

UNIT 1



The Age of Power

Six selections trace the evolution of political power in early modern times. Topics include the European state system, the emergence of British power, and the influence of John Locke on liberty.

To the Reader Topic Guide

Overview

1. **The Emergence of the Great Powers**, Gordon A. Craig and Alexander L. George, from *Force and Statecraft: Diplomatic Problems of Our Times*, Oxford University Press, 1983.

In 1600 Europe's greatest power complex was the Holy Roman Empire, in league with Spain. By the eighteenth century, however, the *European system* was transformed so drastically that the *great powers* were Great Britain, France, Austria, Prussia, and Russia. How did such a shift occur? This essay traces the *evolution of the European state system* in early modern times.

2. **War, Money, and the English State**, John Brewer, from *The Sinews of Power*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1989.

England was a minor power in the great *wars* that ravaged Europe in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. But *European powers* soon came to fear and envy *Britain's military machine*, particularly its navy. John Brewer's introduction to his book on the topic explains the *institutional arrangements* and *economic strategies* that made England a major power.

3. **A Golden Age: Innovation in Dutch Cities, 1648–1720**, Jonathan Israel, *History Today*, March 1995.

During the seventeenth century, says Jonathan Israel, "the *Dutch Republic* was economically and culturally the most dynamic and flourishing country in Europe." This essay explains why other countries, devastated by the *Thirty Years' War*, took Dutch cities for their model when they prepared to renovate or reconstruct their cities.

4. **The High Price of Sugar**, Susan Miller, *Newsweek*, Columbus Special Issue, Fall/Winter 1991.

In the *early modern period*, the Atlantic formed the matrix for a new phase of Western civilization, one that combined European, American, and African elements. Central to this new system was the *triangular trade*, driven by Europe's demand for sugar and the sugar growers' reliance on *slave labor*. This article shows how the drive for profits transformed the Western world.

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UNIT 2



Rationalism, Enlightenment, and Revolution

Eight articles discuss the impact of science, politics, music, economic thought, changing social attitudes, and the rights of women on the Age of Enlightenment.

5. **Cardinal Mazarin**, Richard Wilkinson, *History Today*, April 1996. 26
Richelieu's successor, Cardinal Mazarin, was often disparaged during his lifetime as a corrupt, incompetent, even disloyal royal adviser. This essay finds some merit in Mazarin's uses of power in *early modern France*.
6. **Locke and Liberty**, Maurice Cranston, *The Wilson Quarterly*, Winter 1986. 31
Unlike Thomas Hobbes, who built his political philosophy around the principles of order and authority, *John Locke* erected a system of political thought around liberty and private ownership of property. Reviewing Locke's life and thought, Maurice Cranston places the English philosopher's work in its political and intellectual context.

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7. **Newton's Madness**, Harold L. Klawans, from *Newton's Madness: Further Tales of Clinical Neurology*, HarperCollins, 1990. 38
Sir Isaac Newton was a universal genius who coined *calculus*, formulated three major *laws of mechanics*, articulated *theories of gravity and planetary motion*, and discovered the composition of white light. Twice during his life he suffered periods of prolonged psychotic behavior. Harold Klawans explores Newton's genius and his bouts with madness.
8. **The Pursuit of Happiness**, Robert Darnton, *The Wilson Quarterly*, Autumn 1995. 42
The Age of Enlightenment saw a revival in the *idea of happiness*. Robert Darnton explores what Enlightenment thinkers meant by the famous phrase, "the pursuit of happiness."
9. **Madrid: City of the Enlightenment**, Charles C. Noel, *History Today*, October 1995. 48
Spain is seldom, if ever, mentioned in discussions of the *Enlightenment*. But in the late eighteenth century, the physical appearance of Madrid, as well as its political and intellectual climate, began to display traits of the Enlightenment.
10. **When Women Pirates Sailed the Seas**, Marcus Rediker, *The Wilson Quarterly*, Autumn 1993. 53
Not all *eighteenth-century women* were restricted to household duties. Some were in the army; others went to sea—as wives, prostitutes, cooks, even sailors—on navy, merchant, whaling, privateering, and pirate ships. Marcus Rediker chronicles the adventures of Anne Bonny and Mary Read, two *cross-dressing* women who became notorious pirates and, possibly, indirect models for *Eugene Delacroix's* female symbol of revolutionary liberty in his famous painting *Liberty Leading the People*.

