The Triumph of Absolutism in France: Essential Questions (Page 1 of 2)

1. How did Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu lay the foundation of absolutism in France via their political, economic and religious reforms?

2. What were *intendants* and how were they used to centralize power around the crown?

3. How did Louis XIV’s alleged quote, “L’état, c’est moi” and his nickname “The Sun King” illustrate Louis XIV’s attitude toward government and France?

4. What was The Fronde? How did The Fronde shape Louis XIV’s attitude?

5. How did Louis XIV’s political reforms enable him to centralize power around the crown?

6. How did the economic reforms of J.B. Colbert strengthen Louis XIV’s France?

7. What actions did Louis XIV taken against Huguenots and the Jansenists?

8. Why is the Palace of Versailles significant both politically and culturally?
9. What were Louis XIV’s territorial aspirations? How did his aspirations lead to conflict in Europe?

10. What were the causes, nature and results of the War of Spanish Succession?

11. How was the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) a balance of power treaty?

12. What were the major provisions of the Treaty of Utrecht?

13. What were the causes, nature and results of “The Bubbles”?

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**Louis XIII (1610-43): The Foundation of Absolutism**

- background on Louis XIII
  - member of the Bourbon dynasty
  - son of Henry IV (of Navarre), the first Bourbon king
  - was 8 years old when he became king (following the assassination of Henry IV)
  - had a speech impediment and suffered from “double teeth”
  - known as “Louis the Chaste”: he was not known to take mistresses
  - relied upon Cardinal Richelieu, his Chief Minister, to carry out his goals of establishing a centralized, absolute monarchy in France

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Louis XIII
Cardinal Richelieu

- background
  - born in Paris; member of the French lesser nobility
  - member of the Roman Catholic clergy who eventually was elevated to “Cardinal”
- role as “Chief Minister” (1624-42)
  - appointed by Louis XIII to be his “Chief Minister” (Prime Minister)
  - Richelieu often regarded as Europe’s first modern prime minister
  - politique: Richelieu was a politique (believed politics was more important than religion)
  - Richelieu was responsible for many of Louis XIII’s reforms that sought to centralize the power of the monarchy and weaken the traditional powers of the nobility

Richelieu’s political reforms

- attacked the power of the parlements (traditional regional courts run by the nobility) by forbidding the discussion of political matters in public assemblies
- expanded the French bureaucracy by creating intendants
  - intendants were royal civil servants who administered and enforced royal decrees
  - intendants were paid by the crown and, therefore, were loyal to the king of France
  - result: the nobility lost power vis-à-vis the king by means of the king’s use of the intendants
- censored the press
- established a network of spies
- NOTE: Louis XIII & Richelieu had no competition from the Estates General (the French parliament) because it had not met since 1614
Richelieu’s economic reforms

- strengthened mercantilism in France
  - encouraged certain trades, especially luxury textiles
  - granted monopolies to companies trading in North America, the West Indies (Caribbean) and Africa
- encouraged nobles to enter commerce

Richelieu’s military reforms

- built up the French navy to help expand France’s colonial empire and protect French commercial shipping
- outlawed private warfare
- destroyed selected castles of the nobility
- strengthened France’s standing army

Richelieu’s religious reforms

- reason: Richelieu’s desire to limit the power of the Huguenots (French Calvinists) in France
  - as per the Edict of Nantes (1598), Huguenots had been allowed to maintain their military strongholds and militias
  - Charles I of England sent money and troops to support the Huguenots
  - Richelieu’s goals of limiting Huguenot power and maintaining Roman Catholicism as France’s sole religion led to a Huguenot revolt (1627-29)
- reactions to the Huguenot Revolt
  - crushed the Huguenot Revolt with force
  - amended the Edict of Nantes with the Peace of Alais (1629), which forbade the Huguenots from maintaining military fortresses and militias, but continued to allow the French Protestants to practice their faith in certain towns in France
What accomplishments of Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu moved the French monarchy in the direction of political absolutism?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accomplishments of Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Religious &amp; Social</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Richelieu’s foreign policy**

- goal: weaken Habsburg power (Spain and the Holy Roman Empire)

- entered France in the Thirty Years’ War (1618-48)
  - early in the war, France supported Protestant states (Richelieu was a politique) with money & weapons in order to weaken Habsburg Spain and the Holy Roman Empire
  - after 1635, France entered its military into the war against Spain
  - France defeated Spain in the Battle of Rocroi (1643), the last major battle of The Thirty Years’ War
  - Thirty Years’ War ended with the Peace of Westphalia (1648)
  - France emerged from the war as Europe’s greatest power

**Richelieu died in 1642; Louis XIII died in 1643**
Journal 21/A: Louis XIV claimed to possess in his own person, as sovereign ruler, a monopoly over the lawmaking processes and the armed forces of the kingdom.

