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CHAPTERS IN BRIEF

Absolute Monarchs in Europe, 1500–1800

Summary

CHAPTER OVERVIEW Spain lost territory and money. The Netherlands split from Spain and grew rich from trade. For a time, France was Europe's most powerful country, where King Louis XIV ruled with total control. Austria's queen resisted a Prussian land grab. Peter the Great modernized Russia. England's Parliament struggled with different kings and became the greatest power in the country.

❶ Spain's Empire and European Absolutism

KEY IDEA During a time of religious and economic instability, Philip II ruled Spain with a strong hand.

Charles V ruled the Holy Roman Empire and various other European countries. In 1556, he retired from the throne and split his holdings. His brother Ferdinand received Austria and the Holy Roman Empire. His son, Philip II, got Spain and its colonies.

Philip expanded his holdings by taking Portugal and gaining its global territories. When he tried to invade England in 1588, though, he failed. The defeat made Spain weaker. However, Spain still seemed strong because of its wealth—gold and silver—that flowed in from the colonies in the Americas.

This wealth led to some serious problems, however. The prices of goods constantly rose. Also, unfair taxes hit the poor, keeping them from building up any wealth of their own. As prices rose, Spaniards bought more goods from other lands. The silver from the colonies, then, began to flow to Spain's enemies.

In the middle of these troubles, Spain lost land. Seven provinces of the Spanish Netherlands rose in protest against high taxes. Also, they were Protestant and Spain was strongly Catholic. In 1579, these seven provinces declared their independence from Spain.

In the new Dutch republic, each province had a leader elected by the people. The Dutch also practiced religious tolerance, letting people worship as they wished. Dutch merchants established a trading empire. They had the largest fleet of merchant ships in the world and were the most important bankers in Europe.

Though he lost possessions, Philip held tight control over Spain. He and others who ruled in the

same way were called absolute monarchs. They believed in holding all power. The Church's power had weakened, which helped make this possible. Some absolute rulers ended conflict within their countries by increasing their power. That is what happened in France.

❷ The Reign of Louis XIV

KEY IDEA After a century of wars and riots, Louis XIV, the most powerful monarch of his time, ruled France.

France was torn by eight religious wars between Catholics and Protestants from 1562 to 1598. In 1589, a Protestant prince, Henry of Navarre, became King Henry IV. He changed religions in 1593, becoming a Catholic to please the majority of his people. In 1598, he issued an order called the Edict of Nantes. It gave Huguenots—French Protestants—the right to live in peace and have their own churches in some cities.

Henry rebuilt the French economy and brought peace to the land. He was followed by his son, a weak king. However, that son had a very capable chief minister, Cardinal Richelieu. He ruled the land for him and increased the power of the crown.

The cardinal ordered that Huguenots could not build walls for their cities. He also said nobles had to destroy their castles. As a result, Protestants and nobles could not hide within walls to defy the king's power. Richelieu used people from the middle class—not nobles—to work in his government. That also cut nobles' power.

French thinkers had reacted to the religious wars with horror. They developed a new attitude—skepticism. Nothing could be known for certain, they argued. Doubting old ideas was the first step to learning the truth, they said.

In 1643, Louis XIV, age four, became king. Cardinal Mazarin ruled for him until Louis was 22. Louis became a powerful ruler, with total control.

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Louis determined never to let nobles challenge him.

He froze the nobles out of his government. He gave more power to government officials and made sure that they answered only to him. He also worked hard to increase the wealth of France. His chief minister of finance, Jean Baptiste Colbert, tried to build French industry. Colbert aimed to convince French people to buy French-made goods and not those from other countries. He urged people to settle in the new French colony in Canada. The fur trade there brought wealth to France.

Louis enjoyed a life of luxury at his court. He built a huge and beautiful palace at Versailles near Paris. He also made sure that nobles had to depend on his favor in order to advance in society.

Louis made France the most powerful nation in Europe. France had more people and a larger army than any other country. However, Louis made some mistakes that later proved costly. After winning some wars against neighboring countries, he became bolder and tried to seize more land. Other nations joined together to stop France by the late 1680s. The high cost of these wars combined with poor harvests to produce problems at home in France.

The final war fought in Louis's time lasted from 1700 to 1714. In this War of the Spanish Succession, France and Spain attempted to set up united thrones. The rest of Europe felt threatened and joined in war against them. Both France and Spain were forced to give up some of their American and European colonies to England, the new rising power.

③ Central European Monarchs Clash

KEY IDEA After a period of turmoil, absolute monarchs ruled Austria and the German state of Prussia.

Germany had suffered from religious wars that ended in 1555. Rulers of each state agreed that they would decide whether their lands would be Catholic or Protestant. Over the next decades, though, the two sides had tense relations. In 1618, a new war broke out and lasted for 30 terrible years.

In the first half of the war, Catholic forces led by Ferdinand, the Holy Roman Emperor, won. However, Germany suffered, because he allowed his large army to loot towns. Then the Protestant king of Sweden won several battles against him. In the last years of the war, France helped the Protestants. Although France was a Catholic nation,

Richelieu feared growing Hapsburg family power.