UNIT 3



Industry, Ideology, Nation- Building, and Imperialism: The Nineteenth Century

Seven articles focus on the nineteenth century in the Western world. Topics include the working class, the Industrial Revolution, the opening of the Far East, and the expansion of Europe.

11. **The French Revolution in the Minds of Men**, Maurice Cranston, *The Wilson Quarterly*, Summer 1989. 59
The French Revolution has had a dual existence. First there was the revolution of actual deeds and words. Then, says Maurice Cranston, there was the revolution as it "became inflated or distorted in the minds of later partisans." He describes the *myths of the French Revolution* and how such fabrications influenced later generations of revolutionaries.
12. **The Passion of Antoine Lavoisier**, Stephen Jay Gould, *Natural History*, June 1989. 64
Many people paid the price for the *French Revolution*. One of them was France's greatest scientist, Antoine Lavoisier. A child of the *Enlightenment* who favored some of the Revolution's early accomplishments, the famous chemist ran afoul of the *Committee of Public Safety* and its revolutionary tribunals. Stephen Jay Gould cites Lavoisier's accomplishments and ponders why in revolutionary times even a brilliant scientist was not immune from political extremists.
13. **Napoleon Takes Charge**, James W. Shosenberg, *Military History*, December 1995. 69
France was in the fourth year of its chaotic new republic. A young artillery officer who had been a hero of the battle of Toulon now found himself without a command and nearly destitute. But in October 1795, opportunity presented itself to 26-year-old *Napoleon Bonaparte*. James Shosenberg examines what happened next.
14. **The First Feminist**, Shirley Tomkiewicz, *Horizon*, Spring 1972. 73
Mary Wollstonecraft, author of *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), cogently argued the case that the *ideals of the Enlightenment* and of the *French Revolution* should be extended to *women*. This is her story.

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15. **Engels in Manchester: Inventing the Proletariat**, Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The American Scholar*, Autumn 1983. 80
Friedrich Engels, coauthor of the *Communist Manifesto* and patron of Karl Marx, wrote an influential study of *working-class life in England*. But was it an accurate description of the *factory system*, or was it colored by the author's theories of *communism*?
16. **Samuel Smiles: The Gospel of Self-Help**, Asa Briggs, *History Today*, May 1987. 88
In eighteenth-century America, *Benjamin Franklin* was the prophet of *self-help*; in nineteenth-century England, it was Samuel Smiles. The latter's formula for *success* stressed the importance of role models, perseverance, and strenuous effort.

UNIT 4



Modernism, Statism, and Total War: The Twentieth Century

Eleven selections discuss the evolution of the modern Western world, the world wars, the Nazi state, the effects of Europe's loss of economic and political dominance in world affairs.

