History of Europe

Seventeenth Century Europe

State, Conflict and the Social Order in Europe 1598–1700

History of Europe

Published

Seventeenth Century Europe 1598–1700

Thomas Munck

Eighteenth Century Europe 1700–1789

Jeremy Black

Forthcoming

Early Medieval Europe 400–1000

Roger Collins

Medieval Europe 1000–1250

Randall Rogers

Sixteenth Century Europe 1500–1600

Richard Mackenney

Nineteenth Century Europe 1789–1914

Alan Sked

Twentieth Century Europe 1915–1986

Anthony Adamthwaite

History of Europe

Seventeenth Century Europe

**State, Conflict and the
Social Order in Europe
1598–1700**

Thomas Munck

Macmillan Education

ISBN 978-0-333-28641-8 ISBN 978-1-349-20626-1 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-20626-1

© Thomas Munck 1990

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 1990

All rights reserved. For information, write:
Scholarly and Reference Division,
St. Martin's Press, Inc., 175 Fifth Avenue,
New York, N.Y. 10010

First published in the United States of America in 1990

ISBN 978-0-312-04011-6 cloth
ISBN 978-0-312-04012-3 paper

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Munck, Thomas

Seventeenth century Europe : state, conflict, and the social order
in Europe, 1598–1700 / Thomas Munck.

p. cm.—(History of Europe)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-312-04011-6.—ISBN 978-0-312-04012-3 (pbk.)

1. Europe—History—17th century. I. Title. II. Series: History
of Europe (St. Martin's Press)

D246.M86 1990

940.2'2—dc20

89–10893

CIP

Contents

Chronology of main events 1598–1700	ix
Acknowledgments	xxi
Introduction	xxiii
Maps	xxx
1 The Thirty Years War in the German lands	1
The German lands before 1618	2
Bohemia and the Rhine (1617–28)	7
Christian IV, Gustav Adolf and Wallenstein (1625–30)	11
Gustav Adolf and Swedish grand designs (1629–34)	16
The elusiveness of peace (1634–48)	20
The consequences of war and peace	23
2 Government in wartime Europe	31
Tax collection and war	35
The restored monarchy and the Huguenots in France	39
The indispensable first minister: Richelieu and Louis XIII	43
Tension and revolt in France in the 1630s	45
Castile and the Spanish system	49
Olivares: integration or disintegration?	51
Sweden and the challenge of empire	56
Christian IV and ‘elective absolutism’ in Denmark	62
Crown and parliament in England	66
Charles I and the abandonment of consensus politics	70
Scotland and the Long Parliament	74
3 The framework of life	81
Population and food supply	82
The demographic effects of disease	90
The impact of war	94
Prices and wages	97
The family	99
Occupations and wealth distribution	103
Social and geographic mobility	106

4 Enterprise and profit	109
Finance	112
Industry and trade	115
Regions in the European economy: the Mediterranean recession	117
The growth of the north-west	121
The frontier in the east	128
The pre-industrial economy: the west and the Ottoman Empire	132
5 The structure of society: nobility and office-holders	137
Tradition and noble status	139
The 'crisis of the aristocracy'	145
The French nobility and the crown	148
Ennoblement and the sale of offices in the west	151
Titles and venality in Castile and England	155
Nobility and government service in central and northern Europe	158
The Polish and Russian elites	162
6 The structure of society: urban life	165
The smaller towns	169
Larger cities	175
Capital cities	178
The urban poor	181
Rioting and crime	185
Charitable responses to urban poverty	189
Official urban poor relief	193
7 Provincial revolts, civil war and the 'crisis of the 17th century'	199
Liberty or noble anarchy: Poland and the east	203
Urban revolt and provincial secession: Spain and its territories in the 1640s	208
The Frondes: absolutism challenged?	212
The English civil wars and Scotland	216
Revolution and the search for stability in England	222
Non-violent 'crises' in the Scandinavian kingdoms	228
Ebb and flow of republicanism in the United Provinces	232
8 The structure of society: peasant and seigneur	237
Serfdom in Muscovy	242
Conditions in east-central Europe	246
Entrepreneurial land usage in central and western Europe	249

Commercial farming in the Netherlands and England	253
Peasant, bondsman and labourer in western Europe	256
Peasant protest and state involvement	261

