

**Absolutism and
Constitutionalism in Western
Europe: 1589-1715**

I. Definitions

A. Absolutism

1. **“divine right” of kings**
2. **sovereignty** embodied in the person of the ruler.
3. France, Spain
4. Foreshadowed totalitarianism of 20th century.
5. Nobles and bourgeoisie provided chief opposition to increasing power of the state.

II. France: 1589-1643

A. Problems facing French monarchs

1. Autonomy of different regions.
2. Huguenots had separate rights and powers.

B. **Henry IV (1589-1610)** – **Henry of Navarre**

“Paris is worth a mass”

“Chicken in every pot”

1. First of **Bourbons**
2. Issued Edict of Nantes



3. Duke of Sully (1560-1641)

a. Reforms - *Paulette*

b. mercantilism

c. Reduced debt

d. Reformed tax collection

e. Improved transportation



C. Henry's assassination = severe crisis in power.

D. Louis XIII (1610-1643)

* Queen Regent – Marie de Medici

1. Corruption and mismanagement.
2. **Madame de Pompadour**



Madame de Pompadour



2. **Cardinal Richelieu (1585-1642)** – became First Minister in 1628

a. Laid foundation for absolutism in France
(total subordination of all groups to the
French monarchy)

b. Intendant system (32 Generalities)

c. La Rochelle

d. Foreign policy-

* *destruction of the Habsburg
fence*

e. *Raison d'état*



c. The **Fronde**

- i. Last major attempt by French nobility to oppose monarchy by force.
- ii. Civil war off & on for 12 years.

III. Reign of **Louis XIV** (1643-1715) – “**Sun King**”

A. Louis XIV

1. ***Letat, c'est moi*** (“I am the state”)
2. “Divine Right theory”: **Bishop Jacques Bossuet.**

3. 30 Years' War: French Phase
4. Breakdown after death of Louis XIII.
 - a. Louis XIV only 5 years old.
 - b. Cardinal Jules Mazarin (1602-1661)**



Louis XIV



B. France in the 17th century.

1. Feudal tradition – society divided into 3 *Estates*.

a. First Estate: clergy; 1% of population.

b. Second Estate: nobility; 3-4%

c. Third Estate: Bourgeoisie, artisans, urban workers, peasants.

