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## Unit 2: History of world affairs since 1789

### Senior 5

### Term 1

### Topic 1: The French Revolution of 1789

**Competency:** The learner analyses the influence of the 1789 French Revolution by examining its causes, events and impact to appreciate how oppression and poor leadership can lead to conflicts in society.

#### 1.1 Europe on the Eve of the 1789 French Revolution

On the eve of the **1789 French Revolution**, Europe—especially France—was gripped by a volatile mix of **political stagnation**, **social inequality**, and **economic crisis**. These conditions created fertile ground for revolutionary upheaval. Here's a clear breakdown of the situation:

##### Political Conditions

- (i) **Absolute Monarchy:** France was ruled by **King Louis XVI**, under the **Ancien Régime**, a system where the monarch held unchecked power. The king governed by **divine right**, meaning his authority was considered God-given and not subject to the will of the people.
- (ii) **Lack of Representation:** Political power was concentrated in the hands of the **First Estate (clergy)** and **Second Estate (nobility)**. The **Third Estate (commoners)**—which made up over 95% of the population—had **no real voice** in governance.
- (iii) **Administrative Chaos:** France was a patchwork of provinces with **inconsistent laws, taxes, and privileges**, creating confusion and injustice. Corruption and inefficiency plagued the royal bureaucracy.

##### Social Conditions

- (i) **Rigid Class Hierarchy:** Society was divided into **three estates**: **First Estate** or the Clergy (privileged, tax-exempt); **Second Estate** or the Nobility (landowners, also

- tax-exempt) and **Third Estate** or Commoners (peasants, urban workers, bourgeoisie—heavily taxed and politically powerless)
- (ii) **Widespread Inequality: The bourgeoisie (middle class) grew wealthier but remained excluded from power. Peasants and urban poor faced rising food prices, feudal dues, and crushing poverty.**
  - (iii) **Enlightenment Ideas:** Philosophers like **Voltaire, Rousseau, and Montesquieu** challenged traditional authority and promoted **liberty, equality, and popular sovereignty**. These ideas spread through salons, pamphlets, and underground literature, inspiring calls for reform.

### Economic Conditions

- (i) **National Debt Crisis:** France was **deeply in debt** due to lavish royal spending and costly wars, including the **American Revolution**. The government was **bankrupt**, and attempts to reform taxation failed due to resistance from privileged estates.
- (ii) **Tax Burden on the Poor:** The **Third Estate** bore the brunt of taxation, while the clergy and nobility were largely exempt. Unfair tax policies fueled resentment and demands for change.
- (iii) **Food Shortages and Inflation:** Poor harvests in the late 1780s led to **grain shortages**, skyrocketing bread prices, and **mass hunger**. Urban unrest grew as people struggled to survive.

### Broader European Context

- (i) Other European monarchies were also facing **calls for reform**, but France's crisis was the most acute.
- (ii) The **Age of Enlightenment** had spread across Europe, challenging feudalism and promoting democratic ideals.
- (iii) France's revolution would soon **inspire uprisings across the continent**, reshaping Europe's political landscape.

In short, France in 1789 was a powder keg of **economic despair, social injustice, and political rigidity**, ignited by the spark of **Enlightenment thought**. The Revolution wasn't just inevitable—it was overdue.

## 1.2 Causes of the French Revolution of 1789

The **French Revolution of 1789** was ignited by a powerful convergence of **social, economic, political, and intellectual forces** that had been building for decades. These causes didn't just provoke unrest—they **radically reshaped France**, leading to the collapse of the monarchy and the rise of modern democratic ideals. Let's break it down:

### Key Causes of the French Revolution

- (i) **Social Inequality:** French society was divided into **three rigid estates: First Estate, the Clergy (privileged, tax-exempt); Second Estate, the Nobility (wealthy,**

also tax-exempt) and Third **Estate**, Commoners (bourgeoisie, peasants, urban workers—heavily taxed and politically powerless).

