independent middle class, weaker nobles, and laboring poor (urban workers and rural peasants).
 - Eastern Europe was weaker and more dependent middle class, stronger nobles, and still had serfs (legal status different from peasants).
 - Protestantism: individualism; equality of all souls.
 - Catholicism: divine right of kings.

France: absolutism under Louis XIV

- The bourgeoisie grows in power and influence due to Atlantic trade and economic expansion
- Nobility is fractured
 - Nobles of the Sword: old noble families; trace their titles back to medieval France; “won” their titles and defended them through force of arms, believing themselves to be the equals of the king – to them, he is “first among equals”.
 - Nobles of the Robe: newer noble families; purchased their titles (and often have to pay a fee to make them hereditary); understand that they are subordinate to the king – though that will change later.
- Louis XIV builds his absolute state by allying with the bourgeoisie and the newer Nobles of the Robe and marginalizing the Nobles of the Sword:
 - uses the threat of the Fronde and of general economic/political instability in the absence of a strong king.
 - favorable economic policies (Colbert and mercantilism)
 - social and political advancement (sale of offices and titles) for allies.
 - Nobles of the Sword marginalized (Versailles).
 - clear that opposition comes at a heavy cost (secret police, etc.).
- Louis XIV made concessions
 - bourgeoisie growing in wealth and power; impossible to exclude them – best to co-opt them, which he can do by promising stability, order, prosperity (mercantilism), and opportunities.
 - needs to divide the nobles (thus, greatly expands the Nobles of the Robe, which also generates revenues ⇒ long term cost in terms of taxes)
 - must isolate/marginalize Nobles of the Sword (the Fronde, War of the Three Henrys).
 - wars of expansion require money – lots of it – and that means taxes and borrowing.

Prussia/Russia/Habsburg Austria: Eastern absolutism & Spain

Nobles were very wealthy (land), powerful, and retained medieval privileges and independence.

- Junkers in Prussia, boyars in Russia (Habsburgs have the problem of competing nationalities, each with their own nobles)
- The Church was dependent on nobility and state
 - In Spain, Church dominates huge sections of the economy [land]
- **No meaningful middle class** ("burghers").
 - few towns; small class, dependent on nobles or towns steadily losing independence and medieval privileges.
 - Cash crops were exported directly to western Europe (no real resources for the people)
 - Their economies rely on government agents, western bankers, and other professionals.
 - Spain: middle class mostly gone from the Reconquista and inflation of their economy made social mobility very difficult
 - Majority of people are serfs – a legal condition (unlike western peasants, who are at least legally free).
 - Uneducated and largely illiterate
- The class structure remained medieval and feudal:
 - Nobles:
 - medieval rights and privileges over their land and serfs confirmed by rulers
 - compelled to enter state service (bureaucracy, military).
 - taxes!
 - Small middle class: reduced to a dependent “service”
 - Limited social mobility
 - Serfs: harsh working conditions; freedoms deteriorate.
 - periodic rebellions crushed by rulers and their noble allies
 - geography prevents a united effort to resist serfdom.

England

- constitutionalism after the English Civil War/Glorious Revolution resulted in Parliament becoming sovereign.

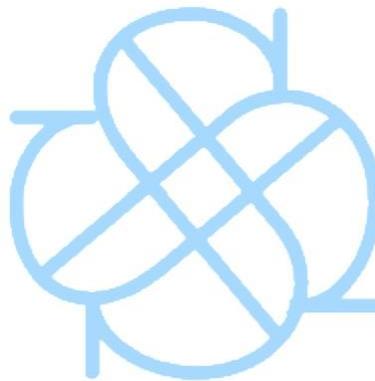
- The middle class and other property owners' ("gentry") wealth increased due to trade and manufacturing
 - Most concerned with economic issues, like the powers of Parliament dealing with the "power of the purse."
 - The lower middle class Puritans (Political/social radicals)
- Nobility relatively small in number and less powerful (compared to France or elsewhere on the continent--still wealthy). Ally with gentry/Commons against the Stuart Kings.
 - Committed Protestants: many got rich with the Dissolution of the Monasteries under Henry VIII
- Stuart kings (James I, Charles I, Charles II, James II) attempt to impose absolutism (almost impossible to impose because of conflicts with Parliament over power)
- English Civil War led to the execution of King Charles I, and this resulted in Puritans' seizure of power in Parliament (Pride's Purge and the "Rump Parliament"), and an attempt to create a Puritan social revolution (Oliver Cromwell and the Protectorate).
 - This revolution ultimately failed when Parliament invited Prince Charles Stuart back to the throne, which is known as the Restoration (monarchy, Church of England, and Parliament is restored).
 - Restoration attempts to create a constitutional monarchy, with defined limitations on the power of Charles II and James II. Fails.
- Glorious Revolution (1689) overthrows James II and creates a constitutional monarchy in which Parliament is clearly sovereign (the Bill of Rights); William and Mary accept.

The Dutch Republic

- Republicanism: no king, weak nobility and the merchant oligarchs are sovereign.
- After achieving independence in 1609 - and confirmed at Westphalia 1648 - there was no king (the previous King had been the King of Spain), and the nobility was relatively weak

or had been merged with the wealthy merchant class (marriage).

- The Netherlands was wealthy and prosperous.
 - “carrying trade,” banking, wool manufacturing, ship building
 - the beginnings of the “agricultural revolution” provides surplus.
 - “Golden Age of the Dutch Republic.”
 - Became a leading commercial power in the 17th century



TERMS AND ID'S

absolutism

constitutionalism

republicanism

the “just price” and the “moral economy”

the “little ice age”

the Peace of Westphalia

the military revolution

Bishop Jacques Boussuet and 'divine right'

Cardinal Richelieu

noblesse de robe

noblesse d'épée

the Fronde

French classicism and the baroque

Jean-Baptiste Colbert and mercantilism

War of Spanish Succession

War of the League of Augsburg

Treaty of Utrecht

Count-Duke of Olivares

serfdom (in eastern Europe)

Junkers

Frederick William (the "Great Elector")

Frederick William I (the "Soldiers' King")

the Mongol Yoke

Ivan the Great

Ivan the Terrible

the "Time of Troubles" and Michael Romanov

Peter the Great

sultan

janissary corps

millet system

Oliver Cromwell and the Protectorate

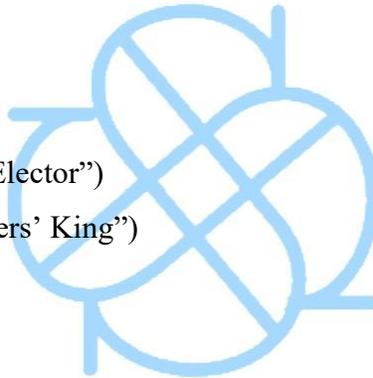
English Bill of Rights

Thomas Hobbes

John Locke

the Restoration

Test Act



Glorious Revolution

Cavaliers

Roundheads

New Model Army

Levellers

‘ship money’

Petition of Right

English Civil War

the Stuart Kings

Declaration of Indulgence

Archbishop Laud

stadtholder

Dutch East India Company

House of Orange

States General (Dutch)

