



## TOPIC 3.1. ABSOLUTISM VS. CONSTITUTIONALISM

Supplement to Chambers, *The Western Experience*, Chapter 17: The Emergence of the European State System, pp. 590-631.

<b>TWO MODELS OF GOV'T</b>	<p>During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, France and England moved in two very different political directions. By the close of the century, after decades of civil and religious strife, ENGLAND had developed into a CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCH with a policy of RELIGIOUS TOLERATION. By contrast, FRANCE developed an ABSOLUTIST, CENTRALIZED FORM OF GOVERNMENT dominated by a monarchy that shared little power with any other national institutions and prohibited all religions but ROMAN CATHOLICISM.</p>
<b>DECIDING FACTORS: Revenue Concerns</b>	<p>In the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, changes in military organization, weapons, and tactics sharply INCREASED THE COST OF WARFARE. Because traditional sources of revenue were inadequate to finance these growing costs – as well as the costs of government – monarchs sought new ones. Only monarchies that succeeded in building a SECURE FINANCIAL BASE that was not dependent on the support of noble estates, diets, or assemblies achieved absolute rule. The FRENCH MONARCHY SUCCEEDED in this effort after mid-century, whereas the ENGLISH MONARCHY FAILED.</p>
	<p>In their pursuit of adequate income, ENGLISH MONARCHS of the 17<sup>th</sup> century THREATENED THE LOCAL POLITICAL INTERESTS and economic well being of the country's nobility and others of landed and commercial wealth. These politically active groups invoked traditional English liberties. As a consequence, they effectively resisted the monarchs' attempted intrusions throughout the country. The experience of Louis XIV, the French king, was different. During the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, he would make the FRENCH NOBILITY DEPENDENT upon his goodwill and patronage. In turn, he would support their local influence and their place in a firm social hierarchy.</p>
<b>Religious Factors</b>	<p>Religious Factors also affected the political destinies of France and England.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A strong Protestant religious movement known as PURITANISM arose in ENGLAND and actively opposed the Stuart monarchy.</li> <li>• Louis XIV, in contrast, CRUSHED THE PROTESTANT COMMUNITIES of France. He was generally supported in these efforts by Roman Catholics who saw religious uniformity enforce by the monarchy as working to their advantage.</li> </ul>
<b>Institutional Differences</b>	<p>There were also major institutional differences between the two countries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In PARLIAMENT, ENGLAND possessed a political institution that had long BARGAINED WITH THE MONARCH over political issues.</li> <li>• FRANCE LACKED A SIMILARLY STRONG TRADITION of broad liberties, representation, and bargaining between the monarchy and other national institutions.</li> </ul>
<b>Personalities</b>	<p>Finally, PERSONALITIES played an important role.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During the first half of the century, FRANCE profited from the guidance of two of its most ABLE STATESMEN, Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin.</li> <li>• The four Stuart monarchs of ENGLAND, on the other hand, had trouble simply making people trust them.</li> </ul>
<b>Social Concerns</b>	<p>In both England and France, the NOBILITY and large landowners stood at the top of the social hierarchy and SOUGHT TO PROTECT THEIR PRIVILEGES and local interests.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In ENGLAND, parliamentary government was the result of the efforts of the English landed classes to protect their concerns and LIMIT THE POWER OF THE MONARCHY to interfere with life on the local level.</li> <li>• The FRENCH NOBILITY under Louis XIV, in contrast, eventually concluded that the best way to secure heir own interests was to SUPPORT THE MONARCHY.</li> </ul>