2. Agrarian

3. Largest country in Europe (20% of population)

4. Strongest nation in Europe

C. Gov't organization

1. Recruitment of middle-class. Why?

2. Intendants

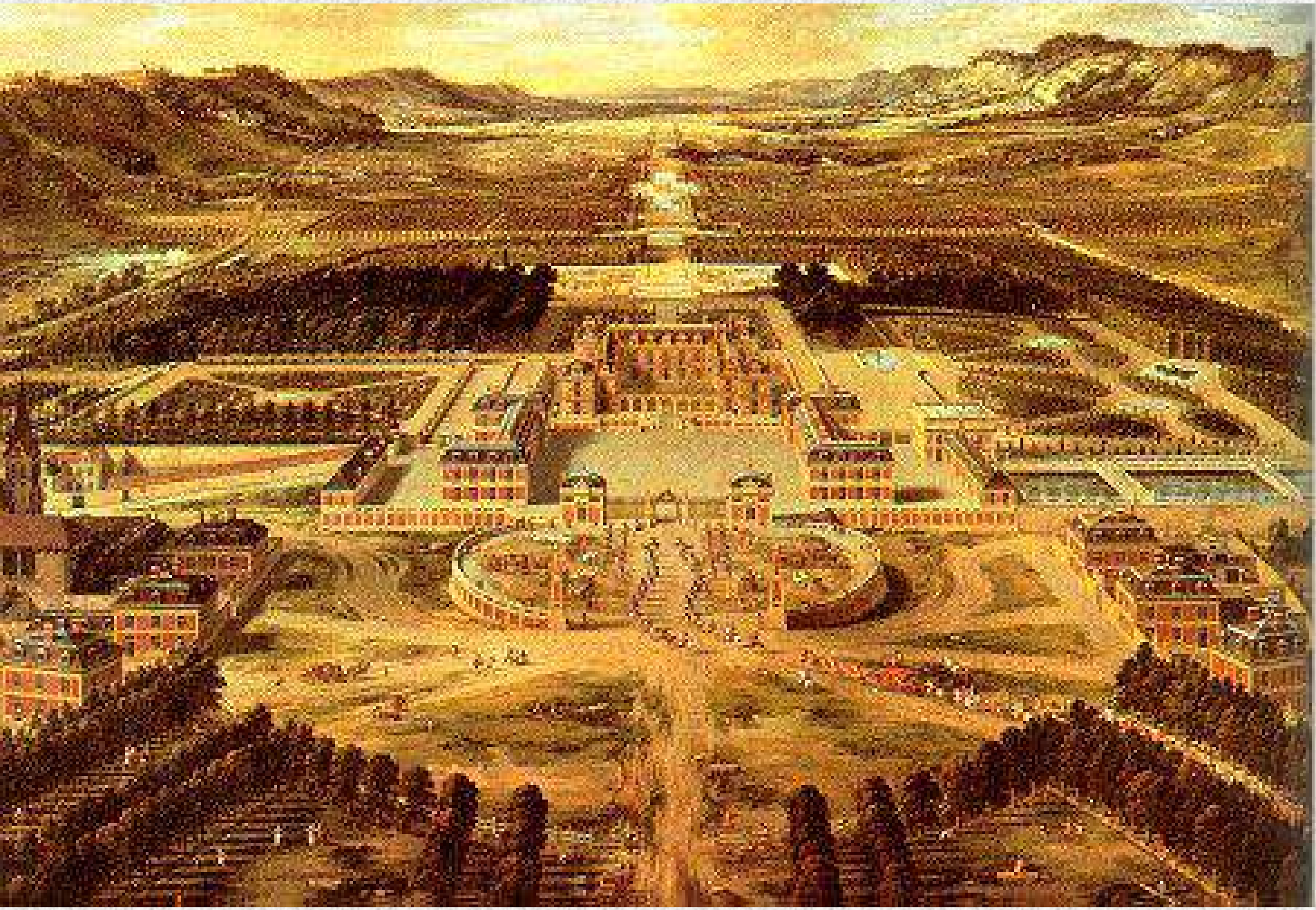
3. Nullified institutions that might challenge him.

4. Control of peasants (95% of pop.)
 - i. Payments to landlord, gov't, and church.
 - ii. corvée*
 - iii. conscription or workhouses.

D. Versailles Palace

1. Begun by Louis XIII
2. Pleasure prison for the aristocracy.
3. Cost 60% of royal revenues.

Versailles Palace





Hall of Mirrors



Garden at Versailles



E. Religious Policies

1. Head of French Catholic Church
2. Suppression of **Jansenists**
3. Revoked Edict of Nantes (**Edict of Fountainbleau**)

F. Colbert (1661-1683) – Louis' greatest finance minister.

1. Financial problems of Louis XIV.

Colbert



2. mercantilism

- “bullionism”

3. Goal: economic self-sufficiency

4. Drawbacks

- a. Poor peasant conditions (esp. taxation)
- b. Not enough \$ for both fleet and army

G. French Classicism – art and literature during Louis XIV

1. Characteristics:

2. Nicholas Poussin (1593-1665)

3. Drama

a. Moliere (1622-1673)

b. Racine (1639-1699)