9 Beliefs, *mentalités*, knowledge and the printed text 269

Witch-hunting	272
The struggle for minds	277
The printed word	285
Scepticism, Galileo and the expanding universe	290
Science and the commonwealth of learning	294
The search for perfect government	299

10 The arts, the value of creativity and the cost of appearances 305

Popular culture	307
Church music and the city public	310
The visual arts and the Catholic church in Rome	315
Buildings and symbols	322
Princely and royal court environments	326
Public patronage and appreciation of the arts	334

11 Absolutism and the return of order after 1660 340

The limitations of central government	342
State regulation of trade and industry	347
Military power and fiscal strain in the Habsburg lands and France	352
Restructuring in Brandenburg-Prussia and Sweden	355
The 'political nation' and the Stuart monarchy 1600–88	359
Church policies and absolutism	365

12 Government and conflict in the later seventeenth century 371

Louis XIV and international conflict in Europe after 1660	372
Commercial rivalry in Europe and overseas	377
Internal opposition and the state monopoly of violence	382
The image of power and the secular state	386
The receding eastern frontier: Russia	391
Conclusion	396

Notes 402

Select bibliography 431

Selective index 442

Chronology of Main Events 1598–1700

The West	C. & N. Europe	The East
<p>1598: Peace of Vervins betw. France and Spain; Edict of Nantes protects French Huguenots; Philip III of Spain (–1621)</p> <p>1600: English E. India Co.</p> <p>1602: Dutch E. India Co.</p> <p>1603: Death of Elizabeth I: Scottish James VI/I (–1625); Shakespeare: <i>Hamlet</i></p> <p>1605: Gunpowder plot in Westminster</p> <p>1606: Papal interdict vs Venice</p> <p>1607: Ulster Plantation begun; Virginia founded</p> <p>1608: Quebec founded by French</p>	<p>Swedes depose Sigismund: Charles IX (–1611)</p> <p>Giordano Bruno burnt (Rome)</p> <p>Caravaggio: <i>Death of the Virgin</i></p> <p>Habsburg peace with Turks; emperor Rudolf II (1576–1612) loses power to his brother Matthias</p> <p>Occupation of Donauwörth by Maximilian of Bavaria (1597–1651); Monteverdi: <i>Orfeo</i></p> <p>Diet of Regensburg fails; Protestant union formed</p>	<p>Boris Godunov tsar (–1605)</p> <p>Muscovy: Time of Troubles (–1613)</p> <p>Bolotnikov revolt in Ukraine</p>

The West	C. & N. Europe	The East
1609: 12-year truce betw. Spain and Un. Provinces; Moors expelled from Spain; Amsterdam Exchange Bank	Jülich–Cleves dispute; Letter of Majesty issued to Bohemian Protestants; German Catholic League formed	Swedes and Poles in Muscovy
1610: Henry IV murdered: Louis XIII (–1643) under regent Marie de Medici	Frederick V elector in Palatinate; Galileo uses telescope	Sigismund III (1587– 1632) of Poland garrisons Moscow
1611: English authorised version of Bible	Christian IV (1588– 1648) vs Sweden (Kalmar war); Gustav Adolf king of Sweden (–1632); Saxony: Johann Georg I (–1656)	
1612:	Death of emperor Rudolf II: Matthias (–1619)	
1613: Amsterdam Exchange	Peace betw. Denmark and Sweden at Knäröd; Elector of Brandenburg adopts Calvinism	Michael Romanov tsar (–1645)
1614: Estates General called in France	Tr. of Xanten splits Jülich and Cleves	
1615: Dutch take Moluccas		
1616: Death of Shakespeare and of Cervantes		
1617: Regency in France terminated by force		P. of Stolbova between Sweden & Muscovy; Swedish-Polish war
1618: Synod of Dordrecht narrows Dutch church	Defenestration of Prague starts Bohemian war	

