



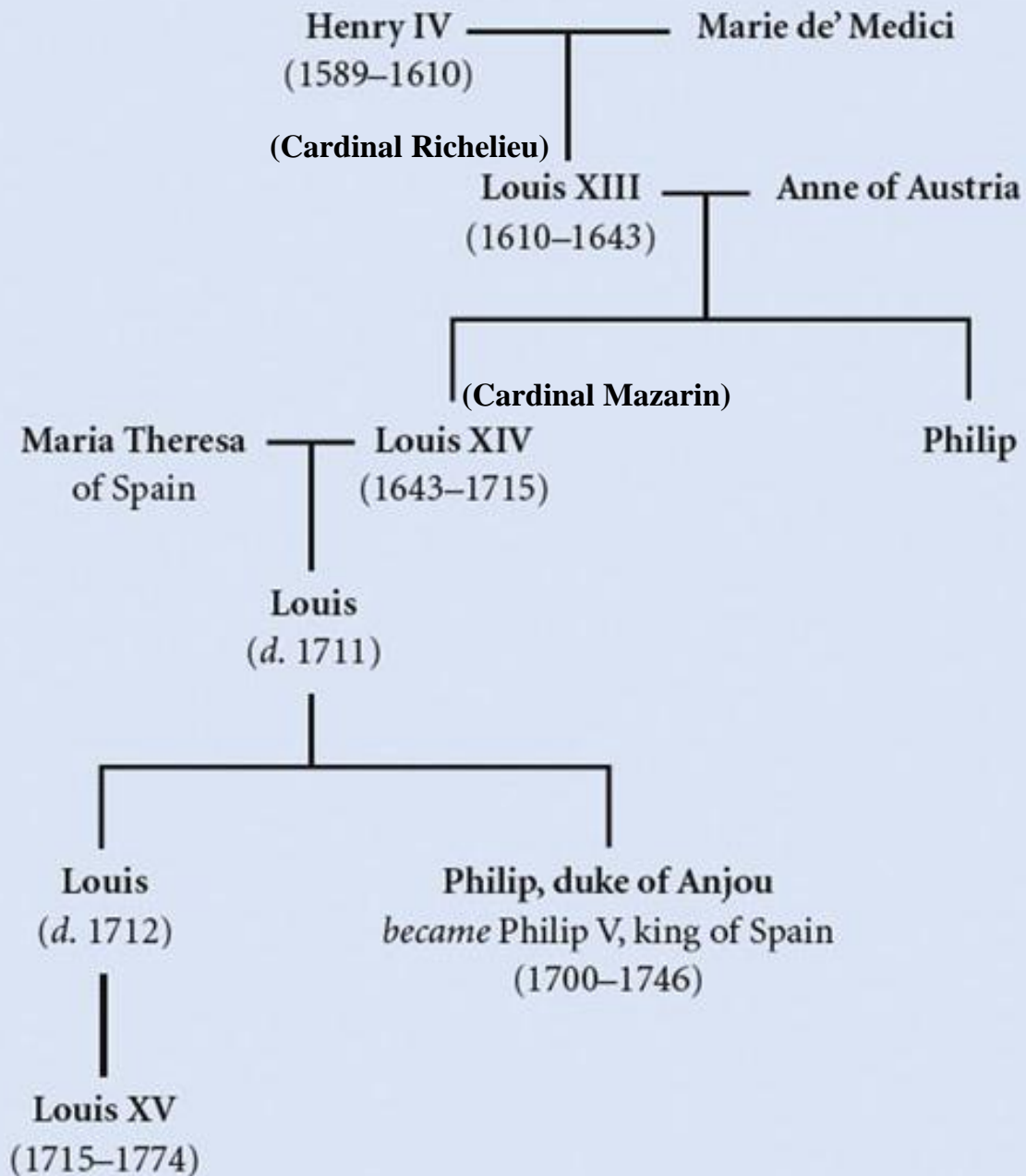
French Absolutism

State Building and the
Search for Order in the
Seventeenth Century

The Thirty Years' War




CHART 15.1 A Simplified Look at the Bourbon Dynasty



Absolutism:

Sovereign Power – King – Divine Right

- **Make laws, tax, administer justice, control administrative system, determine foreign policy (Jean Bodin – Late 16th C.)**
- **Government – divinely ordained – ordered society – government derives its power from and is only accountable to God**
- **rulers put on a pedestal -- larger attempt to reorganize and rebuild after the major conflicts of the mid 17th C.**
 - **pressure to rebuild for future competition**
 - **centralization, mercantilism, taxation, standing armies (1/2 budget)**



Who would resist movement
toward absolutism?

The French “Superpower”

✦ After 1648 – France as the leading power

- ◆ 16th C. – 1648 (Habsburg)

- ◆ 1648 – 1715 (Bourbon)

✦ Model for the rest of Europe

Absolutism In France:

- ✦ Cardinal Richelieu, Louis XIII's chief minister,
 - ✦ Eliminated the military and political rights of the Huguenots,
 - ✦ Against the Edict of Nantes (Henry IV)
 - ✦ Forced a significant part of the nobility into loyalty



Henri Motte's romantic depiction (late 19th C.) of Cardinal Richelieu at the Siege of La Rochelle.





✠ Siege of La Rochelle



- ✦ Efficient network of spies – uncover and ruthlessly punish nobility's plots against the crown
- ✦ Royal officials – Intendants, initially tax collectors for the crown
 - ◆ Eventually carried out the policies of the central government in the provinces – clashes with provincial authority
- ✦ Financial inefficiency/corruption
- ✦ *Taille* increased by 2 ½ times in 1643
- ✦ Massive debt from anti-Habsburg policy & involvement in the Thirty Years' War

❖ Forced to deal with encirclement by Habsburgs

Army/navy,
Diplomacy



**READ
RICHELIEU...**

✦ Richelieu dies in 1642, Louis XIII in 1643

✦ Cardinal Mazarin (Italian), Richelieu's trained successor, crushed the Fronde (1650-1653), which was a pair of revolts against the growing power of the French monarchy.

◆ The first – ‘nobles of the robe’, (service nobility: lawyers and administrators)

- Parisian parlement allied w/ nobility
- Barricade of Paris city streets and a successful royal siege of Paris
- Angry bourgeoisie - taxation

◆ The second – ‘nobles of the sword’, (men whose ancestors were medieval nobles)

- Saw policies as an infringement on feudal rights
- Civil war – opposition splintered

✦ Results of the Fronde?