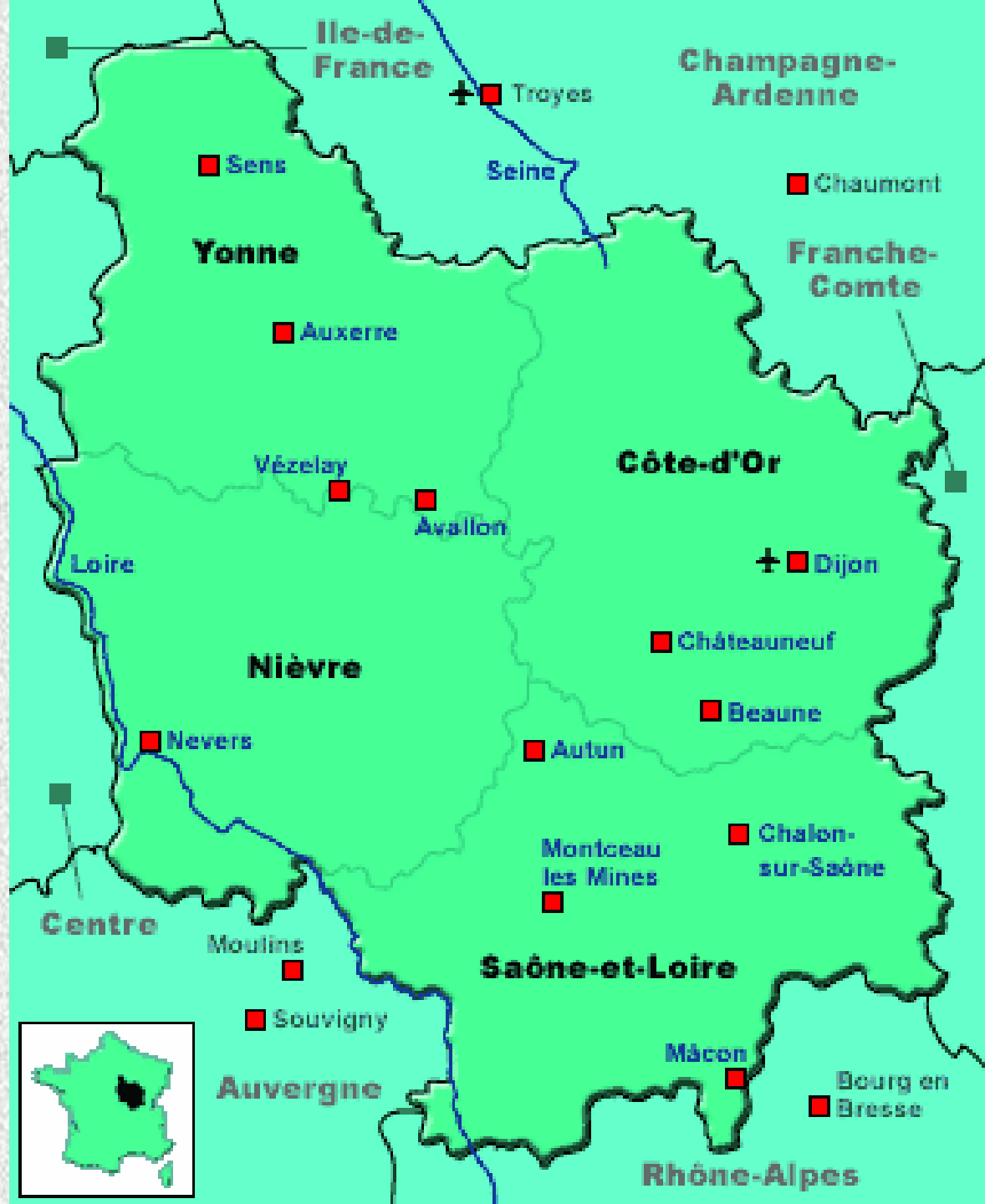
H. Wars of Louis XIV

1. Creation of modern army: **Marquis de Louvois**

2. **War of Devolution (1st Dutch War), 1667-68**

- Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle:
 - Got 12 towns on Spanish Netherlands' border.
 - Gave up Franche-Comtè (Burgundy)

Map of Burgundy



3. Second Dutch War (1672-78)

a. Peace of Nijmegen (1678-79)

b. Represented limit of expansion under Louis XIV.

