Analyze the major ways through which Tsar Peter the Great (1682-1725) sought to reform his society and its institutions in order to strengthen Russia and its position in Europe. (1989, #3)

In 1682, at the age of ten, Peter ascended the throne and claimed the title of tsar. However, it wasn’t until 1689 when he truly ruled by himself. After his visit to Western Europe, Peter sought to reform Russia through westernization and his four objectives. In order to transform Russia into a great power of Europe, the tsar first had to control and restrain the power of the boyars and the streltsy. He then went on to accomplish secular control of the church and abolished the position of the patriarch. Reorganizing domestic administration became another duty of Peter the Great in which he was determined to bring Russia a more efficient bureaucracy. In developing the economy and waging war, Peter established the iron industry of Russia and secured the warm-water ports gained through warfare. All goals were succeeded by a means of domestic and foreign policies. Tsar Peter the Great reformed his society and institutions by westernization through controlling the boyars and streltsy, achieving secular control of the church, reorganizing domestic administration, and developing an economy and waging war.

I. Historical Background Information of Peter the Great
   A. Peter the Great was born on May 30, 1672 in Moscow and took the throne at the age of ten.
   B. He was the child of his father’s second marriage Alexei Mikhailovich and Natalia Kirillovna Naryshkina
      1. In his father’s first marriage with Maria Miloslavskaya he had sons and eight daughters although only two were alive, Feodor and Ivan.
      2. When his father died, his eldest brother, Theodore III took the throne and later died in 1682. Alexis’s first wife, the Miloslavskys family did not want Peter to succeed alone.
      3. The Streltsy and Miloslavlyks decided to accept Ivan and Peter as joint rulers.
   C. Sister Sophia ruled as a regent in 1682.
      1. She appointed her lover, Prince Golitsin as Chief Minister, and ruled over Russia as he wished.
      2. Prince Golitsin persecuted the Old Believers for spiritually holding Russia back.
         a. The Russian people looke up to the Old Believers as the true symbol of religious devotion and disapproved of what the prince did.

II. Westernization
   A. Definition: the process whereby traditional, long-established societies come under its influence of Western culture in such matters as industry, technology, economics, lifestyle, food and moral and cultural values.
   B. With Sophia in control, Peter was sent back to Kolomenskoe.
      1. Soon he noticed that he possessed a penchant for war games including military drill and siege craft.
      2. He became acquainted with European soldiers from which he learned military tactics and strategies.
      3. At the age of seventeen his sister tried to murder him, but failed, and as a result, Sophia was sent to become a nun.
   C. Peter attempted to secure the principality’s southern borders against the Tatars and the Ottoman Turks.
      1. He failed to do so against a fort on the Sea of Azov’s but after he created Russia’s first navy, Peter was able to take the port of Azov in 1696. To continue the war with the Ottoman Empire, Peter traveled to Europe to seek allies.
      2. Peter at this time had two main goals: (1) to establish a strong European alliance against Turkey, and (2) to expand his personal knowledge of the West and its technology
   D. Grand Tour of Europe
      1. Peter the Great spent two years around Europe.
         a. During the time, he studied shipbuilding in Holland and England.
         b. He observed gunnery practice in Prussia.
         c. He paid a visit to the military and civilian school, factories, museums, military arsenals and installations.
         d. Peter also dined and spoke with the great and the powerful, who considered him both crude and rude.
         e. He inspected shipyards, docks, and manufacturing.
   E. Peter was determined to modernize the Russian state and westernize its society.
      1. The boyars and the streltsy
         a. Peter made an attack on the boyars, enforcing a dress code, mimicking Western Europe’s customs.
         b. He published the Table of Ranks.
            i. It equated a person’s social position and privileges in the bureaucracy or the army rather than with his position in the nobility.
         c. He brutally suppressed the revolt of the streltsy, punishing them for their disloyalty.
      2. Secular control of the church
         a. The Russian Orthodox Church was conservative theologically and through its attitudes toward westernization.
         b. Peter the Great replaced the position of the patriarch with the Holy Synod, which were made up of a committee of bishops, led by the Procurator General.
3. Reorganizing the administration of Russia
   a. Peter used Sweden as a model to reconstruct Russia's administration in which government departments were directed by colleges consisting of several individuals.
   b. A Senate of nine members was established to substitute for the tsar when he was absent.

4. Developing the economy
   a. To guarantee enough supplies for the military, state mines and factories were established. This included the establishment of the great iron industry.
   b. Peter also established the head tax on every male to raise money for the wars.
   c. Westernization caused the division of classes between the small, semiwesternized upper class (the nobility) and the rest of the population, which were peasants living in poverty.

5. The Wars of Peter the Great and Securing Warm-Water Ports
   a. Wars were fought against the Ottoman Turks and Sweden. Fighting Sweden and Charles XII in the Great Northern War brought in more success for Russia.
   b. After having defeated Sweden, warm-water ports were acquired and secured.