The **Third Estate made up over 95% of the population**, yet had **no meaningful representation** or privileges. This imbalance created **deep resentment**, especially among the rising bourgeoisie who demanded political inclusion.

- (ii) **Economic Crisis:** France was **bankrupt** due to extravagant royal spending and costly wars, including the **Seven Years' War** and the **American Revolution**. The government tried to raise taxes, but the privileged estates resisted reforms. **Poor harvests** in the late 1780s led to **food shortages and soaring bread prices**, causing widespread hunger and unrest.
- (iii) **Political Discontent:** France was ruled by an **absolute monarchy** under **Louis XVI**, who was seen as indecisive and ineffective. The Estates-General hadn't met in over 175 years, and when it was finally convened in 1789, the **Third Estate was sidelined**, prompting them to form the **National Assembly**. This act of defiance marked the **beginning of revolutionary action**.
- (iv) **Enlightenment Ideas:** Thinkers like **Voltaire, Rousseau, and Montesquieu** promoted ideas of **liberty, equality, and popular sovereignty**. These philosophies challenged the divine right of kings and inspired people to demand **constitutional government and human rights**.
- (v) **Influence of the American Revolution:** France's support for the American colonies in their fight for independence exposed French soldiers and citizens to **republican ideals**. The success of the American Revolution proved that **monarchies could be overthrown**, emboldening French revolutionaries.

### How these factors contributed to the Revolution

- **Social tensions** exploded when the Third Estate realized reform was impossible under the existing system.
- **Economic desperation** turned political frustration into **mass mobilization**, especially in urban centers like Paris.
- **Enlightenment ideals** gave the revolution a **moral and intellectual foundation**, framing it as a fight for justice and human dignity.
- The **failure of leadership** and refusal to compromise by the monarchy made **violent revolution inevitable**.

The storming of the **Bastille on July 14, 1789**, was not just symbolic—it was the eruption of years of **oppression, inequality, and unmet demands**. The Revolution didn't just change France—it **reshaped the world**, inspiring movements for democracy and human rights across continents.

### Ways to avoid conflicts similar to the French Revolution in the future.

Avoiding conflicts like the **French Revolution**—which erupted due to deep social inequality, economic crisis, and political exclusion—requires proactive governance,

inclusive policies, and social justice. Here are key strategies that can help prevent similar upheavals in any society:

- (i) **Promote Inclusive Governance:** Ensure all social classes and communities have **representation in decision-making**. Strengthen democratic institutions and uphold **rule of law** to prevent authoritarianism and abuse of power.
- (ii) **Address Social Inequality:** Implement policies that reduce **wealth gaps**, such as progressive taxation, land reforms, and access to quality education and healthcare. Protect the rights of marginalized groups and promote **social mobility**.
- (iii) **Maintain Economic Stability:** Avoid excessive national debt and ensure **transparent fiscal management**. Support job creation, fair wages, and food security to prevent economic despair among the population.
- (iv) **Encourage Civic Education and Dialogue:** Educate citizens about their rights, responsibilities, and the importance of peaceful engagement. Create platforms for **open dialogue** between government and citizens to resolve grievances before they escalate.
- (v) **Respect Freedom of Expression:** Allow space for **criticism, protest, and media freedom**—these are safety valves that help societies self-correct. Suppressing dissent often leads to underground resistance and radicalization.
- (vi) **Learn from History:** Study past revolutions to understand the **warning signs** of unrest. Use historical insights to design policies that promote **justice, equity, and national unity**.
- (vii) **Strengthen Institutions and Accountability:** Build strong, independent institutions that can **check executive power** and prevent corruption. Ensure leaders are held accountable through **transparent legal systems** and public oversight.

The French Revolution teaches us that when people are **excluded, oppressed, and ignored**, they will eventually rise. Avoiding such conflicts means building societies where **justice, dignity, and opportunity** are not privileges—but guarantees.

