

7

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL DYNAMICS IN THE 1700s

As Enlightenment ideas spread across Europe, monarchs became interested in implementing aspects of some of them, specifically, religious toleration and the abolition of serfdom. In particular, during the latter half of the eighteenth century, three rulers in Eastern Europe—Joseph II of Austria, Catherine II of Russia, and Frederick II of Prussia—came to power eager to reform their respective countries. At the same time, war persisted. Most wars were fought primarily for territorial expansion rather than for religious or ideological reasons. The century also saw the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution, during which the upper classes grew in wealth and the divide between rich and poor widened.

KEY TERMS

Agricultural Revolution	primogeniture
balance of power	reason of state
cottage industry	Seven Years' War
enlightened absolutism	War of Austrian Succession
estates	War of Spanish Succession
Grand Tour	
Junkers	
mercantilism	

KEY CONCEPTS

- Politically, there were some changes during the eighteenth century. Although absolutism remained the predominant form of government across all of Europe except England, several monarchs offered some rights to their people. Eighteenth-century monarchs also waged larger, more encompassing wars in an attempt to build bigger, stronger states.
- Mercantilism remained the preferred economic system of the absolutists. However, revolutions in agriculture and industry had a substantial impact on Europe, especially in the west, leading to the growth of capitalism. These economic changes directly affected the highly structured levels in society, opening up opportunities for the lower classes to improve their economic condition.
- During the latter half of the eighteenth century, rulers in Russia, Prussia, and Austria put in place policies that reflected the ideals of the enlightened philosophes.

For a full discussion of Europe in the 1700s, see *Western Civilization*, 7th and 8th editions, Chapter 18.

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY POLITICS

Over the course of the eighteenth century, five major powers arose. In Western Europe, France and England grew to have great political and economic might. Their main rivals, Spain and the Netherlands, no longer had the strength to hold them at bay. In Eastern Europe, Prussia and Russia set out to rival the still-great Austria, mostly through the conquest of strategic tracts of land.

In the west, France began the century under the reign of Louis XIV, marking the height of European absolutism. At Louis XIV's death in 1715, his great-grandson, Louis XV, became king. Although he reigned until 1774, Louis XV never gained the same level of control as his grandfather. That was in part due to the fact that he began his reign as a five-year-old and in part because of France's enormous economic problems, a result of its tax policies and almost constant wars under Louis XIV. After Louis XV's death, his grandson came to power. He, too, was unable to exercise the same centralized power as had Louis XIV. Although still a major European power, France was weaker by the end of the century and ripe for revolution.

England, on the other hand, had seen great gains in representative government during the seventeenth century and began the new century with Parliament working side by side with the Stuart monarchy. When Queen Anne died childless in 1714, England looked for leadership from Stuart cousins in Hanover, a German state. The Hanoverians, especially George I and George II, had little feel for the British political system. As a consequence, they depended heavily on their chief ministers, giving Parliament even more influence than it had gained with such difficulty during the 1600s. Eighteenth-century prime ministers—especially Robert Walpole, the first to have that title, and William Pitt the Elder—helped craft major policies during the reign of George II, including many English economic and military policies.

To the east of England and France, absolutism characterized the eighteenth century. Three monarchs in Eastern Europe are generally referred to as enlightened absolutists, or enlightened despots: Frederick II of Prussia, Catherine II of Russia, and Joseph II of Austria. Although other monarchs had tried various enlightened reforms in their countries, Catherine, Frederick, and Joseph justified their absolutism by encouraging reforms. In the end, however, they did not succeed in creating much long-term change.

In Prussia the Hohenzollerns encouraged the growth of a highly structured society and the building of a strong, militaristic state. Continuing a policy begun by Frederick William the Great Elector, Frederick William I gave the Junkers, the Prussian noble class, the highest positions in the military. This maintained the strong link between military virtue, based on loyalty, and the role of nobles in his state, and was key to the efficient bureaucracy he created to run the Prussian government.

Despite his father's disapproval of his intellectual interests, Frederick II (the Great) was interested in Enlightenment ideas, and he implemented several political reforms, including the establishment of a single law code, religious toleration, and equal legal treatment for his people. Frederick also made social and cultural improvements in the areas of religious freedom, education, literature, music, science, and agriculture. To improve agriculture, Frederick ordered the cultivation of potatoes as a hedge against rising bread prices and possible famine and ordered that they be made a part of his soldiers' diet.