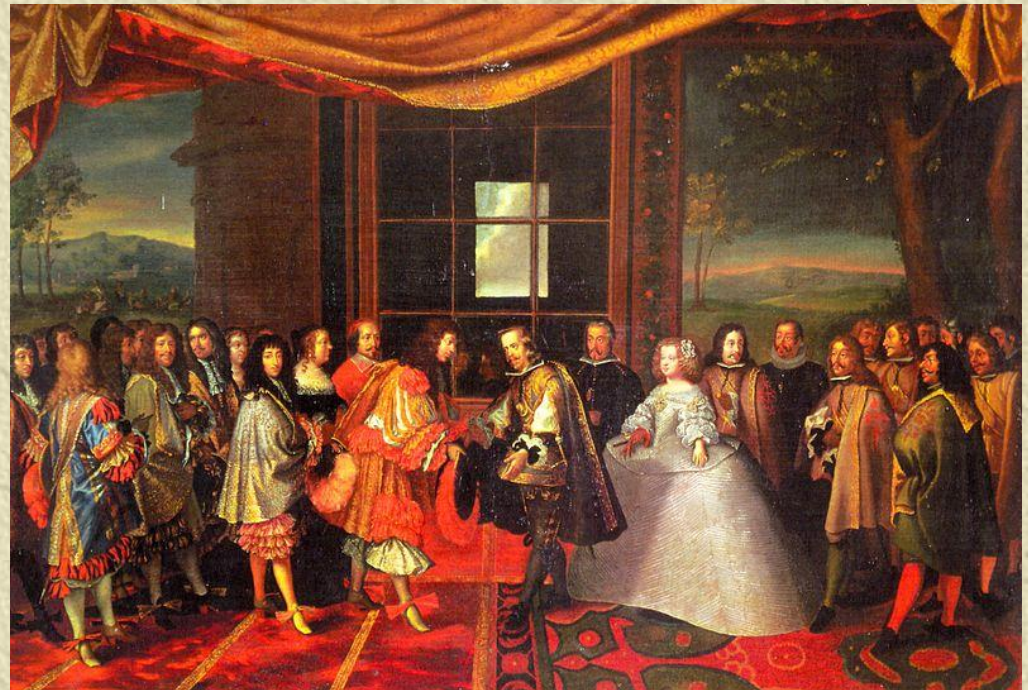




Episode of the Fronde at the Faubourg Saint-Antoine by the Walls of the Bastille -- **The Fronde finally resulted in the disempowerment of the territorial aristocracy and the emergence of absolute monarchy.**

Context of the Fronde Revolt?

- ✦ French War with Spain to the Peace of the Pyrenees (1635-1659)
- ✦ Mazarin: Marriage [Louis and daughter of the King of Spain, Maria Theresa (1660) – will lead to a French claim to Spanish throne]



- Death of Mazarin in 1661 – Louis XIV assumes full control



- ✦ Louis as “Sun King – the source of light for all of his people (72-years)
- ✦ “*L'État, c'est moi*” – commonly attributed quote – most likely never uttered by Louis XIV





Provide an overall assessment...

Louis XIV took steps to make sure his power was the sole power in all of France.



Eliminated the high nobles and princes of the blood (the royal princes) from the royal council – replaced them with a ‘new nobility’, subservient to him.

- ◆ Distracted high nobles/princes of the blood w/ the pleasures of court life at Versailles - - - kept them out of the real government machinery.
- ◆ Bribed provincial officials to execute his policies.
- ◆ 1685 – **Edict of Fontainebleau**: revoked Edict of Nantes, provided for destruction of Huguenot churches, closed Protestant schools.

Louis XIV's Foreign Policies

✠ Louisiana

✠ Post-Westphalia – “natural” expansion into German lands

Louis was unable to overcome certain limitations to make himself a truly absolute monarch.

- ◆ In France – system of overlapping authorities → difficult to centralize and rule absolutely
- ◆ High nobility still exercised much authority
- ◆ Privileges/powers/liberties of towns and provinces
- ◆ Traditional groups/institutions too powerful to be directly controlled by the monarchy too powerful
- ◆ Local officials could still obstruct execution of policies they disliked

Jean Baptiste Colbert – mercantilist controller general of finances

- Attempted to promote French industry/exports
 - Cultivated luxury industries – royal tapestry, glassmaking (tax exemptions, loans, subsidies)
 - Building of canals/roads
 - Royal vs. local authority
-
- Regulations evaded
 - France too late to emerge
 - Louis XIV – depleted the treasury faster than it could be restored

Palace of Versailles

- King's residence
- Reception hall for state affairs
- Office building for gov't
- Home to thousands of royal officials and aristocratic courtiers
- Nobility kept busy and excluded them from power

Life in the Palace of Versailles?

- Ceremony centered around the king
- Active involvement in activities like dressing the king would be rewarded with offices, titles, or pensions, court etiquette important, went so far as to decide what chair could you sit down on...