---Palmer Chapter 21 • pp. 169-81---

Directions: Using sentences or detailed bulleted notes, identify & explain the evidence Palmer uses to support the thesis listed above.

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Louis XIV (1643-1715): The Triumph of Absolutism

- background on Louis XIV
  - son of Louis XIII; Bourbon dynasty
  - became king when he was 5 years old
  - personality: hardworking, ambitious and intelligent
  - early years were dominated by his Chief Minister, Cardinal Mazarin (minister from 1643-61)

- Louis XIV basics
  - ultimate goals: one king, one law, one faith
  - most famous alleged quote: “L’état, c’est moi.” (“I am the state.”)
  - known as “The Sun King”: France revolved around him
  - absolutist government justified by divine right, as per the political philosophy of Bishop Bossuet, Louis XIV’s court preacher

Louis XIV by H. Rigaud

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Louis XIV (1643-1715): The Triumph of Absolutism

“The royal power is absolute. Many writers who hate absolutism have tried to confuse absolute government with arbitrary government, in which the king uses his power to further his own pleasures. But arbitrary government and absolute government are completely different.

The king is not responsible to anyone on earth for his acts....Without this absolute authority, the king could neither do good nor repress evil. His power must be such that no one can hope to escape him. The only protection individuals have against the king’s authority is that they are innocent of having acted against him or God....”

—Bishop Bossuet,
Politics Drawn from the Very Words of Holy Scripture (1679)
as quoted in The Shaping of Western Society (1968) by Edwin Fenton, ed.

Exam Skills (ES): Primary Source Interpretation

In his Politics Drawn from the Very Words of Holy Scripture (1679), how did Bishop Bossuet justify political absolutism?
Louis XIV (1643-1715): The Triumph of Absolutism

- **Louis XIV’s “Early Period” (1643-61)**
  - while Louis XIV was young, his government was dominated by Chief Minister Cardinal Mazarin, who sought to continue the centralizing policies of his predecessor, Cardinal Richelieu
  - The Fronde (1648-53): “The Slingshot Tumults”
    - uprising of the nobles (and the noble-dominated parlements) against the centralizing policies of the crown; occurred as Mazarin attempted to force the nobles to pay a tax to help bring the Thirty Years’ War to a close
    - nobility hoped the reality of a young king coupled with an inexperienced chief minister would provide them an opportunity to reverse the centralizing policies that had been established under Louis XIII
    - revolt eventually crushed by the forces of Mazarin
    - The Fronde provided Louis XIV with the incentive and inspiration to move the royal court out of Paris (to Versailles) and further centralize power around his executive government (political absolutism)

- **Louis XIV’s political reforms**
  - upon Mazarin’s death (1661), Louis XIV declared that he was to be his own Chief Minister
  - increased the size of the French bureaucracy by adding more intendants with even greater responsibility
    - often intendants were from the bourgeoisie
    - intendants were forbidden from administering the area from which they hailed
  - empowered the Catholic bourgeoisie or recently appointed Catholic nobles (which, therefore, struck at power and influence of the Huguenot nobles and the traditional Catholic nobility)
  - eliminated great nobles from his royal council
  - used royal orders of arrest and a secret police
  - **NOTE:** Louis XIV had no competition from the Estates General (the French parliament) because it had not met since 1614
Journal 21/B: Colbert worked to make France economically powerful and self-sufficient.

Directions: Using sentences or detailed bulleted notes, identify & explain the evidence Palmer uses to support the thesis listed above.

Louis XIV (1643-1715): The Triumph of Absolutism

Louis XIV’s economic reforms: spearheaded by Louis XIV’s Chief Economics Minister, J.B. Colbert, who strengthened mercantilism in France

- reduced internal tariffs and increased external tariffs
- replaced local business codes with a national “Commercial Code”
- built roads and canals
- expanded manufacturing in selected areas (silk, glassware, woolens)
- introduced new taxes on salt (the gabelle), wine and tobacco
- established a tariff-free zone within France called “The Five Great Farms”
- established the French East India company (1664)
- established the French Academy of Sciences in 1666 (sometimes called the Royal Academy of France)
Louis XIV (1643-1715): The Triumph of Absolutism

