

Louis xiv, the sun king

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Louis XIV, the Sun King Historians over three centuries have both defended and criticized Louis XIV's controversial reign. Many people hailed him as a great king; supreme as the sun he deemed his emblem. A great king is an unselfish one who is able to consider the people's interest before their own. This is a direct contrast to how Louis XIV ruled France, but he still accomplished a remarkable amount for France. Even with his selfish agenda and lavish spending, it is without question that Louis still remains the most excellent and most powerful absolute monarch in European history.

He is the epitome of an absolute monarch. Having so much authority making a few mistakes was inevitable. But in his successes, France was altered for the better, permanently. Louis challenged the status quo by doing what had never been attempted. His bold choices changed the lifestyle and attitude of Europe, by creating one of the most dynamic monarchies in history. Although some may question his effectiveness, under Louis XIV's reign France achieved political, militarily, and cultural dominance.

In regards to politics, Louis' attitude can be summarized in one infamous statement: " L'Etat, c'est moi" (I am state). In other words, he possessed total control over his people, as an absolute monarch. He often referred to himself as the Sun King; strategically coming up with such a name because the world revolves around the sun, as he wanted the people to revolve around him. His egotistical thinking earned him a few harsh critics but his dominance remained unquestioned. When in rule, he made it clear that his word was law.

This was an effective approach for him. Through his absolute monarchy he was able to accomplish much for France, specifically in the early years of his

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reign. The Sun King even managed to strip parliament of their traditional power to obstruct legislation. Implementing the idea; once more, that he was absolute ruler of all things. When Louis came to power, France was disheveled nobles were asking for extensions of power, in which they did not need. He put an end to this debacle; in a time of separation, he sought to unify his people and he was able to do so.

After centralizing government and gaining total control of reign, his efforts were focused on cutting deficit and promoting industrial growth. With the help of his alter ego, Jean Baptiste Colbert, they brought order out of chaos associated with the royal fiscal administration. Colbert possessed the interest in the people's ideals that the king lacked; this helped him better advice the king in his political reforms. By enforcing such reforms he pushed France towards a more stable government.

Louis XIV made his most substantial impact in the realm of militarism. The foreign policy of prestige was mainly concerned with strengthening the military. The king made such astute claims that needed a strong military to defend his word. During his reign, he took the initiative to build a massive army, which grew to be more powerful than ever. Military reforms vastly increased France's power. By the late 1660's, France was the most powerful state in Europe. The army's destructiveness assisted in reaching his main goal: to extend France to its natural borders.

His adoration for power led to a series of wars that lasted many years- The four distinct conflicts that characterized his military excursions were: War with Spain, the Dutch war, the war of Palatinate, and the war of Spanish succession. Unfortunately, his desire for expansion gained him a few

enemies. The enemies being the countries he was trying to conquer. Even some of his people were underwhelmed with his efforts, having to pay for such reforms in heavy taxes. Overall, his military reforms helped France sustain a stronger army than ever.

With such an astute commander, the French military was certainly a force to be reckoned with. Just as Louis' wars dominated political history in the late 1600's, his palace at Versailles dominated European culture. The age of Louis saw a flourishing of culture throughout Europe. As an absolute monarch, he assumed total control over everything, and culture was no exception. The state was able to manipulate cultural developments and take them to unprecedented heights. His influence on culture contributed to the prestige of France (). The Sun King also aided in the blossoming of art and architecture.

The great king created many programs and institutes to infuse more of the arts into French culture. Louis' patronage for the arts was concentrated on Versailles, a palace that is an unforgettable symbol of his power and influence on Europe. Versailles was one of the most beautiful achievements of eighteenth-century French art (). There was a shift from articulate paintings to posters, but the idea remained the same, to commemorate his power. The motives in supporting art were simple: to pass the glamour and glory of his century to the generations to come.

Louis XIV served the longest reign in European history. His time in power saw achievements that seemed unattainable for France, in the time before him. The age of Louis XIV was essential to European history for a manifold of reasons. First, his reign saw the triumph of absolutism, not only in France, <https://assignbuster.com/louis-xiv-the-sun-king-research-paper-samples/>

but also in continental Europe. His creation of Versailles was an extravagant denotation for other European leaders to follow. Second, Louis' wars proved the system of Balance of power to be an effective method. French aggression was contained and it became the norm.

Most importantly, Louis' reign established France as the dominant power in Europe. However, his legacy was not all positive; his lavish spending habits left his successors a huge debt. While conditions in France were well during his rule, the problems caused by his decisions would help ignite the French Revolution in 1789. With that being said, Louis' achievements deemed him one of the greatest monarchs in history. It is unfortunate that so many historians focus only on debt and military failures, and not what he was able to do for France, when they desperately needed change.