Catherine II (the Great), wife of Tsar Peter III, took over as autocrat of Russia after the murder of her husband in 1762. German by birth, she never remarried, and ruled alone for over thirty years. She corresponded with several philosophes, most notably Voltaire. Through this long-term exchange of letters, Catherine came to believe in many of the ideals of the Enlightenment and subsequently attempted to introduce them to her countrymen. She offered greater local self-government and legal reforms and encouraged the expansion of education, the arts, and science. However, in time Catherine was forced to choose between providing Enlightenment policies for her people and strengthening her state. To maintain and build Russia, Catherine set out to conquer lands to the south and west. Further, in quelling Pugachev's Rebellion, an anti-government revolt that included peasants, Catherine wound up extending serfdom. In attempting to strengthen Russia, she put herself at odds with the very enlightenment ideals she had espoused and weakened her ability to effect change because of her indebtedness to the nobles who had helped her.

In the Austrian Empire, Joseph II, son of Maria Theresa, continued the long history of Austrian Habsburg rule. Like Frederick the Great and Catherine the Great, he sought to put in place enlightened policies. A man of deep convictions, Joseph introduced religious toleration, tax reform, and educational improvements. To reform the Austrian legal system, he offered equal legal treatment for all people, and ended torture and the death penalty. Although he was considered by many historians the most enlightened of the enlightened despots, most of Joseph's reforms did not last beyond his death in 1790.

AP Tip

The response to Enlightenment ideals by Frederick II, Catherine II, and Joseph II is a frequent theme on the AP European exam. Focus your study on several policies for each ruler and how those policies reflected the Enlightenment.

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY WARS

Dabblers in Enlightenment ideals, these enlightened despots and other leaders across Europe were deeply engaged in devastating wars during the eighteenth century. Religion was displaced by concerns over the continental balance of power as the major cause of European wars.

Rulers during this period also began to shift from making decisions aimed at extending their dynasty to making decisions based on reason of state—the strength of their country considered in a longer timeframe. As a consequence, European countries began competing to become major powers as leaders put the longevity of their own states over virtually all else.

WAR OF THE SPANISH SUCCESSION

A good example of this is the War of the Spanish Succession, the last of the many wars Louis XIV waged over the course of his long reign. When the last Habsburg ruler of Spain died in 1700, Louis was eager to see his grandson Philip become king. Concerned about the continued growth of France, several countries, including England, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Netherlands, went to war to stop Louis. The Treaty of Utrecht, ending a war that had dragged on for more than a decade, allowed Philip to take the Spanish throne but guaranteed that the French and Spanish monarchies would never unite. This war began a century of warfare in which nations attempted to achieve balance of power (allowing no one country to dominate others) as they strove to become major European powers.

WAR OF THE AUSTRIAN SUCCESSION

The War of the Austrian Succession, beginning in 1740, was led by Frederick II (the Great) of Prussia. His goal was to seize Austrian Silesia and thwart the rise of Maria Theresa, whom he assumed would be weak. England joined in support of Austria, thus leading France, England's traditional enemy, to join with Prussia. The war ended with the signing of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, which returned Europe to its status quo with one exception: Prussia refused to give up Silesia and had begun its climb to become a major European power.

THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR

Austria's loss of Silesia set the stage for another war, which broke out in 1756. The Seven Years' War grew out of two major conflicts. The first was a clash between England and France in the New World,

beginning in North America what is known as the French and Indian War. The second was the attack on Saxony by Frederick II of Prussia, part of his plan to build a greater Prussia. But there was a drastic changing of alliances. As the war progressed, England joined its old enemy, Prussia, and some small German states against Austria, which allied with its old enemy, France, and Russia. This so-called Diplomatic Revolution demonstrated the growing desire for balance of power in Europe.

The victory of Prussia and England, both in Europe and in colonies around the world, led to dramatic changes in that balance of power. With the Treaty of Hubertusburg and the Treaty of Paris in 1763, Prussia became a truly major European state, England solidified its position as a major colonial power, and France and Austria were greatly weakened.

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SOCIETY

As the eighteenth century progressed, life expectancy increased for many reasons, including better foods and fewer devastating diseases. Also, the general structure of the family began to change. Although the father was still the head of the household, families tended to build stronger bonds, with the upper and middle classes tending to focus more on the development of their children.

