

Chapter 1 : Frederick the Great - Enlightened Despots

Enlightened despotism, also called benevolent despotism, a form of government in the 18th century in which absolute monarchs pursued legal, social, and educational reforms inspired by the Enlightenment.

History[edit] Enlightened absolutism is the theme of an essay by Frederick the Great , who ruled Prussia from 1740 to 1786, defending this system of government. He believed that an enlightened monarchy was the only real way for society to advance. Frederick was an enthusiast of French ideas. The monarchs of enlightened absolutism strengthened their authority by improving the lives of their subjects. This philosophy implied that the sovereign knew that the interests of his or her subjects better than they themselves did. The monarch taking responsibility for the subjects precluded their political participation. The difference between an absolutist and an enlightened absolutist is based on a broad analysis of the degree to which they embraced the Age of Enlightenment. For example, although Empress Catherine II of Russia entirely rejected the concept of the social contract, she embraced many ideas of the Enlightenment , being one of the great patrons of the arts in Imperial Russia and incorporating many ideas of Enlightenment philosophers, especially Montesquieu , in her Nakaz , which was intended to revise Russian law. However, historians debate the actual implementation of enlightened absolutism. They distinguish between the "enlightenment" of the ruler personally, versus that of his or her regime. For example, Frederick the Great was tutored in the ideas of the French Enlightenment in his youth, and maintained those ideas in his private life as an adult, but in many ways was unable or unwilling to effect enlightened reforms in practice. The concept of enlightened absolutism was formally described by the German historian Wilhelm Roscher in [8] and remains controversial among scholars. Codifying the laws of their territories. Reforming the countryside by establishing who owned which land and by reporting this data in property surveys called cadasters. Abolishing, or taking steps to abolish, aristocratic tax immunities. Promoting commerce whether directly, through royal manufactures, or indirectly, through subsidies, tariffs, the reduction of tolls, or the improvement of transportation. Establishing some measure of religious toleration. Sponsoring cultural activities and institutions such as individual philosophies, royal academies, libraries, and essay contests. In several nations with powerful rulers, called "enlightened despots" by historians, leaders of the Enlightenment were welcomed at Court and helped design laws and programs to reform the system, typically to build stronger national states. Charles III , King of Spain from 1759 to 1788, sought to rescue his empire from decay through ambitious reforms such as weakening the Church and its monasteries, promoting science and university research, facilitating trade and commerce, modernizing agriculture, and avoiding war. Spain relapsed into former patterns after his death. Emperor Joseph II , ruler of Austria from 1780 to 1790, was over-enthusiastic, announcing so many reforms with so little support that revolts broke out and his regime reverted to a comedy of errors.

Chapter 2 : Enlightened Despots - Age of the Enlightenment

An Enlightened despot (also called benevolent despot) is an authoritarian or non-democratic leader who exercises his political power for the benefit of the people, rather than exclusively for themselves or for an elite or small portion of the people.

As a child, he spent most of his time in rigorous military training and education. Constantly, Frederick was put down by his father for his artistic and intellectual tastes. In fact, their struggles were so intense that Frederick 1 publicly beat and criticized him. However, he was not discouraged. Later, his first active military service was with Austrian commander, Eugene of Savoy, against the French army in the Rhineland. Under the leadership of Frederick 11 from to , Prussia became one of the greatest states in Europe. As the third king of Prussia, he was an absolute monarch and an enlightenment enthusiast. Frederick wanted the government to be based on enlightenment ideals and strongly believed in the state being superior to any personal power or interest. He frequently said that he was the "first servant of the state. He left behind a very successful army that Frederick used for his first military victory during his reign in the battle of Mollwitz in April of . Later, he saw a chance to expand and unify his city of Prussia by taking over the Austrian city of Silesia. His military successes, however, did not end there. The Seven Year War began in with the invasion of Saxony. Though Frederick nor any of his opponents won or lost this war, it proved the genius he had and it left the balance of European power unchanged. In , he obtained all Polish Prussia, and a part of Great Poland. Not only did Frederick the Great expand Prussia, but he also created many reforms that helped establish a more modern society. Frederick gave people the right to freedom of the press and created individual rights by speeding up the legal process and not tolerating torture. Because of these reforms judges in Prussia were highly respected and thought to be the most honest in all of Europe. Also, he created the first German law code and enforced general education rules across Prussia. Frederick the Great built thousands of miles of road and payed to rebuild towns. The decisions he made throughout his lifetime were based on his belief in "enlightened despotism", or the use of rationality and reason. Most of all his courage, dignity, and intelligence are what have made him one of the most well know enlightened despots in history.