The Palace of Versailles





Versailles – The Canopy bed of Louis XIV





Reign of Louis XIV (1643 – 1715)

- ✦ Professional Army
 - ◆ 100,000 men in peacetime;
400,000 in wartime
- ✦ Four wars between 1667 – 1713
- ✦ Height of power in 1680 --- led to counter-reaction
 - Pursuit of *gloire* (glory) - - military means
 - ranks of army officers, bayonet
 - De Vauban – military engineer – built forts on the frontier





Citadelle Besançon



Neuf-Brisach

War of Devolution

1667-1668

(the first war...not named in the text):

- **Goals:** to achieve military glory, to extend his royal lands and ensure Bourbon domination of European affairs, to conquer the Spanish Netherlands and Franche-Comté
Exploitation of weakened German states after Thirty Years' War
- **Extent to which he met them:**
Triple Alliance (Dutch, English, Swedes) defeated him, won only a few towns in the Spanish Netherlands



Louis XIV visiting a trench during the war. Painting by [Charles Le Brun](#).

Dutch War 1672-1678

- **Goals:** to gain revenge against the Dutch for arranging the earlier Triple Alliance, to conquer the Netherlands

- Managed to split England/Sweden from alliance with Dutch

- **Extent to which he met them:** received Comté

**William of Orange

Dutch/English King 1688

– org. coalitions vs. French

– Tradition of English involvement balancing Cont. power



War of the League of Augsburg 1689-1697 (the third war)

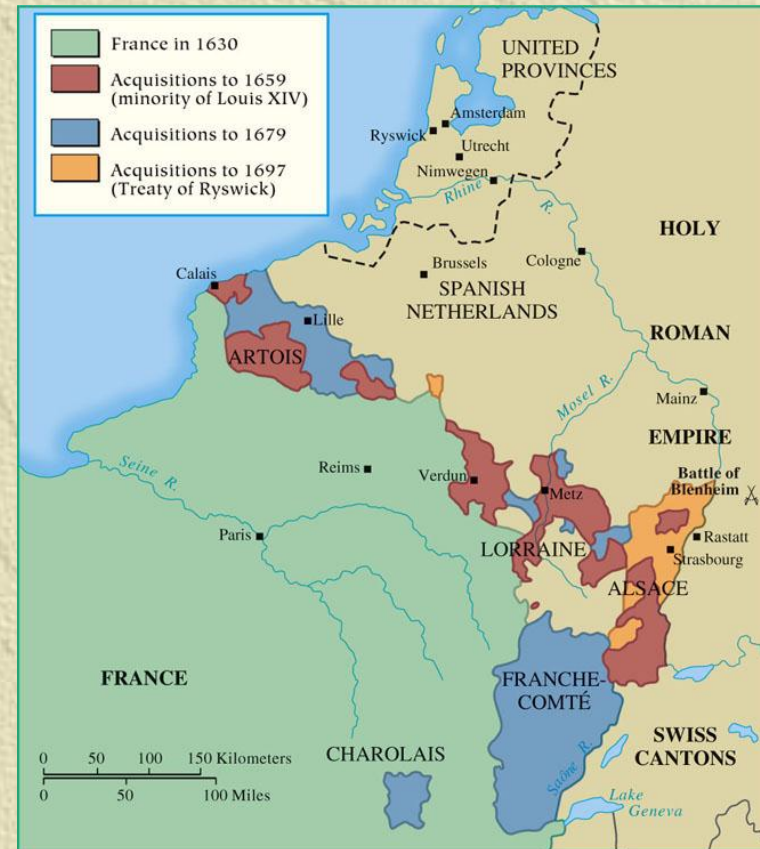
- **Goals:** win land from the Holy Roman Empire
 - Louis' policy of "**reunion**"
- **Extent to which he met them:** allowed to keep Strasbourg and part of Alsace

(Opposed by Spain, HRE, Sweden, UP/England

William III)

- Treaty of Ryswick (1697) – end of war with out a decisive result

- left France in an econ. depression/famine



War of the Spanish Succession 1702-1713

- Carlos/Charles II (Habsburg King of Spain) – left his throne to Louis' grandson Philip V
- **Goals:** to ensure that his grandson, Philip V, would remain on the Spanish throne; possibly unite the two thrones in one large kingdom
- **Extent to which he met them:** Philip V allowed to remain on Spain's throne –
 - two thrones were to be separated

--- NOTES ---

Fear of France/Spain

World War

British Naval Dominance

Granada, “Battle of Blenheim”