Additionally, as society changed and the ideas of the Enlightenment spread, the laws and customs of primogeniture began to change. The eldest son was still considered by many to be the prime inheritor of family estates, but this was no longer automatically presumed; in England in particular, the upper classes began to look at all of their children as deserving of equal attention.

Society continued to be divided into classes—an upper class, a middle class, a working class (including small farmers), and the poor. In Western Europe these classes—or estates, as they were called in France—had been entrenched for hundreds of years, so the upper class was solidly in power. The wealthy continued to own large tracts of land on which multitudes of peasants worked. As towns grew and the expanding middle class developed trade and, especially in Britain, early cottage industries, the city working class and poor increased in number. The gap between the lives of the upper and middle classes in the cities and the peasants in the countryside was tremendous.

An important custom of the upper class—especially the English—was the Grand Tour. Reflecting the ideals of the Enlightenment, the Grand Tour gave young, prosperous European men the opportunity to learn about life as they traveled across the continent. They frequently went to France to learn about refined culture and to Italy to learn about ancient Rome and art, along the way spending some time on less-than-educational pursuits.

At the other end of the socioeconomic spectrum, peasants lived hard lives. In England, because of the continued enclosure of land and agricultural methods that made more efficient use of the land, many who had owned and worked small plots were forced out. Working others' land, they could survive only at the subsistence level. This pushed them toward the growing towns for work, where they might end up as beggars—before the development of the factory system,

there was little for them in the towns. Although in earlier centuries beggars had been aided by charity, by the eighteenth century, town authorities looked to other options, such as incarceration and public works projects, in dealing with the poor.

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ECONOMICS

During the eighteenth century there were several economic changes. For more than a century, rulers had relied on mercantilism to build empires. An empire provides economic gain by requiring its colonies to trade only with the mother country. Mercantilism was the economic system preferred by many seventeenth-century absolutists, such as Louis XIV, but as absolutism waned, so did mercantilism, especially with the growth of the more economically productive cottage industries and early factories. The physiocrats, led by François Quesnay, also spoke out against mercantilism, encouraging governments to allow the development of free enterprise. By the end of the century, capitalism was on the rise in Europe.

With the growth of industry, beginning in England, the more static agrarian and mercantilistic economies gave way to dynamic profit-oriented ones. Early manufacturers were unable to meet the growing demand for goods, so cottage industry, free of guild restrictions and done in homes, offered greater productivity and, therefore, increased profits. During the latter half of the eighteenth century, the cottage industry system was supplanted by the early factory system. Bringing workers together in one building and using machines powered by water, the latter proved much more profitable than the former.

Aiding this economic growth were the Agricultural Revolution and the expansion of banking, which provided the loans and letters of credit underlying it. Agriculture's transition from primitive to modern production methods—for example, the replacement of the wooden plow by the iron plow—increased the production capacity of land. With improved methods and productivity, the population grew through greater access to food. Further, fewer farm workers were needed to produce that food. At the same time, there was a rising need for industrial workers. All in all, increased agricultural productivity fueled industrial growth by providing the food supplies needed by the growing urban populations.

These economic changes, especially dramatic in England, led to greater international trade and, in turn, to Europe's growing economic presence in the world. Colonies, essential to mercantilism, were just as important to the growth of capitalism in Europe. The factory system depended on increasing quantities of raw materials and markets, both of which could be supplied by colonies.

AP Tip

Socioeconomic history is an important component of the AP exam. Look for ways to connect economic trends to contemporaneous social developments.