17. **Giuseppe Garibaldi**, Denis Mack Smith, *History Today*, August 1991. 94
Giuseppe Garibaldi was the hero of Italy's nineteenth-century quest for unification. Many tendencies of *modern Italian politics* have their origins in Garibaldi and his *Red-Shirt movement*.
18. **After Centuries of Japanese Isolation, a Fateful Meeting of East and West**, James Fallows, *Smithsonian*, July 1994. 99
Nineteenth-century *imperialism* was not simply a matter of European nations carving up Africa for themselves. Among other things, it also involved efforts by the United States to open the Far East to American trade and influence. James Fallows's account of Matthew Perry's expedition to Japan notes that this step has had profound impacts on the subsequent development of both nations and on their relations with each other and the world.
19. **Justice Seen, Justice Done? Abolishing Public Executions in 19th-Century Germany**, Richard J. Evans, *History Today*, April 1996. 105
What were the presumed benefits of *public executions*, and why did they disappear from the *criminal justice* systems of the major Western countries? Richard Evans addresses these matters, using Germany as a test case.
20. **The Life and Resurrection of Alexandre Dumas**, Victoria Foote-Greenwell, *Smithsonian*, July 1996. 109
The most famous writer of nineteenth century France, the author of *The Three Musketeers* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*, was the grandson of a Haitian slave. Victoria Foote-Greenwell tells his story.
21. **Sarah Bernhardt's Paris**, Christopher Hibbert, *Mankind*, October 1982. 113
Through carefree times and through war and famine, for more than half a century actress *Sarah Bernhardt* was at the center of the *artistic and social life of Paris*. Christopher Hibbert's review of her colorful career provides a panorama of *social and political change*.

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22. **When Cubism Met the Decorative Arts in France**, Paul Trachtman, *Smithsonian*, July 1996. 124
Cubism was among *modern art's* most famous experiments. Driven by "a voracious, if not violent, appetite for new forms of intellectual, cultural, and industrial life," it was a characteristic expression of the new century.
23. **1918**, John Lukacs, *American Heritage*, November 1993. 128
The world we know and the kind of people we are can be explained in part by long-forgotten events of 1918. As John Lukacs points out, many of our current political ideals and *notions of world order* took shape in the context of World War I and its culmination.

24. **How the Modern Middle East Map Came to Be Drawn**, 131
David Fromkin, *Smithsonian*, May 1991.
The long-awaited collapse of the *Ottoman Empire* finally occurred in 1918. *World War I* and the *Arab uprising* paved the way for a new era in the Middle East. But it was the British, not the Arabs, who played the central role in reshaping the *geopolitics* of the region.
25. **Remembering Mussolini**, Charles F. Delzell, *The Wilson Quarterly*, Spring 1988. 138
Benito Mussolini won the praise of intellectuals, journalists, and statesmen for bringing order and unity to Italy during the early years of his *fascist regime*. In 1945, however, he and his mistress were executed; later, a mob in Milan mutilated the corpses. Here Charles Delzell chronicles the dictator's rise and fall.
26. **Women and the Nazi State**, Matthew Stibbe, *History Today*, 145
November 1993.
Adolf Hitler believed that *German women* should be esteemed but should remain within "the sphere nature has assigned to them." The "spheres" he had in mind for them were cooking, children, and church. But, as Matthew Stibbe observes, women performed a much broader range of functions, both official and unofficial, for Nazi Germany.
27. **The Commanders**, Stephen E. Ambrose, *U.S. News & World Report*, May 23, 1994. 149
Carried out on June 6, 1994, *D-Day* proved to be the Allies' most decisive European operation of World War II. Stephen Ambrose takes a probing look into the architecture of D-Day, as seen from headquarters, and reveals the strategies, *contingencies*, and *significance* of history's greatest invasion.
28. **Looking Back: The Cold War in Retrospect**, Raymond L. 154
Garthoff, *The Brookings Review*, Summer 1994.
Some historians argue that the cold war was a battle of *ideologies*. Hence, in their view, the contest began in 1917 when Communists took over Russia. Others maintain that the struggle was the product of *balance-of-power* politics based on the geopolitical circumstances that prevailed at the end of World War II. Raymond Garthoff comments on these interpretations in light of the way the cold war ended.
29. **How the Bomb Saved Soviet Physics**, David Holloway, *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, November/December 1994. 158
Josef Stalin, the Soviet dictator, insisted that in his regime *science* must conform to *Marxian dogma*. Punishment, even death, could be the fate of scientists who put facts ahead of ideology. Nuclear physics was the exception. David Holloway explains why.