The West	C. & N. Europe	The East
<p>1619: Oldenbarnevelde executed in The Hague; Black slaves in N. America</p> <p>1620: Bacon: <i>Novum Organum</i>; <i>Mayflower</i> sails</p> <p>1621: Death of Philip III: Philip IV (–1665)</p> <p>1622: French peace with Huguenots (Montpellier); Oliver's first minister in Madrid (–1643)</p> <p>1623:</p> <p>1624: Anglo-French war; Richelieu incr. influential in French govt (–1642)</p> <p>1625: Death of James VI/I: Charles I (–1649); Death of Maurits of Orange, Dutch surrender Breda; Grotius: <i>De jure belli ac pacis</i></p> <p>1627: Siege of La Rochelle; War of Mantuan succession</p>	<p>Death of emperor Matthias: Ferdinand II (–1637); Hamburg Bank set up; Andrea: <i>Christianopolis</i></p> <p>Battle of White Mountain: 'Winter King' loses Bohemia</p> <p>Empire heads for financial chaos, 'Kipper- und Wipperzeit'; Swedes take Riga</p> <p>Re-catholicisation begins in Habsburg lands; Recurrent peasant revolts (–1627)</p> <p>Maffeo Barberini elected pope Urban VIII (–1644)</p> <p>Monteverdi: <i>Il combattimento</i></p> <p>Wallenstein hired by emperor; Christian IV intervenes in Empire (–1629)</p> <p>Wallenstein and Tilly extend imperial control north; Swedish peasant revolt (Dalarna)</p>	<p>Bethlen Gabor invades Hungary</p>

The West	C. & N. Europe	The East
<p>1628: Duke of Buckingham assassinated; Petition of Right; Harvey: <i>De motu cordis</i></p>	<p>Wallenstein 'general of the Baltic Sea'; Swedish control of Baltic trade tightened</p>	
<p>1629: Huguenots accept durable peace at Alais; Engl. parliament dissolved</p>	<p>Peace of Lübeck takes Christian IV out of war; Edict of Restitution</p>	<p>Truce of Altmark betw. Sweden and Poland</p>
<p>1630: Day of Dupes in Paris; Rubens: <i>Peace and War</i></p>	<p>Gustav Adolf enters German war; Wallenstein dismissed; Plague virulent in Europe</p>	
<p>1631: <i>Gazette de France</i></p>	<p>Magdeburg sacked by Tilly; Tr. of Bärwalde betw. France and Sweden; Leipzig colloquium; Swedish victory at Breitenfeld; Fall of Prague to von Arnim</p>	
<p>1632: Wentworth in Ireland; Major rebellions in France continuing into 1640s</p>	<p>Gustav Adolf killed at Lützen; Christina queen (–1654), Oxenstierna dominant (–1644); Galileo: <i>Dialogue</i>, then trial in Rome</p>	<p>Muscovy attacks Poland; Wladyslaw IV king of Poland (–1644); Muscovite expansion into Siberia</p>
<p>1633: Baptists in England; Charles I visits Edinburgh</p>	<p>Protestant league of Heilbronn;</p>	
<p>1634: Ship-money first collected in London</p>	<p>Wallenstein again dismissed, then assassinated;</p>	<p>Polish-Muscovite peace</p>

The West

1635: France and Spain at war (–1659); Académie française set up

1636: France invaded by Habsburg army

1637: Spain loses Breda; prayer book riots in Scotland;

Descartes: *Discourse on method*

1638: National Covenant in Scotland

1639: Spanish navy defeated by Dutch off Downs

1640: Revolts in Catalonia and Portugal; Short and Long Parliaments called in England (Scots invasion)

1641: Irish rebellion; Strafford beheaded in London; Grand Remonstrance

1642: Civil war in England; Death of Richelieu, Mazarin first minister; Hobbes: *De cive*; Rembrandt: *Night Watch*

1643: Death of Louis XIII; Louis XIV (–1715) under regency; Spain defeated at Rocroi;

C. & N. Europe

Protestant defeat at Nördlingen; Swedish Form of Govt

Peace of Prague betw. emperor and Saxony;

Saxons defeated by Swedes at Wittstock

Ferdinand III emperor (–1657); Public opera house opens in Venice

Frederick William elector of Brandenburg-Prussia (–1688): peace with Sweden

Danish–Swedish war (–1645)

