

**Table 1: GDP per capita levels in Europe  
(1990 international dollars)**

Year	England/ Great Britain	Holland/ The Netherlands	Italy	Spain
1086	754			
1270	759			957
1300	755		1,482	957
1348	777	876	1,376	1,030
1400	1,090	1,245	1,601	885
1450	1,055	1,432	1,668	889
1500	1,114	1,483	1,403	889
1570	1,143	1,783	1,337	990
1600	1,123	2,372	1,244	944
1650	1,100	2,171	1,271	820
1700	<b>1,630</b> 1,563	2,403	1,350	880
1750	1,710	2,440	1,403	910
1800	2,080	<b>2,617</b> 1,752	1,244	962
1820	2,133	1,953	1,376	1,087
1850	2,997	2,397	1,350	1,144

Sources: England/Great Britain: Broadberry et al. (2011); Broadberry and van Leeuwen (2011); Holland/The Netherlands: van Zanden and van Leeuwen (2012); Italy: Malanima (2011); Spain: Álvarez-Nogal and Prados de la Escosura (2013).

Note: Figures are for 10-year averages starting in the stated year (i.e. 1270–79, 1300–09, etc) apart from 1348, which refers to the pre-Black Death years 1339–48, and 1086, the year of the Domesday survey.

The estimates in Table 1 suggest that Western Europe was already well above bare bones subsistence (\$400) by the late Middle Ages, with average per capita GDP in England and Holland around \$750 on the eve of the Black Death in 1348, and substantially higher than this in Italy and Spain. The first income category identified will therefore be less than \$750. Using the North et al. (2009) terminology, a state with a per capita income below \$750 is categorized as a 'fragile' limited access order. This can apply to the whole of Europe during the early medieval period. Wickham (2006) emphasizes the importance of patronage networks in maintaining the small, fragmented states that emerged following the collapse of the Roman Empire.

The second income category is \$750–\$1,500. The upper end of this range corresponds to the level of per capita GDP in central and northern Italy during the late Middle

Ages, a highly commercialized and prosperous society for its time. Holland reached this level during the late 16th century and England around the revolution of 1688. Once again, using the North et al. (2009) framework, a state with a per capita income between \$750 and \$1,500 is regarded as a 'basic' limited access order, with a durable state bureaucracy, but one that is still vulnerable to instability.

Despite having an elaborate bureaucracy since at least the 12th century, England continued to experience periods of instability until the 17th century. Between the Black Death and the Glorious Revolution, for example, internal power struggles within the dominant coalition led to the Wars of the Roses in the 15th century and the civil war of the 17th century. The revolt of the Dutch against the Habsburg rule of the Low Countries, which led to the foundation of the Dutch Republic in the late 16th century, also illustrates the instability of the Spanish state.

The third income category is \$1,500–\$2,000. The upper end of this range corresponds to the level in Britain in 1800, by which time the Industrial Revolution and the transition to modern economic growth were in full swing, and urbanization was proceeding rapidly. Holland had reached this level by 1570, the start of its Golden Age. This category corresponds to a 'mature' limited access order. Holland after the foundation of the Dutch Republic and Great Britain after 1688 were both characterized by stable systems of governance with reformed bureaucracies capable of raising substantial fiscal resources (O'Brien 2011). Organizations outside the state sphere, such as banks, also began to take on a more durable form, underpinned by the growing use of the legal system in commercial transactions (Cameron 1967; Harris 2000; MacLeod 1988).

The fourth income category is over \$2,000. A country in this category can be regarded as being on the verge of the open access order. However, the transition to the open access order is only a possibility and is by no means a foregone conclusion. North et al. (2009) emphasize that the differences between the above categories are a matter of degree rather than kind, and that movement from one category to another can occur in either direction. Holland after 1600 and Great Britain after 1800 both meet the door-step conditions. Both operated with the rule of law for elites,