- **Louis XIV’s military reforms**
  - Louis centralized control of the military
    - appointed himself to sit atop the military chain of command
    - continued to weaken the influence of private armies and regional military affiliations (which struck at the traditional power of the nobles)
  - war was made an official activity of state
    - only the king could declare war
    - soldiers could only fight for the king’s military
    - soldiers had to wear state-issued uniforms
  - foreign policy goals: sought to expand France’s borders in the north-east to the Rhine River (which he deemed to be France’s “natural boundary”) and control the throne in Spain
  - expanded taxes to help maintain France’s large standing army and France’s ambitious foreign policy initiatives (tax burden fell on the non-noble, non-clerical classes of France)

- **Louis XIV’s religious policies**
  - revoked the Edict of Nantes in 1685
    - Edict of Nantes (1589) originally issued by Henry IV, a Calvinist who converted to Catholicism, to end the French Wars of Religion. The Edict of Nantes granted Huguenots (French Calvinists) freedom of conscience and some religious freedom in Huguenot-controlled towns (ex., La Rochelle).
    - Peace of Alais (1629): Louis XIII & Cardinal Richelieu weakened the Huguenot strongholds and restricted the rights of French Protestants
    - Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes altogether, allowing only Catholicism to be maintained as France’s faith; the revocation of the Edict of Nantes forced many Huguenots to flee to the Netherlands, the Protestant German states and North America
Louis XIV (1643-1715): The Triumph of Absolutism

• Louis XIV’s religious policies (cont’d)

✓ Jansenism: background
  ➡ Catholic splinter group founded by Flemish theologian Cornelius Jansen
  ➡ beliefs of Jansenism: largely Catholic with some Calvinist overtones, such as predestination and a strict moral code

✓ Louis XIV’s repression of Jansenism
  ➡ Louis XIV sought to destroy Jansenism because it challenged his goal of “one faith” for France and he associated it with The Fronde (some of the nobles who led The Fronde were Jansenists)
  ➡ Louis XIV closed the Convent of Port-Royal-des-Champs (1710), a stronghold of Jansenism
  ➡ encouraged Jesuits to theologically challenge the teachings of the Jansenists

Journal 21/C: Versailles completed the political and moral ruin of the French aristocracy.

—Palmer Chapter 21 • pp. 169-81—

Directions: Using sentences or detailed bulleted notes, identify & explain the evidence Palmer uses to support the thesis listed above.
Louis XIV (1643-1715): The Triumph of Absolutism

- Louis XIV: built the Palace of Versailles

✓ background

- The Fronde had convinced Louis XIV that Paris was too dangerous and too dirty to be the seat of his royal court and the French government
- Louis XIV understood the importance of the theater of politics and, as a result, sought to build a palace that would be the ultimate stage setting for his political drama
- Louis XIV transformed the royal hunting grounds in the town of Versailles (about 12 miles outside of Paris) into Europe's most famous palace

Gilded decorative sculptures at Versailles

Louis XIV and Versailles: Reflections On

“Life at the court of Louis XIV was a daily drama in which he played the lead. He was also its director and producer, and he built his own theater for it as soon as he was of age and fully king: the palace at Versailles. It was wise to move the court out of Paris, away from the restless populace and the intellectuals. When the château 11 miles away was completed, the show, underwritten by the vanity of the nobles themselves, put them at the mercy of the Grand Monarch. Every hour of every day they wanted his favor, his glance—a nod was enough reward, a blessing. By watching one another, making little plots, and getting in each other’s way, the mischief-makers of the Fronde were kept amused and tamed.”

Louis XIV (1643-1715): The Triumph of Absolutism

• Louis XIV: built the Palace of Versailles (cont’d)
  ✓ architectural highlights
    ➡ structure, decorative arts and gardens were designed by Louis Le Vau, André Le Nôtre and Charles Le Brun
    ➡ main facade is 1/3 of a mile long (at the time it was the largest secular structure in Europe)
    ➡ contains 700 rooms and 67 staircases
    ➡ Louis XIV’s bedroom is in the center of the complex
    ➡ the royal stable could hold 12,000 horses
    ➡ 1,800 acres* of gardens contain 1,400 working fountains
    ➡ images portraying Louis XIV as the “Sun King” exist throughout the palace
    ➡ the most famous room is the “Hall of Mirrors”
    ➡ decorative frescoes and paintings celebrate the accomplishments of Louis XIV
    ➡ NOTE: at the time of its completion, there was no indoor plumbing at Versailles