The East

Muscovite expedition through Siberia to Pacific

The West	C. & N. Europe	The East
Assembly of Westminster		
1644: Engl. battle at Marston Moor	German peace conferences start in Westphalia (–1648) Pope Innocent X (–1655)	Colloquy of Torun
1645: Cromwell wins at Naseby; Laud beheaded		Alexis tsar (–1676)
1646: End of first civil war in England (–1648)		
1647: Willem II Dutch stadholder (–1650)	Revolt of Masaniello in Naples	
1648: Parl. of Paris starts Frondes (–1653); 2nd Engl. civil war: Pride's Purge of parliament	Dutch-Spanish peace; Prague taken by Swedes; Peace of Westphalia; Frederick III king of Denmark (–1670)	Jan II Kazimierz king of Poland (abdic. 1668); Riots in Moscow, <i>zemskey</i> called
1649: Charles I beheaded; Cromwell to Ireland, later also Scotland; <i>Leveller Third Agreement</i>	European-wide harvest failures (–1652)	Russian <i>Ulozheniye</i> (law code)
1650: Dutch power struggle until Willem II d.: Joh. de Witt takes over (–1672)	Sw. Estates in conflict	
1651: First Navigation Act; Hobbes: <i>Leviathan</i>		
1652: Anglo-Dutch war		Irkutsk founded
1653: Barebones Parliament, Cromwell Lord Protector; Ormée (Bordeaux) ends, princes' Fronde collapses, Mazarin back from exile	Imperial Diet reconvenes; Swiss peasant revolt starts in Luzerne	Nikon's reforms of Russian Orth. church

The West	C. & N. Europe	The East
1654:	Abdication of Christina of Sweden: Charles X (–1660)	Ukrainian revolt of Khmelnytsky; Polish-Russian war, Smolensk falls to tsar
1655: Anglo-Spanish war (–1659)	Charles X invades Poland; Pope Alexander VII (–1667)	
1656: General hospital set up in Paris; Huygens: pendulum clock	Saxony: Johann Georg II (–1680)	Mohammed Küprülü gr. vizir in Ottoman empire
1657: Humble Petition and Advice to Cromwell	Death of emp. Ferdinand III; First Danish-Swedish war	
1658: Cromwell dies: son Richard ineffective	Leopold I emperor (–1705); Second Danish-Swedish war	
1659: French-Spanish peace at Pyrenees; Pepys: <i>Diary</i> (–1669)	European-wide harvest failures (–1661)	
1660: English Restoration: Charles II (–1685)	Death of Charles X of Sweden: Charles XI (–1697) under regency: peace with Danes; 'Coup' makes crown hereditary in Denmark	Sw.-Polish war ended by peace of Oliva
1661: Death of Mazarin: Colbert minister (–1683)		Russo-Swedish peace at Kardis Ahmed Küprülü Ottoman gr. vizir (–1676)
1662: English Press Act and 'Clarendon code'; Royal Society in London		Copper riots in Muscovy
1663:	Diet of Regensburg in permanent session	

The West	C. & N. Europe	The East
1664: Anglo-Dutch war (–1667)	Turkish-Habsburg truce at Vasvar	
1665: London Plague; Carlos II of Spain (–1700)	Danish Royal Law	
1666: Louvois min. of war; Great Fire of London; Molière: <i>Misanthrope</i>		Schism in Russian Orth. church
1667: Milton: <i>Paradise Lost</i> ; French war of Devolution in Flanders (–1668); La Reynie chief of Paris police		Truce of Andrusovo betw. Poland and Muscovy; Stenka Rasin rebellion
1668: Spanish partition tr; Rembrandt: <i>Jewish Bride</i>	Grimmelshausen: <i>Simplicissimus</i>	
1670: Secret tr. of Dover; Spinoza: <i>Tractatus th.</i>	Death of Frederick III: Christian V (–1699)	Hungarian Wesselenyi revolt suppressed
1672: Franco-Dutch war (–1678): de Witt killed, power to William III of Orange; Stop of Engl. Exchequer		Cossack-Turkish attack on Poland
1673: Engl. Test Act passed		
1674: P. of Westminster: England out of war	Swedes invade n. Germany	John Sobieski king of Poland (–1696)
1675: Rebuilding of St Pauls under way; Revolt in Brittany crushed	Swedish defeat at Fehrbellin; Danish-Swedish war (–1679); Fall of Griffenfeld (Denmark)	
1676:	Pope Innocent XI (–1689)	Fiodor III tsar (–1682) under regency; Kara Mustafa gr. vizier