Chapter 3 : Lecture Notes: Enlightened Despots and Others

An enlightened despot is a non-democratic or authoritarian leader who exercises their political power for the benefit of the people, rather than exclusively for themselves or elites. Enlightened despots distinguished themselves from ordinary despots by claiming to rule for their subjects' well-being.

Enlightened Despots, Then and Now: Judd Owen January 26, By now, the pattern is predictable. Jihadists carry out a suicide bombing, a ritual beheading, an immolation, a murder in a Western city, or some other such barbarism, and newspapers, magazines, and blogs demand or suggest an Islamic enlightenment. Before the Enlightenment, European and American Christians burned witches and heretics and fought and died for obscure otherworldly beliefs; after the Enlightenment, they did not. And so, the argument goes, Islamic societies need their own enlightenment to wrest them back to the future. Setting aside that the Enlightenment did not end violence and self-destruction in the West see: Indeed, the very turmoil and violence that are thrashing Muslim societies are in no small measure a reaction against the forces of enlightenment, rather than a sign that those forces await initiation. The Enlightenment, then, in both the natural and political sciences, set itself against traditional authorities, particularly the church and the state it sanctioned. To succeed, the new learning required political support, which it found most importantly in monarchs who wanted to continue to weaken the two entities that blocked their ambitions: The Enlightenment provided these ambitious kings with various justifications and opportunities. In the spirit of modern physics, Hobbes reduced human beings to material bodies and was unambiguous about the need to tame religious institutions by making the head of the essentially secular state the supreme authority over religion. The enlightened sovereign would support the useful sciences with a view to material security and prosperity, while reforming legal and religious education with a view to enlightening the people. Enlightenment would operate from the top down, and would be compatible with the suppression of dangerous especially seditious religious teachings. But it is important to bear in mind that the Western Enlightenment contained both absolutist and democratic strands. Indeed, the century that followed Hobbes, the heyday of Enlightenment philosophy and science, is often known as the era of enlightened absolutism. Frederick the Great of Prussia, an ardent admirer and associate of the French Enlightenment philosopher Voltaire, set the pace, sponsoring modern science and applying its findings to agriculture, transportation, government, and not least war-making. These countries were far from democratic. Indeed, thanks in part to their ability to harness Enlightenment techniques for state organization, their rulers enjoyed much more power than their medieval counterparts ever did. But that transition itself entailed catastrophic violence within and among states. As the historian R. Palmer has written, the republican revolutions began as an aristocratic reaction against monarchs and the war debts they had accumulated on the back of the new technology. As landed elites began to assert their old rights and privileges, impoverished common people turned on their enlightened despots. Neither the king of England nor the Dutch stadtholder qualified as an enlightened absolutist, but even they were following the general trend toward centralizing power. European monarchs turned on the Enlightenment once the French Revolution inspired rebellion throughout the continent, which spiraled into terror and foreign wars in and For it was Napoleon who, with his invasion of Ottoman-ruled Egypt in , first brought the modern Enlightenment into the Muslim world. By way of Muslim-ruled Spain, this medieval rationalism profoundly influenced Christian and Jewish thought for centuries to come. But that original Islamic Enlightenment had lain dormant for centuries by the time Bonaparte arrived. In the nineteenth century, many Ottoman elites—soldiers, bureaucrats, educators—likewise found the principles of modern practical learning appealing, even though those principles had come from the same Europe that was humiliating their once-mighty empire. A decisive moment came in , when Mustafa Kemal Atatürk dissolved the Ottoman caliphate, founded the Republic of Turkey, and put the secular state decisively in charge of religion. His words would have pleased Thomas Hobbes. These were no backward-looking traditionalists. They were forward-looking state builders seeking to apply modern rationality and science to society. But like the enlightened absolutists of eighteenth-century Europe, twentieth-century secular Muslim rulers were power-seekers. The Atatürks and Nassers needed to improve the