4. Invasion of Spanish Netherlands (1683)

- **League of Augsburg, 1686**

5. War of the League of Augsburg (1688-97)

a. Initiated Anglo-French rivalry for over 100 yrs.

b. King William's War

c. Alsace and Strasbourg (in Lorraine)

6. War of Spanish Succession (1701-1713)

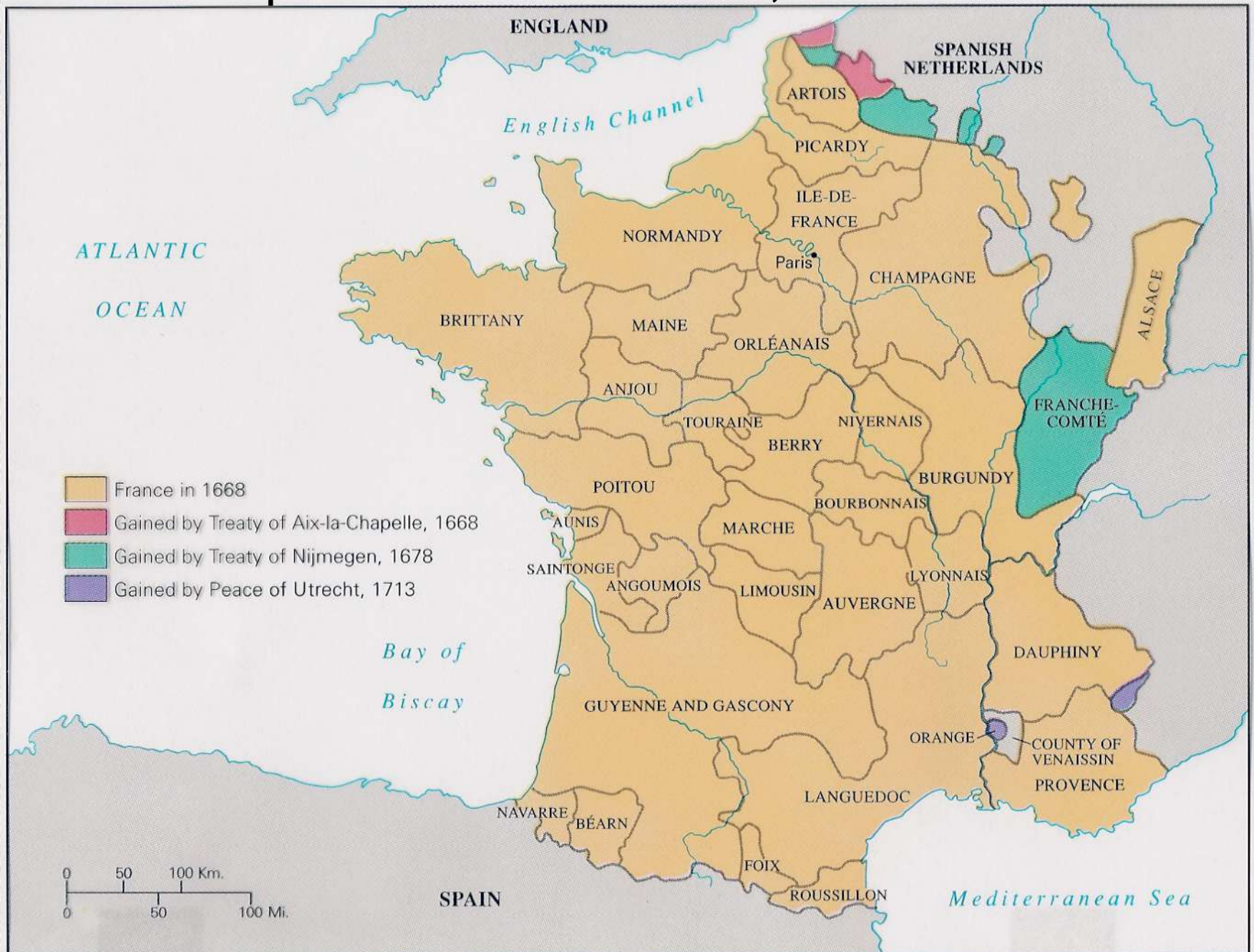
a. Will of **King Charles II**

b. Grand Alliance: England, Holland, HRE, Prussia.