The West	C. & N. Europe	The East
1677: William of Orange m. Stuart princess Mary; Spinoza: <i>Ethics</i>		Russo-Turkish war (–1681)
1678: Peace of Nijmegen ends war in west; ‘Popish plot’ in England	Hamburg opera house	
1679: Habeas corpus Act; Engl. Exclusion Crisis; Scottish Covenanters defeated	N. European wars end	
1680: Réunions started on French Rhine frontier; Purcell: <i>Dido & Aeneas</i>	Saxony: Johann Georg III (–1690) Swedish comn. examines regency: crown strengthened; Bohemian peasant revolt	
1681: French seize Strassburg		
1682: Four articles launch Fr. church vs Papacy; Fr. court to Versailles	Thököli rebellion in Hungary; Swedish <i>reduktion</i> under way	Peter I tsar (–1725), under Sofya’s regency
1683: Franco-Spanish war; Death of Colbert: Louvois dominant minister	Siege of Vienna by Turks fails; Danish law code published	Austro-Polish war vs Turks (–1699)
1684: Truce at Regensburg		
1685: Death of Charles II: James II/VII (–1688); Argyll and Monmouth rebellions; Revocation of Ed. of Nantes, Huguenot exodus from France		
1686: League of Augsburg vs Louis XIV		

The West	C. & N. Europe	The East
1687: Louis excommunicated; Newton: <i>Principia M.</i>	Turks defeated at Mohacs; Habsburg control of Hungary improved (Diet of Pressburg)	
1688: Fr. launch war of League of Augsburg (–1697); William lands in England, James flees to France	Frederick III elector of Brandenburg-Prussia (–1713)	Turks lose Belgrade
1689: William & Mary given Engl. crown: Bill of Rights; Engl. join war on France; Huguenot revolt in S. France; James lands in Ireland; Locke: <i>Two Treatises</i>	French devastate Palatinate	Tsar Peter I takes power
1690: James defeated at Boyne		Mustafa Küprülü leads Ottoman recovery
1691: Death of Louvois	Saxony: Johann Georg IV (–1694)	
1692: Massacre at Glencoe	Hannover becomes electorate	
1693: National debt set up in England	Swedish absolutism complete	
1694: Bank of England; Famine starts in much of Europe (–1697)	Saxony: Augustus the Strong (–1733); Halle University founded	
1695: End of effective censorship in England		
1696: Bayle: <i>Dict. historique</i>		Peter takes Azov
1697: Tr. of Rijswick ends war in west	Augustus also king of Poland; Charles XII king of Sweden (–1718)	Habsburg victory over Turks (Zenta); Peter I visits west

The West

1698: Spanish partition
tr.;

Fénelon: *Télémaque*

1699: Scottish Darien
project fails;

Vauban: *Dîme royale*
(not publ. yet)

1700: Spanish
Habsburg line extinct

C. & N. Europe

P. of Karlowitz ends
Turkish war;

Frederick IV of
Denmark (–1730)

Great northern war
(–1721)

The East

Streltsy revolt
suppressed by Peter

Acknowledgements

This volume has taken much longer to write than originally anticipated, but in the process I have benefited from the help and advice of many. I owe most of all to my family – especially to my wife Margaret, who has not only for all her married life had to put up with someone perpetually reluctant to take a break from the current part of successive time-consuming projects, but has cheerfully encouraged and helped me along; and to my children, without whom this book would have appeared much sooner!

Any historian attempting a wide-ranging survey has an enormous debt to the countless scholars in whose work he has sought evidence, ideas and interpretative guidance – and whose findings he may in the process have been rash enough to compress out of recognition. There are some areas covered by this book where I have detailed research experience of my own, but many more where I have necessarily had to rely entirely on the work of others. The endnote references and the bibliography will, I hope, serve as some acknowledgement of where my greatest debts lie; but such is the vitality and range of work in the early modern period that neither of these can, within the confines of a textbook, be comprehensive. I have been able to include references only to what seemed to me most important and most helpful for anyone wishing to pursue particular themes in greater depth, but have added a number of works of a slightly more specialised nature, where more thorough guidance is given on recent developments in the field. If there is a heavy weighting towards work completed in the last ten or fifteen years, that is because perceptions of many central aspects of the period have in fact changed dramatically within that time-span.

I am grateful to the University of Glasgow for leaves of absence, and for providing what is still a congenial and stimulating environment for students and staff alike. Many colleagues and friends deserve personal acknowledgement, but I owe a particular debt to the following: to Hamish Scott at the University of St Andrews, whose detailed and invariably helpful comments were both a great encouragement when the enterprise seemed daunting, and of enormous practical assistance; and at my own university to Christopher F. Black and Alan G.R. Smith, whose expertise in areas outside my usual range proved particularly invaluable. For chapter 10 I have unashamedly pirated ideas from a Special Subject which Chris Black and I have run jointly

for some years, and his thorough knowledge of especially Roman Catholic Italy has been of as much benefit to me as to our students. No less generous with his time was G. V. R. Grant, always willing to help by commenting on drafts at any stage of the work. I need hardly say that these friends and colleagues, whilst generously spending much time and effort on improving both structure and detail, in no way take on any responsibility for inadequacies in the final text.