### 1.3 Key Events in the Course of 1789 French Revolution

The year **1789** marked the explosive beginning of the **French Revolution**, a transformative period that dismantled centuries of monarchy and feudal privilege. Here are the **key events** that shaped the course of the revolution in its first year:

#### Major Events of the 1789 French Revolution

1. **Meeting of the Estates-General – May 5, 1789:** King Louis XVI convened the **Estates-General** to address France’s financial crisis. The three estates—clergy, nobility, and commoners—met for the first time since 1614. The **Third Estate**, representing the majority of the population, demanded more influence but was repeatedly overruled.
2. **Formation of the National Assembly – June 17, 1789:** Frustrated by inequality, the Third Estate **declared itself the National Assembly**, claiming to represent the French people.

This was a direct challenge to royal authority and marked the start of revolutionary defiance.

3. **Tennis Court Oath – June 20, 1789:** After being locked out of their meeting hall, members of the National Assembly gathered in a nearby tennis court. They pledged **not to disband until a new constitution was established**, asserting the sovereignty of the people.
4. **The royal session, June 23, 1789:** The king Louis made a failed attempt to assert his authority and control over the revolutionary process. His agreements to some of the Third Estate's demands, such as fiscal equality and regular meetings of the Estates-General, were rejected as insufficient and the Third Estate continued to push for more radical changes. The Royal Session became a rallying point for those who opposed the revolution and sought to preserve the traditional social and political order. It marked the last voluntary decision by the king and set the stage for the subsequent revolutionary events.
5. **Storming of the Bastille – July 14, 1789:** Parisians, fearing a royal crackdown, stormed the **Bastille prison**, a symbol of tyranny. This iconic event became the **symbolic start of the revolution** and is celebrated today as **Bastille Day**.
6. **The Great Fear – July–August 1789:** Rumors of aristocratic plots sparked **peasant uprisings** across rural France. Nobles' estates were attacked, and feudal records were destroyed, signaling the collapse of feudalism.
7. **Abolition of Feudal Privileges – August 4, 1789:** The National Assembly responded to the Great Fear by **abolishing feudal rights and privileges**. This was a major step toward equality and the end of aristocratic dominance.
8. **Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen – August 26, 1789:** The Assembly adopted a document proclaiming **liberty, equality, and fraternity**. It became the ideological foundation of the revolution and modern human rights.
9. **Women's March on Versailles – October 5–6, 1789:** Thousands of women marched from Paris to Versailles, demanding **bread and political accountability**. They forced the royal family to relocate to Paris, placing them under the watch of the revolutionaries.

These events in 1789 didn't just shake France—they **redefined the meaning of citizenship, governance, and justice**.

## 1.4 Impact of the French Revolution of 1789

### Positive Impact of French revolution of 179 on France

The **French Revolution of 1789** had profound and lasting **positive impacts on France**, reshaping its political, social, and cultural landscape. Though the revolution was turbulent, it laid the foundation for modern democracy and civil rights. Here's a breakdown of its most significant contributions:

- (i) **End of Absolute Monarchy and Feudalism:** The revolution **abolished the Ancien Régime**, ending centuries of **absolute monarchy** and **feudal privileges**. Nobles and clergy lost their hereditary rights, and **all citizens became equal before the law**.
- (ii) **Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen:** Adopted in **August 1789**, this document enshrined principles like: **Liberty, Equality, Freedom of speech and religion, Right to property and security** It became a cornerstone of **modern human rights** and inspired constitutions worldwide.
- (iii) **Legal and Administrative Reforms:** **The revolution led to the** codification of laws, **culminating in the** Napoleonic Code (1804). This code promoted: Equality before the law; Merit-based public service and Freedom of religion It replaced arbitrary royal decrees with a **uniform legal system** across France.
- (iv) **Rise of Meritocracy:** The revolution dismantled the idea that **birth determined status**. Careers in government, military, and civil service became **open to talent**, allowing the **middle class** to rise to positions of influence.
- (v) **Spread of Enlightenment Ideals:** Revolutionary ideas like **popular sovereignty, secularism, and citizen participation** became embedded in French society. These ideals influenced **education, literature, and political thought**, fostering a more informed and engaged public.
- (vi) **Global Influence:** The French Revolution inspired **liberation movements** across Europe and Latin America. It challenged monarchies and colonial powers, fueling the **global spread of democracy and nationalism**.
- (vii) **Creation of the First French Republic:** The monarchy was replaced with a **republic**, where power was derived from the people rather than inherited privilege. This shift marked a **new era of governance**, emphasizing civic responsibility and national identity.