UNIT 5



Conclusion: The Human Prospect

Eight articles examine how politics, war, economics, and culture affect the prospects of humankind.

30. **The Other Camus**, Robert Royal, *The Wilson Quarterly*, Autumn 1995. 167
After France's sudden and bitter defeat in *World War II* and the *Vichy* regime's cringing obeisance to its Nazi overlords, *postwar France* needed a new generation of cultural heroes, preferably independent thinkers and writers associated with the anti-Nazi resistance. The writer Albert Camus became the symbol of France's literary and moral renewal. Robert Royal describes the private Camus, a man quite different from his public image.
31. **The Future That Never Came**, Mitchell Reiss, *The Wilson Quarterly*, Spring 1995. 175
After *Hiroshima* and *Nagasaki*, strategists—and much of the public—assumed that the next war would be fought with nuclear weapons. Mitchell Reiss explains why a *nuclear conflagration* did not happen.
32. **The End of the Twentieth Century**, John Lukacs, *Harper's*, January 1993. 184
John Lukacs presents historical reflections on the people, ideas, and movements that shaped our century—*communism* and *anticommunism*, *V. I. Lenin* and *Woodrow Wilson*, *nationalism*, and *developing world revolutions*.
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33. **Jihad vs. McWorld**, Benjamin R. Barber, *The Atlantic Monthly*, March 1992. 198
This article explores two possible political futures, “both bleak, neither democratic.” The first is a return to *tribalization*, an endless array of conflicts pitting culture against culture, ethnic group against ethnic group, and religion against religion. The second is a single homogeneous *global network* “tied together by *technology*, *ecology*, *communications*, and *commerce*.”
34. **The Real Clash**, James Kurth, *The National Interest*, Fall 1994. 204
James Kurth contends that the greatest potential conflict facing Western civilization is an internal one. Kurth foresees a kind of *cultural civil war* within the West between proponents of traditional Western values and advocates of an emergent “post-Western” culture based on *feminism* and *multiculturalism*.
35. **Europe's Muslims**, Anthony Hartley, *The National Interest*, Winter 1990–1991. 212
The controversy over Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* awakened the world to some of the *conflicts between Muslim and European values*—conflicts that may be intensified as the Muslim population of Europe grows. Anthony Hartley explores the status of Muslims in England, France, and Germany.
36. **The Nation-State Is Dead. Long Live the Nation-State**, *The Economist*, December 23, 1995–January 5, 1996. 218
The *nation-state* has been one of the driving forces of modern life. Today it appears to be challenged by both global and particularist interests. The challenges are scrutinized in this article.

37. **A Golden Age of Discovery**, *The Economist*, December 23, 1995–January 5, 1996. 222

In this so-called “space-age,” it is often assumed that the *exploration of Earth* has been completed. But, as this essay points out, there is much to be done to fill in the gaps in our knowledge of the oceans and Earth’s surface.

38. **The Poor and the Rich**, *The Economist*, May 25, 1996. 225

Why are some countries richer than others? The issues of *economic growth* and *national development* are attracting the attention of contemporary economists. Here is a survey of their findings.

39. **Technology and Its Discontents**, Reed Karaim, *Civilization*, May/June 1995. 229

Humanity’s relationship to its *technology* has always been ambivalent. Today’s massive electronic databases and worldwide *computer networks* would seem to be unmixed blessings. Not so, say many of Reed Karaim’s informants.

40. **Whither Western Civilization?** Thomas Sowell, *Current*, September 1991. 234

The fate of Western civilization, says the author, “is intertwined with the fate of human beings around the world, whether they live in Western or non-Western societies.” Thus, to understand the modern world it is essential to be aware of *the West’s achievements and shortcomings*. But, says Thomas Sowell, the West should be judged by comparison to the achievements and shortcomings of other cultures and traditions, not by abstract standards of perfection.

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