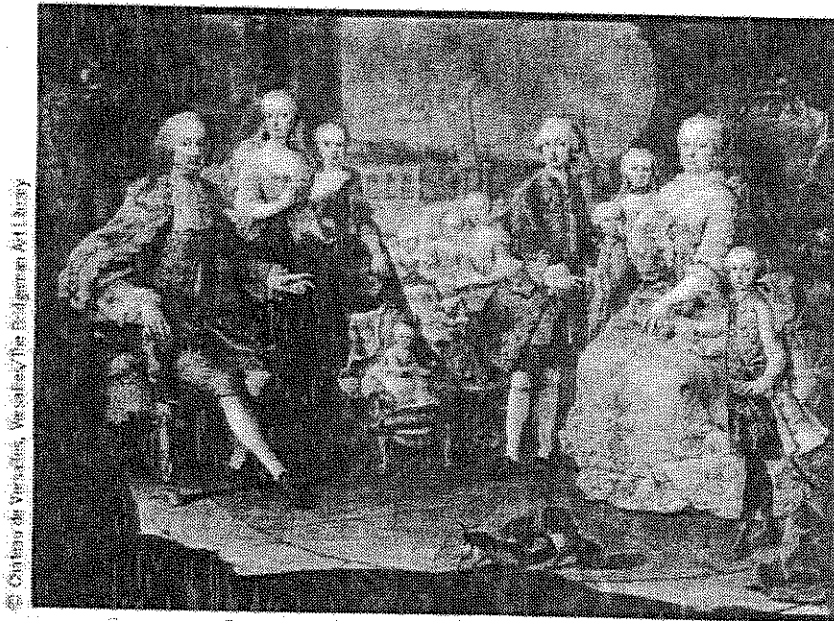
BEYOND ENLIGHTENED DESPOTS

During the eighteenth century, while rulers fought to build their states into major European powers, Enlightenment thought was leading many to hope for a better world. But as the social gaps between the classes widened, the desire of enlightened despots to bring progress to their countries was insufficient to the task. Thus, in 1789, this widening socioeconomic division, along with impending bankruptcy in France, would explode into revolution.

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. After the death of Louis XIV, to what extent did France maintain the same degree of absolutism?
 - (A) Louis' son kept the same level of absolutism as his father.
 - (B) Although France lost many wars after Louis' death, absolutism remained strong in France for the rest of the eighteenth century.
 - (C) The kings who followed Louis XIV tried to maintain the same level of power but were unable to do so.
 - (D) The kings who followed Louis XIV held absolute power over both France and the territories it gained during eighteenth-century wars.
 - (E) After the French loss in the War of Austrian Succession, French absolutism would never be as strong as under Louis XIV.

2. To what extent did the Agricultural Revolution support the Industrial Revolution?
 - (A) The Agricultural Revolution provided the food supplies for the increasing city populace, most of whom worked in the factories.
 - (B) The Industrial Revolution had little connection with the Agricultural Revolution, except that they both existed in the eighteenth century.
 - (C) The Industrial Revolution processed most of the foodstuffs grown because of the Agricultural Revolution.
 - (D) Because the Agricultural Revolution occurred after the Industrial Revolution, it did not support the development of industry at all.
 - (E) With the demand for more workers in the countryside, the Agricultural Revolution actually slowed the progress of the Industrial Revolution.



3. What assumption about Maria Theresa is best supported by the painting above?
- (A) The Austrian Empire controlled by Maria Theresa was vast and powerful.
 - (B) Maria Theresa, as queen, was subservient to her husband, the king.
 - (C) Several of Maria Theresa's children died in infancy.
 - (D) As queen, Maria Theresa had more beautiful clothing than other monarchs.
 - (E) Maria Theresa was proud of her large family.
4. To what extent did the European class system change during the eighteenth century?
- (A) With the development of cottage industries and a growing middle class, the gap between the upper and lower classes grew.
 - (B) Because of Enlightenment ideals, the gap between rich and poor was lessened and virtually disappeared.
 - (C) The development of estates replaced the old class system.
 - (D) Because of their ability to move to towns where they could find work, the poor were more willingly accepted by the upper class.
 - (E) European monarchs, especially those in Western Europe, encouraged involvement by the poor in their governments, thereby lessening the gap between rich and poor.

5. What was a major cause of the War of the Austrian Succession?
 - (A) Poland's weakness, brought on by elected monarchs
 - (B) Prussia's newfound alliance with France, Austria's traditional enemy
 - (C) England's concern about the growing threat of Austria in Eastern Europe
 - (D) the death of Charles VI of Austria and the ascension of Maria Theresa to the throne
 - (E) the succession of Catherine the Great to the thrones of both Austria and Russia

6. What was the backbone of the Prussian military state?
 - (A) The Hohenzollerns depended on their parliament to maintain their strong position in central Europe.
 - (B) At the core of the Prussian state was an absolutist king, William III, who made all major decisions.
 - (C) The Prussian military, based on the hiring of mercenaries from a neighboring German state, Hesse, provided the needed strength to make the Hohenzollerns the most powerful royal family on the continent.
 - (D) The Hohenzollern rulers worked closely with the Junkers to build a strong military.
 - (E) The Hohenzollerns built their military state on a strong trading empire in the Atlantic.