In a less direct but important way I have also gained a great deal from certain colleagues outside the field of early modern Europe; in particular, Evan Mawdsley and Rick Trainor, whose enthusiasm brought me into the age of the microcomputer, changing my outlook both on teaching and on research in the process. That this book shows so little obvious sign of quantitative analysis is something that I regret, but which the nature of the project made inevitable. At least its production was greatly eased (the excellent earlier typing of Pat Ferguson notwithstanding) by means of the new technology, which has also enabled me to remedy some of the accruing defects of long gestation. And on that note I must thank my publishers for their forbearance with more overshoot deadlines than I would care to admit in print.

University of Glasgow
October 1988

THOMAS MUNCK

Introduction

No textbook on a whole century of European history could hope to be fully comprehensive, given the amount of stimulating work that is being done in the field of early modern studies. The structure of this book has accordingly been based on two broad principles. First, while the narrative framework is covered in some detail in the key political chapters of the book (namely the first two, the seventh and the last two), the rest of the text is centred on themes which are crucial to an understanding of the period but which do not necessarily lend themselves either to chronologically or to geographically structured treatment. The aim has been to survey areas where more recent work has led to reassessments of the period and its meaning, and to outline some of the ideas which have guided historians in their attempts to solve crucial difficulties. The index will help readers locate individuals and countries on which they may wish to concentrate; the book as a whole will, it is hoped, provide some guidance for those seeking an overall understanding of the relationship between state and subject, of the structure of society, of the location of power and the nature of status and influence, of the mental and cultural world of the early modern period, of the urban and rural communities, and of the demographic and economic realities that shaped society.

Second, the book has been written in the belief that the British Isles are part of Europe. This is not to say that English or Scottish developments are necessarily comparable to what happens on the continent: indeed one obvious thread running through this book is the significance of the local and the particular all over the continent, and the extent to which even smaller states in this period were still far from being coherent entities in themselves in any meaningful sense. But the fact that the British Isles were surrounded by sea, while ensuring a natural advantage in avoiding the worst excesses of continental military development, also ensured ready commercial, cultural and even political contact with continental states – despite that legendary streak of insularity and xenophobia for which at least the English were renowned. During the seventeenth century, as newspapers and travel made Europeans more aware of what was happening beyond their immediate horizons, some observers also became more aware of the potential repercussions of developments in other countries. Nowhere is this more strikingly revealed than in the horror all over the continent

which greeted the news of the execution of Charles I, or in the growing awareness later in the century that Louis XIV was becoming both a model of the grandeur of monarchy and a warning of the dangers of military arrogance.

French and English material necessarily forms a large part of any survey of early modern Europe, partly because French and English-language scholars have led the way towards a re-evaluation of the social and economic history of the period. Given the strengths of recent publications in these fields, however, the aim of this book has been to try to broaden the perspective by emphasising central, northern and eastern Europe as far as possible. This may at times lead to some unusual choices of examples and case-studies; in the process, however, it is hoped that a more balanced view of European developments will emerge. Absolute monarchy, to return to an earlier point, may have had its most grandiose exponent in the form of Louis XIV; but it is the history of smaller states, as well as the reluctance of the English to follow suit, that throw the clearest light on what governments could and could not achieve in practice during this period.

The seventeenth century, as a period, itself requires some justification. It stands in transition between on the one hand the relatively prosperous and dynamic sixteenth century, with its major religious debates, its overseas expansion, and the economic growth which lasted into the 1590s or even to 1620; and on the other the more relaxed and expansive eighteenth century, where aristocratic society was at its height yet where many intellectual and cultural trends came to fruition in the enlightenment. Boxed in by the Moslem world in the Mediterranean, threatened by recurrent warfare both amongst the European powers and overseas, and at times overwhelmed by disease and starvation of extraordinary ferocity, seventeenth-century Europe was under siege. Chapter 7 is a central part of this story, covering the middle decades of the century when to many Europeans the whole structure seemed about to collapse. This chapter provides the resolution of the growing tensions of wartime Europe discussed in the first two chapters, but also helps to explain why those with any influence were so insistent after 1660 on the preservation of the social order and the consolidation of stable monarchy. This consolidation is discussed in chapter 11, whilst some of its negative sides, together with the continuing limitations of classic absolutism, are outlined in the last chapter.