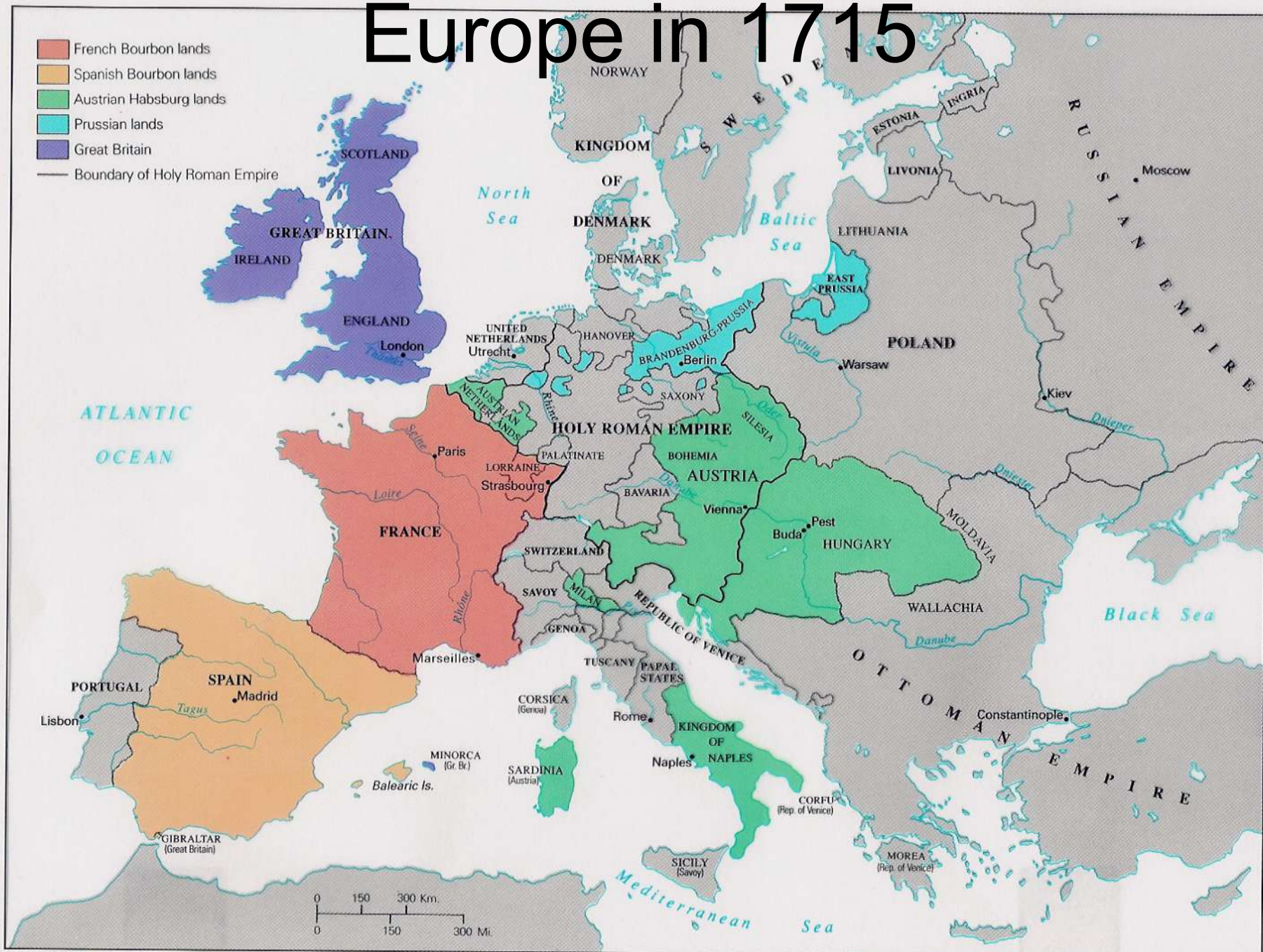
c. Treaty of Utrecht (1713)

- i. Most important treaty since 1648.
- ii. End to expansion of Louis XIV.
- iii. Spanish empire partitioned: Bourbon king
- iv. English gains: ***asiento***
- v. France
- vi. “King of Prussia”