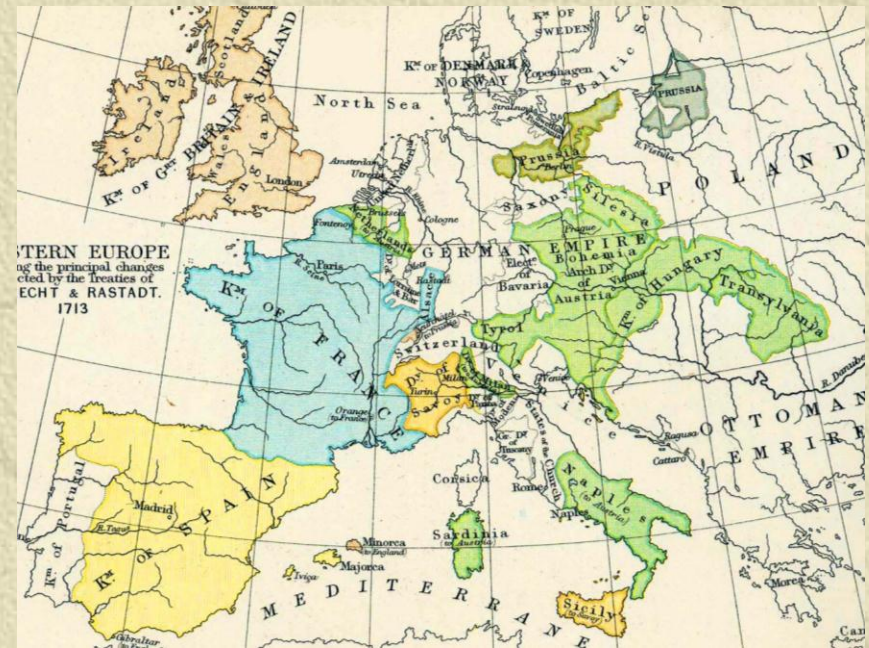
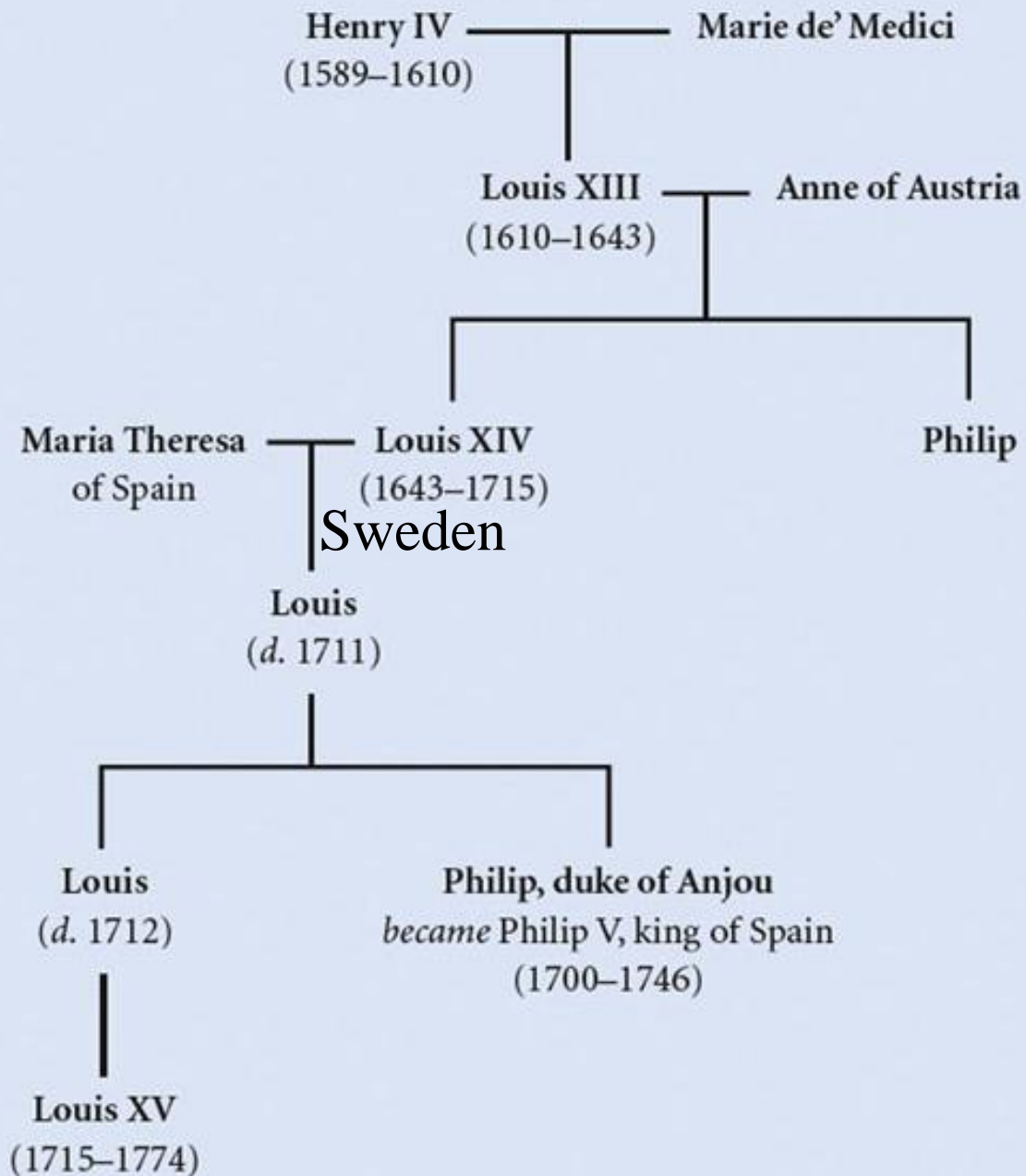