## THE RISE OF ABSOLUTE MONARCHY IN FRANCE

<p><b>HENRY IV (1589-1610)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brought an end to religious civil wars and brought peace to the nation.</li> <li>• Issued the Edict of Nantes, which guaranteed religious freedom for the Protestant Huguenots.</li> <li>• Laid the foundation for France's economic, military, and intellectual leadership during the 17<sup>th</sup> century.</li> </ul>
<p><b>CARDINAL RICHELIEU</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Served as the chief advisor to Louis XIII.</li> <li>• Established the STRUCTURE OF ABSOLUTISM by:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tearing down the castles of the nobility</li> <li>• Replacing the nobility with INTENDANTS as chief administrators in the provinces.</li> <li>• Not summoning the Estates-General, which could have challenged the power of the king.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>CARDINAL MAZARIN</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GOVERNED FRANCE WITH A FIRM AND EFFICIENT HAND during the minority of Louis XIV.</li> <li>• Challenged by a civil war, known as the FRONDE -- a reaction against the excesses of the now powerful royal administration. The violence of the struggle served to convince many Frenchmen that the ONLY ALTERNATIVE TO ROYAL ABSOLUTISM WAS ANARCHY.</li> </ul>
<p><b>LOUIS XIV: THE SUN KING</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chose the sun as the symbol of his power.</li> <li>• Worked to enhance the power and prestige of the crown, which he defended haughtily: "All power, all authority, resides in the hands of the king..."</li> <li>• Ordered the construction of the PALACE OF VERSAILLES, which became a magnificent symbol of his greatness.</li> <li>• INCREASED THE POWER OF THE <i>INTENDANTS</i>.</li> <li>• REORGANIZED THE ARMY, making it the largest (nearly 400,000 men by 1703) and most modern in Europe.</li> <li>• Instituted a wide variety of ECONOMIC REFORMS to strengthen the French economy and increase revenue so that surpluses accumulated in the royal treasury.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrated the NEGATIVE ASPECTS of royal absolutism by:                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isolating himself from the people at Versailles</li> <li>• Revoking the Edict of Nantes, which had guaranteed religious freedom to the Protestant Huguenots.</li> <li>• Squandering the resources of his realm through military conquest.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>FRANCE THREATENS THE BALANCE OF POWER</b></p>	<p>Louis embarked on a SERIES OF WARS to attain for France her "natural boundaries" by extending French territory eastward to the Rhine at the expense of the Spanish and Holy Roman empires. His motive was not security for France but PRESTIGE FOR THE MONARCHY.</p>
<p><b>Alliances Against France</b></p>	<p>Because he threatened the balance of power, rival nations formed a SERIES OF ALLIANCES against him:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Triple Alliance</u> (England, Sweden, Holland)</li> <li>• <u>League of Augsburg</u> (England, Sweden, Holland, Austria, Spain, Bavaria, Saxony, Palatinate)</li> <li>• <u>Grand Alliance</u> (England, Holland, Holy Roman Empire).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Results:  France Weakened Treasury Bankrupt</b></p>	<p>As a result of the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), which brought an end to these wars, a fairly satisfactory BALANCE OF POWER WAS MAINTAINED on the continent for nearly thirty years. But FRANCE WAS WEAKENED and the French TREASURY WAS BANKRUPT.</p>