Only rarely is the story taken beyond the last decade of the seventeenth century. This is a departure from some textbook norms, where 1715 has been the point of termination. I am not convinced that the latter date is helpful: by that stage the War of the Spanish Succession had drastically altered the balance of power in a way that belongs to the eighteenth century, not the seventeenth. No less

important, many of the central themes of the seventeenth century reach a natural conclusion in the last years of the century rather than after an additional half-generation of European war: this applies to the witchcraze as well as to the completion of the scientific and intellectual revolutions, to the commercial reorientation of Europe in favour of the north-west, as well as to the resolution of the last trailers of the 'mid-century crisis' in England in 1688–89 and in Sweden in the period 1680–97. French absolutism itself makes best sense if seen as an organic development from the end of the civil war in 1598, through Henry IV and the ministers of Louis XIII, to a culmination (after the brief interlude of the Fronde) in the fully-developed but hardly innovative approach of Louis XIV's ministers Colbert and Louvois. In the last years of his reign, however, the French crown had to rely on emergency expedients, abandoning any long-term planning in favour of what at times seemed simple survival in an all-out European war. The legacy of those last years was apparent through much of the eighteenth century.

In the broader cultural area there are equally good reasons to stop short of the turn of the century. Chapter 10 attempts to analyse the period in terms of the arts. This discussion cannot be anything other than provisional, since in some areas research is still in its infancy. For that reason, too, some areas of Europe that might reasonably have deserved more prominent treatment are only covered in passing. However, the point of the chapter is not to attempt total coverage, since that is not yet possible, but instead to highlight some of the main concepts and problems that the historian faces in trying to integrate cultural history into a wider explanatory framework. The literary dimensions alone could easily have taken up all the available space; instead, however, analysis concentrates on areas where more reliable results can at this stage be attained, particularly with regard to music, the fine arts and architecture. In the arts, too – whether one examines the changes in literary tastes, away from the grandeur and passion of Milton and Racine towards the lighter entertainment of the Restoration theatre, or whether one turns from the dramatic masterpieces of Monteverdi to the conventionality of court music during the last years of Lully and after his death, or whether one looks at the relative decline of Italian artistic innovation after the age of Bernini – the conclusion must once more be that a natural point of summation comes in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. By then the demands of patrons and the tastes of the public were coming to favour the idyllic more than the dramatic or the emotional. By then, too, the new 'aristocratic' standards of the *ancien régime* were becoming apparent even in the paintings of the Dutch. Historians who have worked on the relationship between popular and elite culture also on the whole agree, as we shall see, that the signs of a divergence between

the two become fully apparent only towards the end of the period.

In terms of the social history of the period, a century is perhaps less meaningful. Continuity is often more apparent than change, and the historian must try to avoid over-dramatising what is often a very gradual and almost imperceptible process. Nowhere is this more obvious than with respect to the peasantry and to peasant–seigneur relations. Nevertheless chapter 8 has been placed after that on the ‘mid-century crisis’ because the consolidation of serfdom in parts of eastern and east-central Europe clearly was in part conditioned by the resolution not just of the Thirty Years War but also of the bitter conflict in northern Europe and the Ukraine in the 1650s. In Poland, in particular, the crown then lost what with hindsight may have been its last chance of playing a decisive regulative role in the style of other European monarchies. As we shall note, it is simplistic to see rural Europe as divided into east and west, *enserfed* and ‘free’; ultimately landowners had a natural interest in preserving the productive capacity of their peasants, even if they might interpret that interest in different ways. In the long-term perspective, peasant–seigneur relations formed an essential and fundamental part of the social hierarchy all over early modern Europe, and contemporaries recognised the mutual dependence that such a relationship involved. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion, however, that at some stage the market-orientation and exclusive privileges of some east-central European landowners would produce a fundamental divergence of approach from the more divided motivations of the western elite, concerned as they were with status based both on the *rentier* income of landed estates and on the juggling for position in the office-holding ranks of increasingly intricate bureaucracies and court circles.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, a well-informed European would have had a very different perception of his political and social environment than that of his grandson or great-grandson after the peace settlements of 1648, 1659 and 1660. The Thirty Years War, for all its tortuous meanderings, had inescapable and decisive consequences everywhere – not just in central Europe but also, as even the sheer length of chapter 2 suggests, on every part of the continent. The slowness with which the conflict got off the ground, however, suggests that 1618 did not mark the culminating release of long-accumulating tensions and imbalances in Europe. On the contrary, one could argue that at the turn of the century the outlook was in some respects quite positive.