Acquisitions of Louis XIV, 1668-1713



Europe in 1715



- VI. Spanish absolutism and decline
 - A. Causes for decline
 - B. Treaty of the Pyrenees (1659)**
 - Marked the end of Spain as a great power.
 - C. Charles II (1665-1700), last of Habsburg kings.**
 - D. Miguel de Cervantes: *Don Quixote***

7. Costs of war during Louis XIV's reign.
 - a. Huge national debt (to be paid by 3rd Estate)
 - b. Enormous loss of life.
 - c. Disruption of trade.
 - d. Principle of balance of power maintained

I. Constitutionalism

1. Rules define and **limit government.**
2. **Liberty of the individual.**
3. **Consent of the governed.**
4. **Nobles and bourgeoisie** often in control (England, Netherlands)

A. Political Thought

1. Thomas Hobbes

(1588-1679):

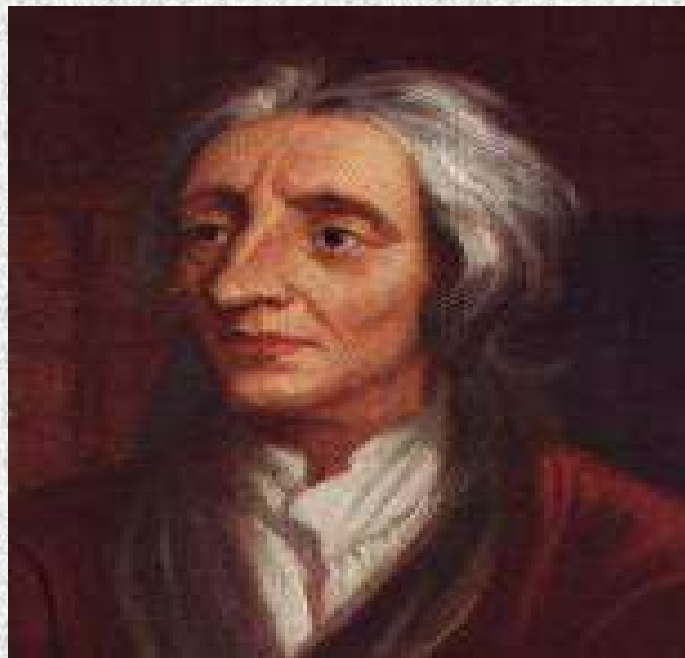
Leviathan

- 1) state of nature
- 2) sovereignty derived from the people who transfer it to monarchy by implicit contract.
- 3) Absolute monarch (but not divine right)



2. John Locke

- 1) natural rights (*life, liberty, property*)
- 2) ***Second Treaties of Civil Government (1640)***
- 3) purpose of government: *protect individual rights*
- 4) right to rebellion
- 5) ideas led to the American & French revolutions



II. Constitutionalism in England

A. Problems facing English monarchs

1. Could king govern w/o consent of Parliament?
2. Would form of church government follow hierarchical Episcopal form or Presbyterian form?
3. Representative democracy issues
 - a. Presbyterians, Puritans, Congregationalists favored Parliament.
 - b. Anglicans and Catholics favored king.

B. Tudor monarchies in 16th century (review)



1. Henry VII – strong central gov't after War of Roses



2. Henry VIII – English Reformation

3. Edward VI

4. Mary Tudor (“Bloody Mary”)

5. Elizabeth I – *Politique* / Elizabethan Settlement



C. Stuarts ruled England for most of 17th century

1. Although absolutist in thought, restrained by Parliament.

a. Lacked political astuteness of Elizabeth I.

b. Partial to Catholicism

2. James I (r. 1603-1625) 1st Stuart

a. *The Trew Law of Free Monarchy*

b. The Gunpowder Plot

c. “No bishop; no king”



GUN-POWDER Plot:

O R,

A Brief Account of that bloody and suble Design laid against the King, his Lords and Commons in Parliament, and of a Happy Deliverance by Divine Power.