The Thirty Years' War ended in 1648 with the Peace of Westphalia. It had been a disaster for Germany. About 4 million people had died, and the economy was in ruins. It took Germany two centuries to recover. The peace weakened the power of Austria and Spain and made France stronger. Because of this war, each nation of Europe was seen as having an equal right to negotiate with all the others.

While strong states arose in western Europe, none emerged in central Europe. The economies there were less developed than in the West. Most people were still peasants. This region had not built an economy based in towns. Nobles enjoyed great power, which kept the power of rulers in check. Still, two important powers arose.

The Hapsburg family ruled Austria, Hungary, and Bohemia in an empire that linked many different peoples. Maria Theresa, Queen of Austria, managed to increase her power and cut that of the nobles. She was opposed by the kings of Prussia, a new state in northern Germany. Those kings built a strong state with much power given to the large, well-trained army. In 1740, Frederick the Great of Prussia invaded one of Maria Theresa's lands. The queen fought hard to keep the territory, but lost. Still, in fighting this War of the Austrian Succession, she managed to keep the rest of her empire intact. The two sides fought again beginning in 1756. In this Seven Years' War, Austria abandoned Britain, its old ally, for France and Russia. Prussia joined with Britain. The Prussians and British won. In that victory, Britain gained complete control over France's colonies in North America and India.

④ Absolute Rulers of Russia

KEY IDEA Peter the Great made many changes in Russia to try to make it more like western Europe.

Ivan III had made Moscow the center of a new Russian state with a central government. His son continued that work. His grandson, Ivan IV—called Ivan the Terrible—began as a successful ruler. He added lands to Russia and gave the country a code of laws. After his wife died, however, he ruled harshly. He used secret police to hunt down opponents and kill them. Ivan even killed his own oldest son. A few years after he died, Russian nobles met to name a new ruler. They chose Michael Romanov, the grandnephew of Ivan IV's wife. He began a dynasty that ruled Russia for about 300 years.

The Romanovs restored order to Russia. In the late 1600s, Peter I—called Peter the Great—began an intense program of trying to modernize Russia. Peter admired the nations of western Europe. He traveled in Europe to learn about new technology and ways of working. He returned to Russia determined to make his country more advanced. His first steps were to increase the powers of the czar, or ruler, so he could force people to make the changes he wanted. He put the Russian Orthodox Church under his own control. He cut the power of nobles. He built up the army and made it better trained.

He took several steps to make Russia more western. He brought potatoes as a new food, began Russia's first newspaper, gave more social status to women, and told the nobles to adopt Western clothes. He promoted education and built a grand new capital city, St. Petersburg, on the shores of the Baltic Sea.

Ⓢ Parliament Limits the English Monarchy

KEY IDEA *Absolute monarchs in England were overthrown, and Parliament gained power.*

When Queen Elizabeth I died, her cousin James, king of Scotland, became king of England. James fought with Parliament over money. His religious policies also angered the Puritans in Parliament. They wanted to reform the English church to rid it of Catholic practices. James was unwilling to make these changes.

His son, Charles I, continued the tension between king and Parliament. Parliament forced him to sign a Petition of Right in 1628. By signing, Charles allowed that the king was answerable to Parliament. Then he dissolved the Parliament and tried to raise money without it—going directly against the Petition of Right.

Other actions of Charles had caused Scotland to threaten to invade England. To meet the danger, Charles needed some money, and to raise taxes he needed Parliament. When Charles called a new Parliament, it quickly passed laws to limit his power. Charles responded by trying to arrest its leaders. Soon England was plunged into a civil war: Charles and his Royalists against the supporters of Parliament, many of whom were Puritans.

The English Civil War lasted from 1642 to 1649. Under the leadership of Oliver Cromwell, the forces

of the Puritans won. They tried and executed Charles for treason—the first time a king had ever been executed in public. Cromwell became a military dictator, ruling until 1658. He crushed a rebellion in Ireland and tried to reform society at home. Soon after his death, though, the government collapsed. The new Parliament asked Charles's older son to restore the monarchy. Charles II began to rule in 1660.

Charles II's reign was a period of calm after turmoil. After his death in 1685, James II became king. His pro-Catholic policies angered and worried the English, who feared that he would restore Catholicism. Finally, in 1688, seven members of Parliament contacted James's older daughter, Mary, and her husband, William of Orange, prince of the Netherlands—both Protestants. They wanted them to replace James II on the throne. The event was called the Glorious Revolution, a bloodless revolution that forced James to flee to France. William and Mary agreed, swearing to rule according to the laws made by Parliament. They agreed to accept the Bill of Rights, which guaranteed English people certain rights. From then on, no king or queen could rule England without the consent of Parliament.

Review

1. **Analyzing Causes and Recognizing Effects** Why did Spain weaken in power?
2. **Summarizing** How did Richelieu and Louis XIV increase the power of the French king?
3. **Analyzing Causes and Recognizing Effects** How did the Thirty Years' War affect Germany?
4. **Clarifying** What did Peter the Great do to modernize Russia?
5. **Drawing Conclusions** How did England develop away from an absolute monarchy?