
Assessment of the Dictatorial Rule of Louis XIV

Absolutism became prominent in the sixteen hundreds. Many rulers were absolutists, but only a few such as Louis XIV, Peter the Great and Frederick William were successful in using this method of control; out of the three, one was the absolutists of them all, Louis XIV. Tasks such as: subjugating nobles, centralizing authority, making money, waging war, controlling the countries culture and religion and creating glory all classify a monarch as an absolutist ruler.

Louis XIV was the ruler of France from 1643 to 1715. Above all Louis believed in divine right, he had to answer to no one except God. To do this he replaced his high nobles with the lower nobles so that they were seen as court figures instead of political figures, he wanted total control. During a peaceful time he would have up to 20,000 men apart of the army and when war was a threat the number grew to 400,000 trained soldiers. Louis XIV engaged in at least five major wars during his reign, Franco-Dutch War, War of the League of Augsburg, War of Spanish Succession, War of Devolution and War of the Reunions. Out of the wars he fought he conquered Ghent, Duncy of Brabant and some of Spanish Netherlands. He made all of the local governments and religious organizations subjects to him. Louis participated in Gallicanism and took control over France's church, disregarding the Pope and the Clergy's power. He once said, "L'Etat, c'est moi" which means, "I am the state".

Aside from all the military success, Louis XIV was not always successful with money management for France. Jean Baptiste Colbert became his financial advisor from early on in Louis's reign. To boost France's economy, he reduced its dependence on foreign goods and increased export by building more roads throughout France, making trade easier. Louis created the Palace of Versailles and relocated it just outside of Paris, where the original palace was. He was very appreciative of the arts. He used his palace as a "museum" to display all the finer things he had, such as his intricate gardens and courtyards. Louis was the created French Classicism. He censored scandalous texts and political writings that did not agree with absolute monarchy, increased the value of press, science, exploration, art and academics.

In order to centralize the state, Louis XIV made France Roman Catholic. He passed many ordinances that had to do with religion. The Grande Ordinance de Procedure Civile (1667) said that baptisms, marriages and burials all had to be registered with the state. Another one he created was, Grande Ordinance sure les Colonies (1685), this allowed the people to own slaves so long as they were members of the Roman Catholic Church. It also stated that slave families could not be broken up and all slaves must be baptized. Louis XIV was very religious and strictly enforced Roman Catholicism on his people. He expelled Jews, destroyed Protestant schools and forced babies to be baptized Catholic.

Unlike Louis XIV, Peter the Great never saw his noblemen as a threat. In fact, he wanted them to be the best they could be. Peter sent them from Russia to Western Europe to get a good education so that they could help to develop Russia more. Early on in his reign he wasn't very keen on actually ruling Russia, he would rather have been working on ships and sailing but after the Northern War in 1721, Russia was declared and Empire and he Declared himself "Peter the Great", Emperor.

In 1703, St. Petersburg was founded under Peter the Great. This city was on the Neva River delta making it a major sea port. Russia now had an easier access to Europe's trade routes and a more efficient means of income. The country excelled in all forms of industry. Russia was a source of raw material, labor, finished goods and factories. Peter the Great organized a Poll Tax that funded the manufacturing and trade.

One Peter's greatest accomplishments came from his interest in technological and mechanical arts, and how they could help military science. He was educated in both allowing him to be innovative in the way he organized the Russian Army and the creating of the Russian Navy. He invited Europe's best engineers, shipbuilders and architects to Russia to modernize the country. Peter the Great valued a good education and thought it was key to the success of Russia. He founded a School of Navigation, Math, Medicine, Engineering and Science. He encouraged the youth to forget Russian traditions and adopt Western Values.

Frederick William was the least accomplished of the three Absolutist Rulers. However, like Peter the Great he didn't see the nobility as a threat. He even exempted them from the harsh taxes he put on the country, so long as they agreed to get rid of the Estates General. To the country he had a bigger role as a Military Commander, unlike Peter the Great and Louis XIV. This was because Prussia and Brandenburg were primarily military countries. Frederick William started his reign without a lot. He built an army with the help of French subsidies and became Commander. He won his first major war in the Battle of Warsaw in 1656, beginning Prussia's military history. Remarkably, his army had 40,000 soldiers by 1678. Fredrick William was noted as such a good leader because of his broad directives and decision making.

Aside from his role as a Commander, Fredrick William turned out to be a good ruler. As a Calvinist, it made him many enemies and at times it was difficult for him to rule. He stood by his faith however and let it shape many of the decisions he made. To reform his country Fredrick William convinced some of the French and Walloon Huguenots to move to his country to help it's technical and industrial base. One of his big steps forward was when he connected Bradenburg and the Duchy of Prussia by canals to make traveling easier. This was also a step in the direction of rebuilding the war destroyed parts of his country.

A major theme between all three of the monarchs is that they all were successful through war and made money by trade. Although Frederick William's country centered on its military, Louis XIV and Peter the Great had the better militaries. Louis's army fought more battles than Peter but, they fell short and lost when they fought Russia. France, Russia and Prussia all had means of trade. France tried to only export and not import because Louis XIV thought it would improve the economy. Peter the Great was fascinated by Western Europe so he imported loads of goods and exported as well. Prussia was smaller than the other two countries so they needed to import to be well supplied. Lastly, Mercantilism was commonly used by Louis XIV, Peter the Great and Fredrick William. They all granted monopolies, tariffs on foreign good and tried expanding their countries.

The absolutist of the absolutists is Louis XVI because of how he approached all the absolutist tasks. What set Louis XVI apart from the other two rulers was his sense of what is going on with his country and how he truly believed in his Divine Rights. He not only believed it he acted upon it. One of the first things he did when he was reigning was to lower the importance of nobles. Soon after he put himself in charge of France's Church. Louis XVI placed heavy tariffs on foreign goods so that he could keep France a centralized state. Another reason he is more

absolute is because he was able to balance all duties that come along with ruling a country. Louis XVI brought culture and religion to his country, he expanded and defended it and bettered the economy. He did what any great absolute monarch does, he found a way to control almost all the aspects of his citizens life's. At the end of his time, Louis XVI managed to defeat every major European power he fought against, except Russia. When he died September 1, 1715 at age 77, he had reigned for 72 years which is longer than any other European Monarch in history.

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