1. From the accession of Louis XIV to the throne until the fall of Napoleon in 1815, France was the most powerful state in Europe. What do you think Louis XIV's contribution to this success was?

His main contributions were to add three provinces to France: French Flanders, Alsace and Franche Comte; to place his grandson Philip V on the throne of Spain; to surround France with defensive fortresses, some of which functioned until 1940; and to make Versailles a centre of European culture and a travel destination, comparable to Florence or Rome.

2. Louis XIV grew up in the horror of the Fronde, which shook the French monarchy to its foundations. How did this experience affect his personality as a statesman and his political choices?

I think it increased his distrust of the Paris Parliament and his belief in troops as the foundation of his monarchy: cannons were 'the last argument of kings', *ultima ratio regum*, to quote the inscription placed on his cannon which you can see today in the stupendous Hotel des Invalides. he built it in Paris to house old soldiers. A building as beautiful and impressive as Versailles.

3. When Louis XIV was born, the government was largely in the hands of Cardinal Richelieu. When he died in 1642, he was succeeded by Cardinal Mazarin, who ruled the country on behalf of the king until 1661. What was XIV. Louis busy with during this period? What was his relationship with these cardinals who ruled France for a long time? What did he learn from them and what kind of France did he inherit as a result?

During this time, until he was twenty-three, Louis XIV was being educated and learning to be a soldier, serving with his troops. And receiving personal lessons in diplomacy and statecraft from Mazarin. He was also practising sports like swimming, riding and hunting. He did not like all-powerful ministers, whom he considered demeaning for monarchs. The power of Richelieu revealed the limits of his father Louis XIII. However he liked Mazarin very much, saw him daily, and nursed him in his final illness. He was a father and tutor to the king as well as his godfather. Even though he stopped the king marrying his first great love Marie Mancini, Mazarin's beautiful and intelligent niece.

4. Although not as dangerous as the Fronde, in the 1660's and 1670's there were violent rebellions in Normandy, Brittany and the south-western part of the country. What were the reasons for these revolts? What was the attitude of Louis XIV towards these revolts?

The main reason was high taxation. Louis XIV's reaction was brutal, as Madame de Sevigne's letters show. His troops devastated parts of Brittany and Bordeaux. One of the discoveries of my book, for me, was Louis XIV's personal brutality towards enemies at home and abroad – unlike Mazarin or Anne of Austria.

5. Because Louis XIV kept Europe in almost constant armed conflict from 1688 to 1714, some historians call this period the "Second Thirty Years' War". What do you think was the reason for Louis XIV's aggressive foreign policy?

He wanted to win immortality, to be a second Alexander the Great, to enlarge France. He did not see the consequences of his actions – the formation of large anti-French alliances, and indeed the rise of Britain, Prussia and Piedmont as anti-French powers.

6. You say in your book *King of the World - The Life of Louis XIV:* "Above all Louis XIV was taught that a king must, like Henri IV, exercise his authority himself, not leave it in the hands of his ministers: 'Royalty is almost all action.'" Do you think this teaching has anything to do with the fact that Louis XIV spent many years of his reign on the battlefield?

Yes I do , increased by Louis XIV's personal love of battles. When ordering the bombardment of Brussels in 1696, for example, he said 'I must do something striking' 'il faut faire quelque chose d'eclat'. He needed to be talked about. Also he had the examples of the kings of France his ancestors, who were all soldiers, including his own father Louis XIII who spent much of his reign fighting French rebels and Spanish armies. İn addition Louis XIV loved war and fighting for themselves.

7. The 'King of Paradoxes' was a man of humour, a lover of art and nature, and a warrior. Such a civilised man, who was extremely respectful towards women, could at the same time order barbarism against French Protestants and France's neighbours. How could these paradoxes live in one body? Or were they not paradoxes at all?

It is a common paradox, in other ages and countries also, the combination of civilisation and brutality in one man: look at Napoleon or some Ottoman Sultans or Tsars of Russia. Even his own generals were shocked by Louis XIV's orders to destroy the cities of the Rhineland in 1688 and 1689. It shows that, as Lord Acton wrote, power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. As a young man he appeared gentle and kind: but he was cruel to his former minister Fouquet, placing him in solitary confinement for over ten years, and cruel to some of his mistresses. The barbaric treatment of Huguenots, especially after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, including killing, torture and attempted brain-washing, anticipates some persecution of minorities in the twentieth century.