To the Tune of *Ain not too high.*

Licensed according to Order.



THE Protestants I pray you do draw near,
Unto this Doree lend attentive Ear:
The Lines are Drawn although the Sultan's Child,
Likewise it is as true as e'er was told.
When James the first in England Reigned King,

At length, these wretched Romans all agreed
Whiche way to make the King and Nation bleed,
By Powder, all agreed with joint Content,
To blow up both the King and Parliament.
So; to keep secret this their Villanage,

3. Charles I (r. 1625-1649)

a. Petition of Right, 1628

b. William of Laud

1) Court of High Commission

* **Book of Common Prayer**

c. Dissolved Parliament

1629 – 1640

* “ship money” – tax

d. Long Parliament (1640-1660)

* **Triennial Act** (every 3 years)



4. English Civil War (Puritan Revolution; Great Rebellion:1642-1649) *Interregnum*

a. Cavaliers v. Roundheads

b. Oliver Cromwell wins: Battle of Naseby

c. Execution of Charles I in 1649



5. **Interregnum (1649-1660) – no king**
 - a. **Commonwealth (1649-1653)**
 - b. **Protectorate (1653-1659)**
 - * **Pride's Purge**
 - * **“Rump Parliament”**
6. **New factions emerged demanding reforms**
 - a. **Levellers –popular sovereignty**
 - b. **Quakers - anabaptists**
 - c. **Diggers – common land**

D. The Restoration

1. Charles II (1660-1685)

– “Merry Monarch”

a. Declaration of Breda

**b. Development of
political parties**

*** Tories (Nobles)**

*** Whigs (Middle Class)**

c. Test Act of 1673: anti-Catholic



2. **James II** (1685-1688) – last of Stuarts

- a. Sought to make England Catholic again
- b. Secret alliance with Louis XIV
- c. Birth of his son



E. “Glorious Revolution” of 1688

1. Reaction to James II trying to Catholicize England.
2. **William III (William of Orange)**
and **Mary**



3. **English Bill of Rights (1689)**

- a. King could **not be Roman Catholic**
- b. Laws made only with **consent of Parliament.**
- c. Parliament has right of **free speech.**
- d. **No standing army** in peace time w/o Parliamentary approval.
- e. Taxation illegal w/o **Parliamentary approval.**
- f. **Trial by jury**; due process of law.
- g. Right to **bear arms** (not Catholics)

The Anatomy of Revolution



Independents under Cromwell (New Model Army); (Levellers & Diggers are even more extreme)

Thermidor: Move away from extremism (Cromwell’s Protectorate)

Restoration: Return of conservatives to power (Charles II)

VII. English Cabinet System in the 18th Century

A. System evolved

B. Sir Robert Walpole led Cabinet from 1721-1742

- First **prime minister** in British history.



C. Hanoverian Kings

1. **George I** (r. 1714-27)
2. **George II** (r. 1727-1760) – decline in decision making
3. **George III** (r. 1760-1820)
 - a. Reduced power of prime minister
– **King's Friends**
 - b. Lost American colonies



VIII. Other Constitutional States

A. United Provinces – Dutch Republic

1. 17th century = “Golden Age” of the Netherlands
2. Government run by bourgeoisie (burghers)
3. Organization – confederation of 7 provinces (each led by Stadtholder)
4. Religion
 - a. Calvinism vs. Arminianism
 - b. Religious toleration

Rembrandt: "Masters of the Cloth Guild"