In essence, the French Revolution was a **turning point in world history**, transforming France from a rigid monarchy into a nation built on **liberty, equality, and fraternity**.

### Negative Impact of French revolution of 179 on France

The **French Revolution of 1789** was a landmark event that reshaped France and inspired democratic movements worldwide. However, it also brought significant **negative consequences**, especially in its early years. These impacts reveal the complexities of revolutionary change and the cost of radical transformation.

- (i) **The Reign of Terror (1793–1794):** Led by **Robespierre** and the **Committee of Public Safety**, this period saw **mass executions** of perceived enemies of the revolution. Over **16,000 people were guillotined**, including **King Louis XVI** and **Queen Marie Antoinette**, and thousands more died in prison or without trial. It created a climate of **fear, paranoia, and political purges**, undermining the revolution's ideals of liberty and justice.
- (ii) **Social and Economic Disruption:** The abolition of feudal privileges was progressive, but it also led to **chaos in land ownership**, disrupted agriculture, and worsened **food shortages**. Inflation soared, and the economy collapsed, especially during the **assignat currency crisis**. **Peasants and urban workers** suffered from hunger and instability, despite being the revolution's backbone.
- (iii) **Collapse of Political Stability:** France cycled through multiple unstable governments: the **National Assembly**, **Legislative Assembly**, **National Convention**, and **Directory**. Political factions like the **Jacobins** and **Girondins** fought violently for control, leading to **civil unrest and coups**. The instability paved the way for **Napoleon Bonaparte's rise to power**, ending the revolution with a military dictatorship.
- (iv) **Religious Persecution:** The revolution promoted **secularism**, but it also led to the **de-Christianization campaign**, closing churches and persecuting clergy. Religious symbols were destroyed, and the **Cult of Reason** replaced traditional faith, alienating many citizens.
- (v) **Internal and External Wars:** Revolutionary France faced **civil wars**, especially in regions like the **Vendée**, where royalist uprisings were brutally suppressed. It also fought **coalition wars** against European monarchies, draining resources and costing thousands of lives.
- (vi) **Loss of Enlightenment Ideals:** While the revolution began with Enlightenment principles, the **radical phase abandoned reason and tolerance** in favor of ideological purity and violence. Intellectuals and reformers were silenced or executed, and **freedom of speech** was curtailed during the Terror.

## Summary

The French Revolution brought **liberty and equality**, but also **bloodshed, instability, and repression**. Its darker chapters remind us that revolutionary change must be guided by **principle, restraint, and inclusive leadership**.

## Impact of 1789 French Revolutions to Europe and rest of the world

The **French Revolution of 1789** was more than a national upheaval—it was a **global turning point** that reshaped political thought, governance, and social structures across Europe and beyond. Its ripple effects inspired revolutions, challenged monarchies, and laid the groundwork for modern democratic ideals.