*comparison: the Oxford Road campus in New Hartford, NY is 24 acres

• Louis XIV: built the Palace of Versailles (cont’d)
  ✓ political implications: Louis XIV used the Palace of Versailles as an elaborate smokescreen to usurp the power of the nobility
    ➡ Versailles was a symbol of the wealth and power of the French monarchy
    ➡ when Louis XIV officially moved his court to Versailles in 1682, it meant that Paris was no longer the epicenter of French politics
    ➡ Louis required nobles to spend a certain amount of time per year at Versailles (often at the expense of the nobles): diverted the attention of the nobles away from regional politics while Louis’ intendants entrenched the power of the king
    ➡ Louis established elaborate rituals at Versailles, including the famous lever (the procedures where nobles were allowed to assist in Louis XIV’s morning dressing routine)
    ➡ other monarchies across Europe copied the architectural style of Versailles and established their own versions of Louis XIV’s rituals
    ➡ the monarchy and French government would remain at Versailles until the French Revolution (1789)
Louis XIV (1643-1715): The Triumph of Absolutism

Looking toward the gardens at the Palace of Versailles

The Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles
Louis XIV and the Arts & Sciences: Reflections On

“Versailles opened a new phase of the baroque, for the great palace exemplified the culture that was emerging in Europe. The disciplined, bureaucratic state, centered upon the monarch, was gradually regulating all phases of life. By rigid, ceremonious formalism, by empty conventions and stiff etiquette, the great nobility, no longer able to control politics, were bent to the king’s will. Versailles reflected this disciplined order. Le Nôtre, the landscape architect, allowed his shrubs and bushes no more self-expression than Louis permitted his courtiers; the clipped hedges, formalized gardens, and disciplined trees all submitted to the royal will. The palace and outbuildings displayed the same order: under the guidance of Mansart, stone, glass, and plaster were brought into a balance of line and form that left no odd edges, no undisciplined sweeps to distract attention from the stately magnificence of the whole. In the decoration of the palace, Le Brun, the apostle of design, imposed upon the painters a pattern of unity. The pictures and bas reliefs may have been pompous and insincere, ludicrous in their glorification of the king’s ego, but there could be no question about their unity. Palaces, statues, and decorations all expressed the stately pomp of the French court and the inner discipline of the bureaucratic state. “

“Louis XIV understood that France's dominant position in Europe required more than large armies and that a flourishing cultural life greatly enhanced the international prestige of even the wealthiest or most powerful sovereign state. Here therefore gave generous financial support to his favorite writers and artists, especially those who produced works for his new palace at Versailles. He also brought the arts and sciences into the state's administration system by establishing royal academies in which various theorists taught the correct principles for art, literature, music, dance, and scientific knowledge. The favored or official aesthetic theory in these academies was called classicism, a theory that emphasized order, harmony, and the artistic achievements of antiquity. Following the example of painters such as Poussin, young artists learned to portray scenes from classical Roman history or mythology with harmonious and almost geometric precision. The great literary theorist of the day, Nicolas Boileau, urged writers to emulate the poetic works of ancient writers who had shown how literature addresses the timeless themes of human knowledge rather than the frivolities of daily life. The classicism of French artists and writers thus fit comfortably with the Sun King's appreciation for order, harmony, and hierarchy in every sphere of social, political, and cultural life.”

Louis XIV (1643-1715): The Triumph of Absolutism

Journal 22/A: From the onset of his reign, Louis XIV pursued a vigorous foreign policy.

Directions: Using sentences or detailed bulleted notes, identify & explain the evidence Palmer uses to support the thesis listed above.

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Financial Priorities in Louis XIV’s France: Reflections On

“Meantime, there is no doubt that the aim [of Colbert’s reforms] was to promote the general welfare. Colbert felt concern about the poor, whether artisan or peasant, and he used his officials to gather statistics for remedial action. He had roads repaired, swamps drained, canals built, and took measures to lighten burdens such as tolls and other levies. Had it not been for the king’s ambition to be a hero in war as well as a paternalistic monarch, the history of the reign might have been a worldwide lesson in political economy. The lavishness of Versailles and the patronage of art would not have bankrupted the country. But another man’s ambition interfered with the peaceful plan: Colbert had [Marquis de] Louvois, the minister of war, a rival for the supreme power. Louvois fed the king’s dreams of glory and cut Colbert’s influence in half using his own to help bring about the four costly struggles that made France the warmonger nation for over a century and half.”