lot of the common people in order to win them over and weaken the authority of traditional religious teaching and institutions. They were authoritarian not in spite of Enlightenment influence but because of it. Much has happened in the Middle East since the heady days of mid-twentieth-century secularism. Traditional Islam never went away, and it continued to be used to back monarchical rule in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. It evolved into modern Islamism, in all its variety, and established regimes in Iran and Sudan. There is no question that, today, Islamism is resurgent, with a radicalized wing growing in militancy and brutality. But Westerners should not be fooled by the strength of Islamism into thinking that the Muslim world simply needs a modern enlightenment. Whatever the future may hold for an Islamic enlightenment, we should understand that, like its Western precursor, its progress is bound to be violent precisely because it is both a spiritual and a political project that is bound to generate both religious and political reactions. Muslims have encountered post-Enlightenment Western society in myriad ways for a long time, and they are torn among themselves in reaction. Indeed, more than a few of those rallying to the cause spent their formative years in Western societies and were educated in Western schools. This piece, written with J.

Chapter 4 : Internet History Sourcebooks

An enlightened despot was a monarch during the 18th century who brought about political, religious, and social reforms that were considered of an enlightened nature.

Europe, to One must first clarify the origins of the term: But in its original form, the term as coined by eighteenth-century French thinkers—philosophers, philosophical popularizers, and social commentators, known collectively as philosophes—described the kind of government they felt was necessary to break through the complex of laws, attitudes, and habits that maintained a society of unjust privilege, stunted economic growth, and perpetuated governmental inefficiency and waste. But this had little to do with real despotism, which in the minds of western Europeans was associated with oriental regimes such as that of the Turks, on whose rulers there were, it was supposed, no checks of any kind. What they had in mind was simply monarchies possessing sufficient power to establish enlightened policies that would lead to a fairer, better, and more humane society. Their policies promoted religious tolerance, advocated full civil rights for religious minorities including Jews, insisted on curbing wasteful governmental expenditures, sought in various ways to stimulate their economies, and attempted to liberate serfs from the feudal control of their noble lords. All of these reforms were seen by the philosophes as part of a long-planned program designed to lessen the power of traditionally entrenched groups such as the clergy, noble landlords, and corrupt officials in the name of greater equality and freedom. Similarly, their attempts to tax these groups directly often for the first time, in combination with other measures such as new forms of taxation and the lessening of mercantilistic restrictions on economic life, were lauded as freeing their economies from the dead hand of the feudal past. The eighteenth century witnessed a number of wars that, in contrast to those of the previous century, were financed entirely by governments rather than largely by warlord-entrepreneurs who had extracted much of their costs from civilian populations through forced contributions and looting. The more controlled "polite" wars of the eighteenth century were a clear reaction against the barbaric and religious wars of the seventeenth century—but these were still long and very expensive wars. All states, but especially the larger ones, had to find new revenues to finance warfare and to cut expenditures in other areas by making their governmental operations more efficient. It was in the thirty years or so following that war that enlightened despotism really flourished. Taxing previously exempt groups such as the nobility and clergy was one means of enhancing revenues, but so was regularizing the practices of government to achieve greater control, through bureaucratic and other reforms, over all of the subjects of a state. If it was true, as Leopold II of Austria put it, that monarchs were "drowning in the inkpot," it was because the sheer volume of state business had now outstripped the ability of monarchs to handle it with the old-fashioned, personal bureaucratic structures they had inherited from the past. Monarchs moved to establish both new institutions and a set of guidelines for bureaucrats that were both clear and uniform—a group of codified policies and procedures designed to ensure that the goals established by the monarch were pursued as intended. What these amounted to were primitive constitutions that helped to pave the way for the constitutional monarchies of the nineteenth century. In the end, paradoxically, these policies helped to make the monarchs themselves less necessary to the functioning of the state apparatus by establishing public law as a standard for governance. To the extent that their reforms were successful, they may well have helped to prevent revolutionary disturbances such as those that came to France in and after. There is some merit in this view. And it is clear that any weakening of the powers of either the nobility or the clergy would create a kind of power vacuum into which the monarch himself could step, assuming powers previously held by both groups as competitors for the exercise of public power within the state. In this context, furthermore, the freeing of serfs, who now became direct subjects of the crown, could be seen not only as a weakening of the powers of their previous lords, but also, simultaneously, as the assumption of vast new powers over them by the state as personified in the monarch. Finally, from this perspective, any benefit to the economy from reform would presumably result in greater revenues for the state, as would any improvement in the operations of government through curbs on official corruption and the elimination of wasteful expenditures. Similarly, the promotion of religious tolerance would remove a potent cause of social