4. Commerce*

a. mercantilism

b. banking: Amsterdam replaced Antwerp in 17th century

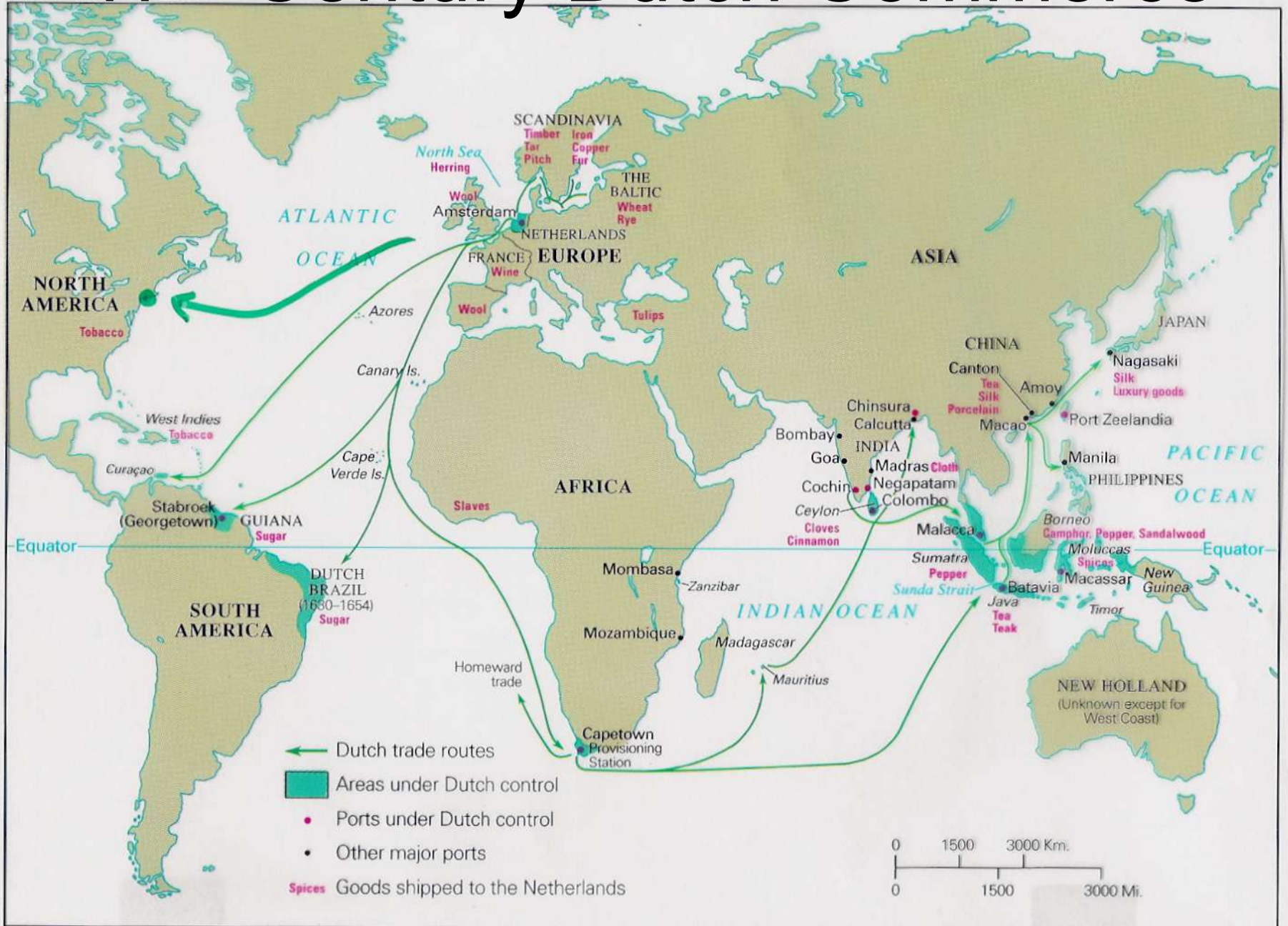
c. Dutch East India Co.; Dutch West India Co.

5. Foreign policy

a. Impacted by England's Navigation Laws

- War with France & England in 1670s
- Treaty of Utrecht marked beginning of end.

17th Century Dutch Commerce



B. Sweden

1. **King Gustavus Adolphus** (r. 1611-32) reorganized gov't.

- Nobles dominant in army and gov't.

2. Economy

a. Dominated Baltic and became world power.

b. Copper



3. Foreign policy

a. Charles X (1654-60)

- First Northern War

b. Charles XII (1697-1718)

- **Great Northern War (1700-21)**

Lost Baltic provinces to Peter the Great