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**Exam Skills (ES): Comparison & Synthesis**

*Compare and contrast how El Escorial and the Palace of Versailles embodied the values/goals of the respective reigns of Philip II of Spain and Louis XIV of France.*

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<th>Social</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philip II’s El Escorial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Louis XIV’s Palace of Versailles</td>
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**Exam Skills (ES): Comparison & Contextualization**

*What accomplishments of Louis XIV moved the French monarchy further in the direction of political absolutism?*

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<td>Accomplishments of Louis XIV</td>
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</table>
France and England took different political and constitutional paths in the course of the seventeenth century. Using specific evidence and analysis, compare and contrast internal developments in the two countries during this period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals of the Monarchies</th>
<th>17th-century England</th>
<th>17th-century France</th>
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<tr>
<td>Major Developments/Events</td>
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<td>Result(s)</td>
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**The Wars of Louis XIV: 1667-97**

- Louis XIV provoked wars in his attempt to expand French territory

  ✓ The War of Devolution & the Dutch War (1667-78)
    - France sought to expand French territory to the Rhine River
    - France checked by the Triple Alliance (The Netherlands, Sweden, England), who were led by the Dutch *stadholder*, William of Orange
    - William of Orange eventually gained additional support from Spain, Austria and Denmark, who also wished to check the power of France
    - period of warfare ended by the Treaty of Nimwegen (1678)

  ✓ 1679-81: France expanded control of Alsace-Lorraine, a territory that had once belonged to the Holy Roman Empire
The Wars of Louis XIV: 1667-97

- Louis XIV provoked wars in his attempt to expand French territory (cont’d)
  
  ✓ War of the League of Augsburg (1688-97)
    - Louis XIV continued to push for French expansion in various parts of Europe, including along the Rhine and into Spain
    - William of Orange put together a coalition of countries to check French expansion: The Netherlands, Sweden, Spain, and a few states in the Holy Roman Empire; England joined the alliance after William of Orange became England’s King William III as a result of the Glorious Revolution (1688)
    - war strained Louis XIV’s ability to raise money to finance his army and navy
    - war ended with the Peace of Ryswick (1697)

The Wars of Louis XIV: The War of Spanish Succession (1702-13)

- causes
  
  ✓ dispute between France and the Holy Roman Emperor over who would be the king of Spain following the death of the Spanish king Charles II (1665-1700), known as “Charles the Mad”
    - each had a legitimate claim to the throne and some proposed dividing up Spain between the two powers to maintain a balance of power (wrangling began even before Charles was dead)
    - upon Charles II’s death (1700), it was discovered that he had a will which stated that Spain should stay united and the Spanish throne should go to the grandson of France’s Louis XIV (if the Bourbons did not accept the throne, the will stipulated that it should go to the Habsburgs in Vienna)
    - on behalf of his grandson, Louis XIV accepted the throne of Spain allegedly claiming, “Il n’y a pas de Pyrénées.” (“The Pyrenees exist no longer.”)
  
  ✓ European fears that France was becoming too powerful and, as a result, was upsetting the balance of power
The Wars of Louis XIV: The War of Spanish Succession (1702-13)

- the war
  - William of Orange (William III in England) forged another alliance in 1701, this time called the Grand Alliance (a year before hostilities began)
    - Grand Alliance members: The Netherlands, England, Brandenburg, Savoy and the Holy Roman Emperor (Portugal eventually joined the alliance)
    - William of Orange died in 1702, although the alliance continued
  - France was supported by Bourbon-controlled Spain and Bavaria
  - France attempted to seize control of post-1648 Spanish Netherlands (modern day Belgium)
  - England seized control of Gibraltar, a strategic location between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean
  - English and Dutch navies fought the French/Spanish navy for control of trading rights in the Western Hemisphere and the Mediterranean
  - The Grand Alliance won many battles in the course of the war, including the famous 1704 Battle of Blenheim (led by John Churchill, the Duke of Marlborough) and eventually forced France to agree to the Peace of Utrecht (1713)
  - the War of Spanish Succession (and the Wars of Louis XIV in general) was costly to the French treasury and opened up Louis XIV to significant criticism.

Louis XIV (1643-1715): The Triumph of Absolutism

Journal 22/B: The old objective of William III (of Orange), to prevent domination of Europe by France, was realized at last.
• overview: balance of power treaty to check the power of France

• major provisions

✓ Britain retained control of Gibraltar (NOTE: England and Scotland became one country in 1707 and were thereafter referred to collectively as Great Britain)

✓ Savoy gained the former Spanish island of Sardinia

✓ The Spanish Netherlands (Belgium) became a territory of the Holy Roman Emperor (thereafter referred to as the Austrian Netherlands)

✓ From Spain, Britain gained control of the profitable African slave trade, known as the asiento

✓ Louis XIV’s grandson was confirmed as king of Spain (Philip V), but the treaty provided that the French and Spanish throne should never be inherited by the same person

✓ France surrendered two territories in North America to Britain (New Foundland & Nova Scotia)

✓ The Netherlands received guarantees of their sovereignty

✓ Duchy of Brandenburg-Prussia was recognized as “The Kingdom of Prussia” and their leader was dubbed “King in Prussia” (as to not offend Poland)
Sources