unrest, which was both disruptive to the economy and socially divisive in societies that needed greater unity in this period of intensifying international competition. That these rulers desired no fundamental restructuring of society is shown by the fact that in no cases were the privileges of the nobility and the clergy entirely eliminated. This interpretation, however, while accurate as far as it goes, misses some important points about enlightened absolutism. First, it ignores the personal culture of most of these rulers—a culture that was to a considerable extent shaped by Enlightenment norms. Most of them grew up in the full flowering of the Enlightenment: To ignore this fact is to deny all possibility that their motivations may have involved genuine humanitarian sentiment, and to suggest that their basic motive was also, in a sense, their basest motive. Second, it ignores the opinions of the philosophes themselves, most of whom believed that the motives of the enlightened despots were shaped, to a considerable extent, by enlightened values. They reasoned that if the reforms the latter sponsored did not go as far as some of the former hoped they might, the rulers were also practical people who understood the difference between philosophical dreams and political realities—and were quite comfortable with incremental reform. As an example, almost none among them believed that it was either possible or desirable to eliminate entirely the "society of orders," that is, a society in which the law was written differently for different groups, depending on their social rank. Finally, and perhaps most important, it ignores the fact that the reforms could serve both purposes simultaneously, making it unnecessary for contemporaries to draw this distinction. And in fact, they did not: This involved abandoning the theory of rule by "divine right," by which monarchs held their office by the grace of God, and justifying power by a new utilitarian standard: When Frederick II referred to himself as merely "the first servant of the state," he foreshadowed a wholly new concept of government—one that justified vast new powers for governments in the name and service of public welfare. Not all of the so-called enlightened despots achieved such results; of the major ones, Catherine II of Russia, who governed the most backward of states, achieved the least. France, interestingly, had no such ruler—until Napoleon. New York, An old but still useful survey of the reforms of the "enlightened despots. A strongly interpretive approach to the problem, with attention to the significance of reforms and to the importance of enlightened absolutism as an epoch of European history. The Hessian Mercenary State: Enlightened Bureaucracy versus Enlightened Despotism in Baden, — Concentrates on the importance of the contribution of bureaucrats to the reforms of the period in one of the German states. A series of essays on absolutism in different countries by a number of specialists. Gagliardo Pick a style below, and copy the text for your bibliography. Encyclopedia of the Early Modern World. Retrieved November 13, from Encyclopedia. Then, copy and paste the text into your bibliography or works cited list. Because each style has its own formatting nuances that evolve over time and not all information is available for every reference entry or article, Encyclopedia.

Chapter 5 : Enlightened absolutism - Wikipedia

An enlightened despot is a form of absolute monarchy in which rulers were influenced by the Enlightenment. They tended to allow religious toleration, freedom of speech and the press, and the right to hold private property.