7. Which of the following was an outcome of the War of Austrian Succession and the Seven Years' War?
 - (A) Alliances remained strong during and after each war.
 - (B) The borders of European nations remained the same.
 - (C) Prussia became a major European power as a result of the two wars.
 - (D) Both wars led immediately to another, more devastating war, eventually causing the total collapse of Poland.
 - (E) Each war led to a major French victory in the New World, especially during the French and Indian War.

8. What was the first step in the transition from agrarian and mercantilistic economies to industrialization?
 - (A) the manufacture of products through cottage industries
 - (B) guilds creating more structure for the production of quality products
 - (C) Adam Smith's writing of *The Wealth of Nations*
 - (D) the growing profits from mercantilism as gold and silver flowed into state treasuries
 - (E) the barren nature of homes, leading people to want to work outside of their homes

9. Joseph II of Austria instituted all of the following Enlightenment policies EXCEPT
 - (A) ending the death penalty
 - (B) instituting tax reforms
 - (C) offering equal legal treatment
 - (D) introducing religious toleration
 - (E) providing a constitutional monarchy

10. A significant facet of the lives of the poor in the eighteenth century was that
- (A) they were well supported by the Roman Catholic Church
 - (B) they finally had the opportunity to own their own land instead of having to work for others
 - (C) local governments found that rather than allowing them to beg, it was better to put them in jail or make work for them
 - (D) towns set up charities to help support them financially
 - (E) monarchs looked to move all of their countries' beggars into poorhouses
11. Under the Hanoverians, what was the primary characteristic of the British political system?
- (A) The Hanoverians were dependent on their chief ministers in making policy.
 - (B) The British people disagreed with the vast majority of Hanoverian policies and attempted to overthrow them.
 - (C) Robert Walpole and William Pitt the Elder led England into major wars during the eighteenth century, including the American War for Independence.
 - (D) Kings successfully challenged the power of Parliament in their efforts to become more like absolute monarchs.
 - (E) These three German-born rulers directly created treaties closely linking Britain to their home state of Hanover.
12. How did primogeniture change during the eighteenth century?
- (A) Before that time, people could live on their own land, but during the eighteenth century they had to rent land from others.
 - (B) Gradually, other children besides the eldest son were allowed to inherit family lands.
 - (C) The Roman Catholic Church allowed only the father of the family to own land.
 - (D) Land became very important, helping establish a person's place in society.
 - (E) Because of Enlightenment thought, the laws of primogeniture ended in Europe.
13. What led to the War of the Spanish Succession?
- (A) Elizabeth I of England attempted to take the throne of Spain from Philip II.
 - (B) On the death of the last Habsburg king of Spain, Louis XIV supported his grandson to be the next king of Spain.
 - (C) Louis XV, in a drive to enlarge his empire, fought to be placed in the Spanish line of succession.
 - (D) The Treaty of Utrecht, at the end of the Thirty Years' War, had proved ineffective.
 - (E) The last Habsburg ruler of Spain wanted to be succeeded by his grandson, Louis XVI.

14. To what extent did the Grand Tour reflect the ideals of the Enlightenment?
- (A) The Grand Tour reflected the Enlightenment because it was meant to improve the lives of the wealthy.
 - (B) The Grand Tour focused on the importance of a cultural education, especially learning about ancient Rome and ideals of the Enlightenment.
 - (C) Because countries required their wealthy citizens to go on the tour, the Grand Tour did not reflect enlightened ideals.
 - (D) Because the Grand Tour led nations to war over common lands, it did not reflect any Enlightenment beliefs.
 - (E) The Grand Tour—especially its focus on visiting eastern European enlightened absolutists—reflected the political aspects of Enlightenment thought.
15. Frederick the Great brought all of the following Enlightenment policies to Prussia EXCEPT
- (A) offering equal legal treatment for his people
 - (B) ending serfdom in all of Prussia
 - (C) improving agriculture
 - (D) providing a single legal code
 - (E) granting religious toleration

Free-Response Questions

1. To what extent were Frederick II of Prussia, Catherine II of Russia, and Joseph II of Austria truly enlightened?
2. Starting with a discussion of the images below, compare and contrast the lives of the upper and working classes in eighteenth-century Europe.

