

Theme 8. The rise of the capitalist states and the first industrial revolution (1600 – 1870)

Revolutions

Once trade increased due to the connection of different world zones and the number of cities grew dramatically, beginning about the seventeenth century, powerful communities of merchants and commercial landowners resented the taxes levied on them by monarchs.

Large empires, based on ancient traditions, like the Qing in China, the Moghuls in India, and the Ottomans in Turkey and the Middle East, managed these tensions, avoiding civil war.

In Europe, however, where competing small, young states prevailed, the monarchs in two states—Holland and England, could not manage the tensions.

Bourgeois leaders took their societies into civil war to limit the power of their monarchs. The most known revolutions are the Dutch war for independency against Spain (1567–1609), the English Civil War (1640–1649) with the consequent Glorious Revolution of 1688, the American Revolutionary War (1765–1783) and the famous French Revolution (1789–1799).

The impact of events in France spread far to Haiti and Latin America.

In Holland the urban elite cast off the Hapsburg authority after a long war from 1567 to 1609 and set up the Dutch Republic.

The English Civil War (1640–1649) led to the execution of the king Charles I by Parliamentary forces and to a temporary assumption of power by the Puritan parliamentarian Oliver Cromwell. When the royal family returned in 1660 and resumed the rivalry between monarch and Parliament, the latter overthrew the king once again, in the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Parliament then invited the Dutch prince, William of Orange, to become king, but with conditions. William of Orange had to agree to the English Bill of Rights which made Parliament dominant in the English Political system.

Men of property in Parliament carried out this political revolution;

They arranged a monarch as a symbol of unity, with real power situated in Parliament.

British colonists in North America, mostly men of property, resisted higher tax levies and declared war on the British in 1776. The colonists were also driven by a growing sense of nationalism.

The American Revolutionary War lasted from 1765 to 1783. It covered the 13 British colonies of New England and the mid-Atlantic coast and was led by George Washington.

The colonists won their independence because overseas war proved too expensive for the British and because the French lent their assistance to the colonists.

In several years after victory, in 1789, the Constitutional Convention ratified the United States Constitution – the democratic system was established. From now, a federal government shared power with governments in each of the 13 states.

It was first attempt by a major state to base a political system on the rights-oriented political philosophy of the Enlightenment. Power at the federal level was shared among three branches – executive (president), legislative (Congress), and judicial (Supreme Court) – according to a concept borrowed from the Enlightenment thinker Montesquieu. However, women and Native Americans could not vote, and neither could men who failed to fulfil certain property requirements – the democracy was not all-inclusive.

The Philosophy of Enlightenment

The Enlightenment prompted rational revision of the nature of politics and society. The Enlightenment thinkers questioned social hierarchies and traditional forms of monarchy. They contributed to massive political changes and the revolutions in Europe and the Americas.

Among the earliest Enlightenment thinkers was John Locke of England, who argued during the late 1600s and early 1700s that the government's power to govern should depend above all on the consent of the governed. He favoured freedom of religion and opinion and the protection of private property.

Largely due to Locke, the concepts of natural rights, the social contract (the mutual obligations owed to each other by governments and their people), and the separation of church and state became cornerstones of Enlightenment thought.

Other influential Enlightenment figures include

- Baron Charles de Montesquieu: Author of the Spirit of Laws (1748), which proposed the separation of powers (executive, legislative, and judicial) as a way to avoid tyranny.
- Voltaire: a champion of freedom of expression, and also a fierce enemy of organized religion, which he viewed as corrupt and hypocritical.
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau: he was a proponent of an idea that ordinary people deserved more political power, as expressed in his 1762 book The Social Contract.

The Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution (as it was named in the early nineteenth century) is the gradual transition from hand work to machine work, from coerced labour to free labour, from the agricultural society to the industrial society.

Causes of the industrial revolution

The Industrial Revolution began in England in the 1770s and 1780s with application of the steam engine to two sectors of the economy: mining and textiles.

1. The proto-industrialization was already in place from the 1600s. "The Industrial Revolution stood on the shoulders of innumerable craftsmen and artificers of pre-industrial times who had slowly built up skills and experience for the future" [J. Roberts and Odd Westad].

2. England was urbanized and a set of harsh agricultural laws, the Enclosure Acts – which, in favour of wealthy landowners, fenced off large pieces of farmland that had once been common property – impoverished many farmers and forced them to relocate to the cities, creating an even bigger labour pool.

3. Environmental factors: the depletion of forests (timber was used both for fuel and to build ships for the Royal Navy) increased dependency on coal, and efficient coal mining required machine power, especially to pump water out of mine shafts.

4. Other factors:

Britain's location in the Atlantic (the interaction of people in Afro-Eurasia with the people of the Americas),

system of roads (some of them from the Roman times) and canals,

large deposits of iron and coal,

a strong tradition of trade and commerce (i.e. joint-stock companies) + privateering and piracy, which allowed investors to accumulate capital.

Mainstream inventions in the coal industry

1.1. Burning regular coal for smelting iron did not work, since the impurities in the coal made the iron brittle.

In 1709 the Darby family in Shropshire discovered that when coal is first converted into coke (coal cleaned from some minerals like carbon dioxide, hydrocarbons, etc.), smelting could be done successfully.

Coal deposits, however, were deep and were impeded by water filling the shafts. Some kind of pump was needed.

In the 1770s a Scotsman, James Watt, improved the design of the steam engine.

First Industrial Revolution

In 1782, the Scottish inventor James Watt patented a steam engine that was both powerful and cost-effective. The first stage of the Industrial Revolution involved the integration of Watt's steam engine into the textile and coal-mining industries.

The next stage of the Industrial Revolution, which lasted roughly until the middle of the 1800s, involved the universal application of steam power – and, more slowly, electricity – to all areas of economic activity. Industrialization spread to other parts of Europe, as well as to North America. Key trends include

- The modernization of transport, thanks to steamships (1807) and railroads (the 1820s)
- The modernization of communications. Beginning with the telegraph (1837)
- The factory system, which systematized, mechanized, and increased the scale of production

- The concept of interchangeable parts, pioneered in America (Eli Whitney and Samuel Colt).

Although the Industrial Revolution is generally said to have ended in the mid-1800s, the industrial era continued throughout the rest of the century and gave birth to a huge wave of invention.