III. Goals of Peter the Great
   A. Controlling the Boyars and Streltsy
      1. Boyars (the old nobility)
         a. Peter immediately after his return from Western Europe shaved off the beards of the boyars.
         b. He also cut off the sleeves of their shirts and coats.
         c. The women were demanded to engage in the social functions of men, ending their seclusion from the society.
         d. The tsar required the boyars to serve his state.
         e. Peter published the Table of Ranks, ranking the nobles individually to have them serve the state out of their own free will. Others who rise to an officer's rank could proceed to the nobility. This ended the dominance of the boyars.
         f. The nobility never became entirely loyal to the state and continuously attempted to defend their independence and authority over the Russian imperial court. They also bargained with the later tsars over regional power and their superiority of the serfs.

   2. Streltsy (guards of the Moscow garrison)
      a. During the time when Peter the Great was taking a trip to Western Europe, the streltsy took advantage of the situation and started a rebellion.
      b. Returning from his trip, Peter suppressed the revolt to the extent where there were private tortures and public executions done by his own ministers.
      c. As a result of the rebellion, an estimated 1,200 of them were executed. Their dead bodies were left out in the open for all to see to prevent any future treachery.

   B. Achieving Secular Control of the Church
      1. Peter had to deal with the independence of the Russian Orthodox Church where it opposed the scientific and theological thought of the west.
         a. Patriarch Nikon made changes in church texts and ritual, which upset the Old Believers. Thousands of them chose committing suicide over giving in to the new rituals. This was a rejection of change and innovation, which encouraged the church hierarchy from making any more settlements with the modern concept.

      2. Instead of dealing with the church's problems, Peter wanted to avoid them.
         a. By doing so, the clergy cannot oppose change and westernization.
         b. The hierarchy of the church is forbidden to cause controversy that inspired the Old Believers.
         c. In 1721, Peter abolished the position of the patriarch and in its place he established a Holy Synod headed by a layman known as the Procurator General in order to rule the church in harmony with the state. The Holy Synod would persecute all dissenters and conducted a censorship of all publications.
         d. The Old Believers still opposed any changes and saw the tsar as leading the church into heresy.

   C. Reorganizing Domestic Administration
      1. Institutions of "colleges," or bureaus were created, consisting of several persons rather than departments with a single minister.
         a. These colleges were imposed by Peter to look after affairs including the collection of taxes, foreign relations, the army, the navy, commerce, mines and manufactures, and justice.
         b. This organization was an effort to drive out Russia's inefficient administration.

      2. A central senate of nine members was developed to take over the government when the tsar was away with the army.
         a. This was intended to establish a bureaucracy that could support an efficient military.

D. Developing the Economy and Waging War
   1. Promoting Economic Development
      a. The iron industry was established in the Ural Mountains. By mid-century, Russia was the largest iron producing country in Europe. To aid the expansion of industry, private operators and established state mines and factories were added to insure adequate supplies for his military.
      b. A head tax on every male was created. It was also known as the soul tax, which collected the income from monopolies on various products such as caviar and salt.
c. Peter sent Russians to Western Europe to acquire technical and organizational skills. He tried to attract the Western European craftspeople to live and work in Russia.

2. Waging War and Securing Warm-Water Ports
   a. In order to bring trade to Russia and have a greater influence on European affairs, Peter resolved to secure warm-water ports. This led him to the wars with the Ottoman Empire and Sweden.
   b. The wars started off with Russia battling the Turks for control of Azov in 1695, which ended in failure. However, Peter returned with a fleet, helping him capture Azov in 1696. This victory, unfortunately, was only temporary and in 1711, Peter was obliged to return the port to the Turks.
   c. Peter then turned his attention away from the Turks and concentrated in his war against Sweden, seeking to acquire control of the Baltic Sea. In 1700, the Russians invaded the Swedish in search of Baltic possessions, which started the Great Northern War.
      i. Peter suffered defeat at the Battle of Narva by Charles XII, but he regrouped his forces and reserved his resources. Later in 1709, Sweden, led by Charles XII returned to fight Russia and resulted in a major victory for the Russians in the Battle of Poltava.
      ii. In 1721, the Peace of Nystad ended the Great Northern War and declared Russia’s acquisition of Ingria, Estonia, Livonia, Karelia.
   d. Russia now possessed the warm-water ports from defeating Sweden and obtained a permanent influence over European affairs.

Peter’s fascination of Western Europe inspired him to create a modernized state. With westernization in mind, Peter the Great modernized the Russian state and established Russia with great prestige, dominating European affairs. His four objectives were accomplished by maintaining control over the boyars and the streltsy, having secular control of the church, reorganizing the Russian administration, promoting the economy through industry and engaging in wars to acquire warm-water ports. Peter the Great took great steps to put Russia in its proper place in the European society. By the prominent accomplishments and reforms of Tsar Peter the Great, Russia had finally achieved its high standing in a world dominated by efficiency.

Works Cited:


<http://www.hfac.uh.edu/gbrown/philosophers/leibniz/BritannicaPages/PeterGreat/PeterGreat.html>