## EVOLUTION OF CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY IN ENGLAND

<p><b>JAMES I (1603-1625)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lacked common sense and tact and <b>ADVOCATED THE DIVINE RIGHT OF KINGS</b> ("... kings are not only God's lieutenants upon earth and sit upon God's throne, but even by God himself they are called gods . . . I will not be content that my power be disputed . . .")</li> <li>• <b>DISSOLVED PARLIAMENT</b> and ruled without it for ten years.</li> <li>• <b>ALIENATED THE PURITANS</b>, members of the urban middle class, who resented his arbitrary taxation and wanted laws to protect their commercial interests.</li> </ul>
<p><b>CHARLES I (1625-1649)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was <b>CONTEMPTUOUS OF THE RIGHTS OF PARLIAMENT</b> and supported the pro-Catholic faction of the Anglican Church.</li> <li>• <b>RULED WITHOUT PARLIAMENT</b> until the <b>LONG PARLIAMENT</b> set to work to make its powers coequal with his.</li> <li>• Was <b>EXECUTED</b> in 1649 after a Civil War involving the Royalists v. the Parliamentarians. (The Parliamentarians triumphed.)</li> </ul>
<p><b>OLIVER CROMWELL: PURITAN REPUBLIC (1649-1660)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government moved from a Commonwealth to a Protectorate to a virtual dictatorship.</li> <li>• Government based on the <b>INSTRUMENT OF GOVERNMENT</b>, the first modern constitution.</li> <li>• Government's <b>REPRESSIVE MEASURES</b> caused discontent.</li> </ul>
<p><b>CHARLES II: RESTORATION OF MONARCHY (1660-1685)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreed to <b>RULE THROUGH PARLIAMENT</b>.</li> <li>• Parliament passed the <b>TEST ACT</b> (excluding Catholics and dissenters from public office) in response to his secret treaty with Louis XIV and his suspension of laws against Catholics and dissenters.</li> <li>• Forerunners of political parties developed: <b>WHIGS</b> (stood for Parliament, Protestantism, and the business class) v. <b>TORIES</b> (supported the king, the church, and the land).</li> <li>• Parliament passed the <b>HABEAS CORPUS ACT</b> in 1679.</li> </ul>
<p><b>JAMES II AND THE GLORIOUS REVOLUTION OF 1688</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ADJOURNED PARLIAMENT</b> after it refused to repeal the Test Act and Habeas Corpus Act.</li> <li>• <b>APPOINTED CATHOLICS</b> to important offices.</li> <li>• <b>THREATENED A CATHOLIC SUCCESSION</b> when his Catholic wife gave birth to a son.</li> <li>• Fled to France when Parliament offered the English crown to William of Orange.</li> </ul>
<p><b>WILLIAM AND MARY</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreed to a <b>BILL OF RIGHTS</b>, limiting the power of the crown.</li> <li>• Parliament supplemented the Bill of Rights and consolidated the Bloodless Revolution with:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>TOLERATION ACT</b> of 1689, which gave Protestant dissenters the right of public worship.</li> <li>• <b>FREEDOM OF THE PRESS</b></li> <li>• An <b>INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY</b> (judges were irremovable)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>RESULTS OF THE GLORIOUS REVOLUTION</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Bill of Rights and subsequent legislation guaranteed certain fundamental rights to the common people, but the nation was now governed by a <b>SMALL, WEALTHY MINORITY OF MERCHANTS, GENTRY, AND LANDED NOBILITY</b>.</li> <li>• The development of such concepts as <b>POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY</b> and the <b>RIGHT OF REVOLUTION</b> which were established in England by the Revolution of 1688 were later to have a profound influence on the world's government and peoples.</li> </ul>

<p><b>ONLINE RESOURCES</b></p>	<p>For more information on this topic, explore one or more of the following online resources:</p> <p><a href="#">The Path to Royal Absolutism: The Renaissance and Early 17th Century</a>: Interesting website that uses primary sources to tell the story of the path to absolutism.</p> <p><a href="#">The Rise and Fall of Absolute Monarchy</a>: Sequel to “The Path to Royal Absolutism.”</p> <p><a href="#">The Glorious Revolution - Back to Class Analysis</a>: Discusses the significance of constitutionalism in England.</p>
<p><b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b></p>	<p>Drawing on the resources you have had an opportunity to explore (textbook, course documents, online resources, library resources), answer one or more of the following questions:</p> <p><b>By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, England and France had different systems of government with different religious policies. What were the main similarities and differences between the two? Why did each nation develop as it did? How much did the particular personalities of the rulers of each nation determine the manner in which their political institutions emerged?</b></p> <p><b>Why did the English king and Parliament come into conflict in the 1640s? What were the most important issues behind the war between them, and who bears more responsibility for it? What role did religion play in the conflict?</b></p> <p><b>What was the Glorious Revolution and why did it take place? What were James II's mistakes, and what were the issues involved in the events of 1688? What kind of settlement emerged from the revolution? How did England in 1700 differ from England in 1600?</b></p> <p><b>Discuss the development of absolutism in France. What policies of Henry IV and Louis XIII were essential in creating the absolute monarchy? What was Louis's religious policy?</b></p> <p><b>Assess the success of Louis XIV's foreign policy. What were his aims? Were they realistic? To what extent did he attain them? To what extent did he forge events, and to what extent did he react to events outside France?</b></p>