A great libertarian vision, at least in part. Let him learn, get out of his way, and see what he could do. The philosophes, in France and elsewhere, were seldom content to chat about these ideas among themselves. They were out in the public arena agitating for change. This led to an important political debate, especially in France. In France the gap between the claims of the state and its feeble powers was large. French progressive thinkers were challenged in a way that their English counterparts were not. And the intense debate in Paris and elsewhere was very influential throughout continental Europe, as foreign intellectuals faced similar if not worse problems of backwardness in their own countries. All the philosophes had a roughly similar diagnosis of the political and social problems they faced in France; all shared in admiration for progressive England. But when it came to building a free society at home, there were disagreements. His Spirit of the Laws, argued that a good constitution must be a balanced one: It was the balance that Montesquieu thought he saw in England, and which was lacking in France, that he envied and promoted. It is interesting that most of the philosophes disagreed strongly with Montesquieu. Montesquieu, who was himself a member of the nobility of the robe, the families that had been ennobled by holding office, might think that it would be good to have the aristocracy take a greater role in the government. Other philosophes saw the privileges of this group as being a big part of the problem, and in no way a solution. It was the structure of privilege itself that had to be dismantled. How to do this? The obvious answer was reform from above. France needed a strong legislator, an absolute king, who could introduce and enforce the reforms so desperately needed. When Louis went wrong, it was because he misused his power, or refused to use it. Those who resisted Louis were almost entirely despicable. The physiocrats were a school of economists who not only said that statecraft could be a science, but also claimed that they had already invented it. Their scheme depended on an absolute ruler to put it into action. As Du Pont de Nemours said, "The idea of several authorities in the same state suggests nothing less than absurdity. French monarchy was a grave disappointment. Frustrated, disappointed French philosophes sometimes found it easy to believe that distant rulers were models for the enlightened monarchs to come. The eighteenth century was an era of improving monarchs, especially in Eastern Europe. This was a matter of practical politics. The three realms that dominated the eastern half of the continent, Prussia, Austria, and Russia, were ramshackle and economically backward. In such places monarchs had to be energetic just to hold his or her realm together. Thus eastern rulers had common problems and common interests. They wanted to transform their heterogeneous possessions into powerful and docile states. It was quite possible to become an improving monarch without being influenced in the slightest by the Enlightenment. Peter the Great of Russia is the best example. Peter died in and thus lived and ruled before there was a recognizable Enlightenment. He was a ruthless pragmatist with little formal education and not a trace of liberalism or human sympathy, but he worked strenuously to destroy a backward, traditional set of values and substitute up-to-date values that would make Russia a military and political power truly subject to his will. But Peter cut a fine figure because he was successful, making Russia a real force in Europe. Nor was he only a warlord. Peter had a keen appreciation of the need for economic progress. A pragmatic man like this attracted a certain admiration from the philosophes. Peter, thought Voltaire, knew how to build up a country, not just how to fight. He was also an example of how a strong executive could cut through the weight of tradition to make practical improvements. Similarly Maria Theresa of Austria a conservative Catholic, but a pragmatic reformer. Yet there was a connection between the political theories of the philosophes and the practice of eighteenth century rulers. It was not a simple one perhaps: Philosophes admired some of the stronger rulers of the day and urged them to adopt their program. So-called enlightened despots appealed to current ideas of progress and to individual thinkers to justify their actions, and once in a while actually did adopt enlightened prescriptions as policy. Perhaps the three most important enlightened despots were: Frederick the Great of Prussia who ruled from Catherine the Great of Russia Joseph II of Austria Frederick was not directly a product of Enlightenment ideology, but played the

part of a new-style ruler very well. First, he was brilliant -- the greatest general of his age. A hardworking monarch Finally, he was a cultured man and a fan of everything French -- wrote music and French poetry, played the violin, and exchanged philosophical letters with Voltaire and other thinkers of the time. Frederick seemed to be the perfect example of a modern philosopher king, a Peter the Great with culture and without cruelty. Catherine was even better: Empress of the barbarous Russians, but progressive A woman, but more capable than many a man Best of all, Catherine claimed to have learned all her good ideas from the philosophes. But the star pupil was perhaps Joseph, the son of Maria Theresa. When Joseph finally got his chance to rule in the s, he brought in sweeping changes. The most remarkable ones were the abolition of serfdom and his attacks on the church.

Chapter 6 : Enlightened despot? | Yahoo Answers

It is never easy to deal with the grief that one may experience when a family member passes away no matter how old or experienced they are. But dealing with death is especially hard for children and teenagers because they experience grief in a variety of ways.

Chapter 7 : enlightened despotism | Definition, Examples, & Facts | www.nxgvision.com

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An enlightened despot is an authoritarian leader who exercises rationality and, in some cases, tolerance. While authoritarian leadership is inherently repressive in some ways, this does not mean that the leader cannot exercise tolerance in other areas.

Chapter 9 : List of enlightened despots - Wikipedia

Enlightened Despotism 'Politics makes strange bedfellows' is a truism that has sustained the test of time. Whether it's Republicans and Democrats making deals in Congress, or Joseph and Pharaoh.