

theory of enlightened government was basically a political theory based on rationalism and derived many of its ideas from the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. The task of politics was to determine the means to achieve the end. They believed that the purpose of man and hence of government, was the achievement of 'happiness'. Politics should be related to this single objective and should be achieved through reason. The individual's natural rights could only be surrendered if it led to the promotion of general happiness and social welfare. The sovereign was presented outside the machine of the state, holding a unique position which could exercise general control of the machinery. It was these ideas that probably influenced Frederick the Great.

The process of state building had already commenced in the time of Frederick William I (1713–40). It was in his time that Prussia began its ascendancy as a powerful state. He treated every activity of the state as official business. He reduced the court's massive expenses drastically to become financially strong. He personally supervised every aspect of state functioning. He concentrated on building military power and increased troops from about 38,000 to 83,000, which made Prussia the fourth largest military force in Europe. He was aware that almost one-third of his military force consisted of foreign mercenaries, and so he began conscription from the peasant population. He forbade his subjects to serve in foreign armies and disciplined his forces. He hardly participated in any foreign wars and thus he could leave a strong military force for his son and successor Frederick II. Along with building his military, he also took steps to centralize the power of the state. A super-agency of the government was created in 1783 under the General Directory. It consisted of Finance, War and Domains under one central administration and was an attempt to establish an autocracy at the top and collegiality below it. Frederick William I saw education as a service to God and to the country and so he made education compulsory for all children in areas where schools existed. In those areas where there were no schools, he instructed local communities to establish schools. Interestingly he never cared for higher intellectual education and during his reign, the universities gradually declined. He distrusted his bureaucracy