On the economic front, despite the catastrophic harvest failures and consequent unrest of the 1590s, there were not yet any clear indications of the long-term stagnation and recession which had unmistakably set in by the early 1620s. Overseas long-distance trade was buoyant if unpredictable, and while the Dutch access to the east via the

Cape in 1595 warned of a change of balance to come, the long-standing Spanish and Portuguese positions in the Americas were still secure. New trade openings were being developed at the turn of the century, the optimism that they generated clearly shown in the trading companies and banking facilities springing up in different cities in the first decades of our period. And, whilst the rise in prices had far outstripped that of wages during the sixteenth century, thereby damaging sections of the skilled and unskilled urban populations, there were signs of prosperity both in the older ports of the Mediterranean and in the more recently developing coastal regions of the United Provinces and north-western Germany.

On the political front the outlook seemed particularly good in 1598. The death of Philip II of Spain, the conclusion of peace with France at Vervins, and the compromise settlement at Nantes of the long and bitter French religious wars all helped to create some ground for optimism. The balance of power in Europe had not shifted significantly. While the Habsburgs clearly dominated Europe with the combined strengths of their Spanish and German imperial branches, neither wing aimed at major aggrandisement within Europe. Emperor Maximilian II had demonstrated his tolerance of (and interest in) Protestantism during the third quarter of the sixteenth century, and while his son and heir Rudolf II was much more encouraging of Counter-Reformation work in the German lands, he progressively lost control of the political situation there. Although the collateral line on the Spanish throne was rigidly and grimly orthodox, it was in no position to use substantial force: the Spanish system was already stretched to capacity to hold its widely scattered European and vast overseas possessions. Apart from the long-standing and now irreconcilable conflict with the rebellious United Provinces in the northern Netherlands, Philip II had also had to face severe threats from the Arab world in the Mediterranean at various times throughout his reign, not to mention the native Morisco population in the Iberian peninsula itself and growing Algiers-based piracy. It was the need to deal with two fronts at once, divided though each was, that prevented Philip II from winning decisively on either. The strain could be observed by anyone in Europe, including the Dutch rebels themselves: most obviously, the financial reputation of the Spanish crown was ruined by recurrent state bankruptcies in 1575, 1596 and 1607. So, while the Spanish position in the Netherlands recovered somewhat in the last years before the twelve year truce of 1609, and Spain could still call on sizeable resources from for example its Italian possessions, the advisors of Philip III were no doubt correct in their cautious evaluation of long-term prospects.

The first decade of the seventeenth century, therefore, was in some respects a period of recovery from exhaustion on several fronts. As we

shall note, smouldering religious-based discords in the German lands remained intractable, but in large areas of Europe political and religious stability of a kind had at last been achieved. Both Scandinavian monarchies were under new and effective leadership, and solidly Lutheran. In the British Isles the death of Elizabeth I in 1603 brought a personal union of Scotland and England in the hands of the experienced if eccentric James. In France the reign of Henry IV, later recalled as a 'golden age', very nearly catapulted Europe into another war; but his assassination in 1610 resulted in a cautious regency. East-central and eastern Europe looked less promising, with growing tensions in Bohemia and open confrontation along the Baltic between the Swedish and Polish branches of the Vasa royal family. But there was no immediate risk of these problems overspilling into the rest of Europe, and in the east Muscovy was so torn by internal problems that both Sweden and Poland diverted their attentions in that direction. Conflict in Europe, therefore, was not a foregone conclusion. Initially it even looked as if the Bohemian war of 1618 might produce no sequel, just as many hoped that the 12-year truce between Spain and the United Provinces might be extended indefinitely. Neither turned out to be the case: the Thirty Years War acquired a momentum of its own, which left both the political and the social structure of Europe fundamentally changed.

Map 1 The Holy Roman Empire during the Thirty Years War

Map 2 European states in 1660