

Chapter 14, Section 3 (Pages 464–469)

Response to Crisis: Absolutism

Big Idea

France became the greatest power of the seventeenth century. Prussia, Austria, and Russia also emerged as great European powers. As you read, complete a chart like the one below summarizing the accomplishments of Peter the Great.

Reforms	Government	Wars



Notes

Read to Learn

France under Louis XIV (page 464)

Analyzing Information

On what did Louis XIV spend so much money?

Absolutism is a system in which a ruler holds total power. In seventeenth-century Europe, absolutism was tied to the divine right of kings. It was believed that a king's power came from God and that he was accountable only to God.

Louis XIV was only four when he came to the throne. Until he was 23, France was run by Cardinal Mazarin. When Mazarin died, Louis XIV took complete control. He called himself the Sun King. Louis undermined the power of nobles to make national policy. He bribed important people in the provinces to make sure his policies were carried out at the local level. He tried to convert the Huguenots to Catholicism by destroying their churches and closing their schools. Many Huguenots fled. Louis spent much money building palaces, maintaining the royal court at Versailles, and fighting wars. He created a huge army that fought four wars. France followed a policy of mercantilism to finance Louis's expenditures. But when he died in 1715, France had many debts and many enemies.



Read to Learn

Absolutism in Central and Eastern Europe (page 467)

Determining Cause and Effect

Why did Frederick William, the Great Elector, create such a large army?

After the Thirty Years' War, there were over 300 independent German states. The state of Prussia was ruled by Frederick William. He realized that Prussia was small and had no natural barriers to enemies. He created an army that was the fourth-largest in Europe. To pay for it, he set up the General War Commissariat to levy taxes. The Commissariat bureaucracy became the elector's instrument for governing the state. Many of its officials also served in the army. In 1701 Frederick William's son Frederick gained the title of King. Elector Frederick III became King Frederick I.

The Austrian Hapsburg's had long served as emperors in the Holy Roman Empire. The Thirty Years' War dashed their hopes of creating an empire in Germany. So they created a new empire in eastern and southeastern Europe. The core of the new Austrian Empire was present-day Austria, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. But the Austrian monarchy never became a highly centralized, absolutist state. It was made up of too many national groups. No common feeling tied all the groups together except for service to the Hapsburgs.

Peter the Great (page 468)

Drawing Conclusions

How did Ivan the Terrible get his name?

A new Russian state emerged in the fifteenth century, around the principality of Muscovy. In the sixteenth century, Ivan IV was the first to take the title of **czar**, the Russian word for *caesar*. Ivan expanded the territories of Russia eastward and crushed the power of the Russian nobility, known as **boyars**. He was known as Ivan the Terrible because of his ruthless deeds.

In 1598 Ivan's dynasty came to an end, and a period of anarchy began. It ended in 1613 when the national assembly chose Michael Romanov as the new czar. Peter the Great became czar in 1689. Peter visited the West and determined to Europeanize Russia. He was eager to borrow European technology to improve his army. Peter created the first Russian navy. He divided Russia into provinces so the central government could rule more effectively. When he died in 1725, Russia was a great military power and an important European state.

Culturally, Peter emphasized Western manners taught in Russia. He insisted that Russian men shave off their beards and shorten their coats. Upper-class women could remove their face-covering veils and enter society. The sexes could now mix for conversation and dancing. Peter also began the construction of St. Petersburg as a "window to the West."

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Section Wrap-up

Answer these questions to check your understanding of the entire section.

1. What is absolutism?

2. What state had the fourth-largest army in Europe during the 1600s?

Descriptive Writing

Using information from the text and your imagination, describe how life for an upper-class man or woman would have changed under Peter the Great.