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Peace of Utrecht-1713 (Rastatt-1714)

- ✦ The problem with substituting the Bourbon king with a Habsburg King...
- ✦ Round table conference of diplomats– avoidance of problem of “precedence”
- ✦ Bourbon line allowed in Spain – permanently separate
- ✦ Spain’s territories to Austria (Italy, S. Dutch provinces) *strengthened*
- ✦ England gains – French territory in N. America, Gibraltar (naval dominance)
- ✦ “Balance of Power” established
- ✦ Ended France’s continental domination

Effects of Louis XIV's reign on France after 1715

- Expanded France's frontiers
- Bourbon dynasty in Spain
- Terrible expense – financial crisis for generations to come
- France's cultural preeminence



According to King Lois XIV – his primary mistakes?

- Fought too many wars
- Overspent/depleted treasury
- Advice: take advice on everything and try to find the best course, lighten the people's burden

CHRONOLOGY Absolutism in Western Europe

France

Louis XIII	1610–1643
Cardinal Richelieu as chief minister	1624–1642
Ministry of Cardinal Mazarin	1642–1661
First Fronde	1648–1649
Second Fronde	1650–1652
Louis XIV	1643–1715
First war (versus Triple Alliance)	1667–1668
Dutch War	1672–1678
Edict of Fontainebleau	1685
War of the League of Augsburg	1689–1697
War of the Spanish Succession	1702–1713

Spain

Philip III	1598–1621
Philip IV	1621–1665

List FIVE reasons for the decline of Spain in the period, 1600-1715.

1. treasury was empty from wars: Bankruptcies in 1596 and in 1607
2. armed forces were out of date
3. govt. was inefficient
4. commercial class weak – peasantry suppressed/impooverished - vs. luxury among nobility
5. Losses/effects of war – Thirty Years' War, Loss of Spanish Netherlands (1648), Portugal (1668), Italy (Utrecht 1714)

15. How would you describe Spain by the end of 1715?

–failed to expand Catholic Church during the Counter Reformation, lost many wars, lost Netherlands, broke: 2nd rate power in Europe