## Impact on Europe

1. **End of Absolute Monarchies:** The revolution **challenged the divine right of kings**, leading to the **decline of absolute monarchies** across Europe. Monarchs in Austria, Prussia, and Russia faced growing pressure to reform or suppress revolutionary ideas.
2. **Spread of Revolutionary Ideals:** Concepts like **liberty, equality, fraternity**, and **popular sovereignty** spread rapidly. These ideas influenced the **Napoleonic Wars**, which exported revolutionary reforms to countries like Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands.
3. **Rise of Nationalism:** The revolution fostered a strong sense of **national identity**, inspiring movements in **Poland, Greece, and Italy** to seek self-determination. It also contributed to the **unification movements** in Germany and Italy later in the 19th century.
4. **Legal and Social Reforms:** The **Napoleonic Code**, rooted in revolutionary principles, was adopted or adapted across Europe. It promoted **legal equality, secular governance**, and **merit-based civil service**, replacing feudal laws.

## Impact on the Rest of the World

- (i) **Influence on the Americas:** The revolution inspired **Latin American independence movements**, including those led by **Simón Bolívar** and **José de San Martín**. It reinforced the ideals of the **American Revolution**, encouraging further democratic reforms.
- (ii) **Global Democratic Movements:** The French Revolution became a **symbol of resistance** against oppression and colonialism. It influenced reformers and revolutionaries in **Haiti, India, and Africa**, who sought freedom and equality.
- (iii) **Human Rights and Enlightenment Legacy:** The **Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen** became a foundational document for **human rights movements** worldwide. It inspired the drafting of constitutions and bills of rights in emerging democracies.
- (iv) **Cultural and Intellectual Impact:** The revolution reshaped **philosophy, literature, and art**, embedding Enlightenment ideals into global culture. Thinkers like **Karl Marx** and **John Stuart Mill** drew on revolutionary ideas to critique capitalism and promote social justice.

In short, the French Revolution was a **catalyst for global change**, igniting the pursuit of **freedom, equality, and justice** across continents.

## Relevance of French revolution of 1789 on Uganda

The **French Revolution of 1789**, though geographically distant from Uganda, holds significant **ideological and historical relevance** for the country—especially in shaping its political consciousness, governance structures, and human rights discourse. Here's how its legacy echoes in Uganda's journey:

- (i) **Inspiration for Democratic Ideals:** The French Revolution championed **liberty, equality, and fraternity**, which became foundational principles for **modern democracy**. These ideals influenced **post-colonial African leaders and movements**, including those in Uganda, who sought to dismantle authoritarian rule and promote **inclusive governance**.
- (ii) **Human Rights and Constitutionalism:** The **Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789)** emphasized civil liberties, freedom of speech, and equality before the law. Uganda's **1995 Constitution** reflects similar values, aiming to protect individual rights and promote justice—principles rooted in revolutionary thought.
- (iii) **Resistance against oppression:** The French Revolution demonstrated the **power of popular resistance** against tyranny and social injustice. Ugandan history—from the struggle against colonial rule to resistance against dictatorial regimes—mirrors this spirit of **grassroots mobilization and political activism**.
- (iv) **Influence on Education and Political Thought:** Revolutionary ideas spread globally through **education, literature, and political theory**, shaping curricula and civic awareness in Uganda. Ugandan students and scholars study the French Revolution to understand **the dynamics of political change, social justice, and citizen empowerment**.
- (v) **Lessons on Governance and Reform:** The revolution exposed the dangers of **political exclusion, economic inequality, and unchecked power**. Uganda's leaders and civil society can draw lessons from this history to **strengthen institutions**, promote **accountability**, and avoid the pitfalls of authoritarianism.
- (vi) **Global Movements and Solidarity:** The French Revolution inspired **anti-colonial and liberation movements** worldwide, including in Africa. Uganda's independence movement and later democratic transitions were part of a broader global wave of **self-determination and reform**, rooted in revolutionary ideals.

In essence, the French Revolution's relevance to Uganda lies not in direct historical ties, but in its enduring influence on **political values, civic engagement, and the pursuit of justice**. It serves as both a **mirror and a warning**—reminding nations that when inequality and oppression persist, the people will demand change.

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