8. What identification can be made between Louis XIV and the Palace of Versailles? What did Louis mean for Versailles and Versailles for Louis?

Versailles for Louis XIV was a palace for pleasure – hunting, shooting, riding, gardening and parties in the palace and the park. It was also a means of surpassing the palaces of Roman Emperors and of Renaissance Rome- many authors stated this in the 1680s - and of attracting Frenchmen and foreigners. It was a means for him to gain the admiration of contemporaries and posterity.

For Versailles Louis XIV was not only the builder, but also the animator, always adding new sculptures to the park or extensions to the palace, and organising balls, concerts, operas, plays and other entertainments there. It seemed dead without him. However sometimes Louis XIV wanted to flee Versailles. He often preferred to live for weeks at a time in smaller buildings like Trianon and Marly nearby, or in more distant palaces like Fontainebleau and Compiegne. Until 1693, when he was 55, he regularly visited fortresses in the provinces or went on campaign in Flanders. He was not trapped in Versailles like Louis XV and Louis XVI.

9. After 72 years in power, what kind of an image did this ruler have in the eyes of his own people? After his death, how did this image change and transform in different periods throughout history?

Outside France he appeared to be the great king who overawed and terrified Europe. But inside France, especially in Paris, many of his subjects were appalled by his wars and taxes. Some Parisians laughed, sang and danced while watching his funeral procession going from Versailles to Saint Denis. There had been mocking comments about his vanity from courtiers and Parisians even at the height of his power in the 1680s. Huguenot refugees after 1685 spread throughout Protestant Europe the image of Louis XIV as tyrant or Antichrist. In general he had an image as a tyrant in France until de Gaulle and the Fifth Republic, when authoritarian governments became more fashionable.

10. Historians are divided about the social and economic conditions of Louis XIV's period. Some argue that he impoverished his country because of his love of luxury and extravagance, the heavy taxes he imposed, and the cost of continuous wars he burdened the country with. They accuse him of leading France to bankruptcy in 1714. According to Vauban and later Voltaire, the period 1660-1689 was a period when France was more prosperous compared to the late 18th century. What is your opinion on this matter?

France had many other periods of even greater prosperity in the eighteenth century, during trade booms after 1720 and after 1783. Look at the magnificent buildings of Bordeaux and Nancy. Louis XIV did lead France to near bankruptcy by 1714, but its economy was so strong and its population was so large, that it could quickly recover, as it did after 1871 and 1944.

11. You state in your book that The King's hours were said to be as regular as a monk. In addition, you say that Colbert wrote "Work is the first object of His Majesty and he prefers it to everything else." Was Colbert right?

Yes Colbert was right. Louis XIV attended council meetings regularly and often worked past midnight with individual ministers, even when he was over 60. He reviewed his troops in the last weeks of his life. He worked too much, he was a control freak, not leaving ministers or generals alone to follow their policies. He knew everything that had happened in Paris the following day, thanks to the reports of the Lieutenant de poliçe, which I read for King of the World.

12. Norman Davies, in his book *Europe: A History,* does not speak favourably of Louis XIV's legacy. He states that he was 'the first in a line of tyrants who tried to take over Europe by force, and the forerunner of Napoleon and Hitler'. He also argues that 18th-century France was the child of Louis XIV's flawed experiment. There are also comments that he laid the foundations for the French Revolution. What do you think about the legacy of Louis XIV's rule in the 18th century?

I think the lack of institutional limits on royal power, some forms of national representation, which the frondeurs had demanded, was a weakness. Louis XIV also increased the gulfs between the nobility and the third estate, and between the court nobility and other sections

of the nobility. However France could have evolved differently under wiser ministers. Foreigners admired 'the flourishing kingdom of France' in the eighteenth century. The right ministers, generals and reforms could have directed 1789.

Norman Davies is wrong. He did not try to 'take over' Europe by force – only sections of it like the Rhineland and parts of the Netherlands. Louis XIV, unlike Napoleon or Hitler, had many allies, like Sweden, Poland, the Ottoman Empire, Bavaria, and before 1688 England. His grandson Philip V was the popular choice as king in Spain, unlike Napoleon's brother Joseph.

13. How can 17th-century Ottoman-European diplomacy's practical difficulties be summarised? Nevertheless, were the French and Ottoman governments able to remain reasonable and pragmatic in the name of higher political interests? How did they achieve this?

So much united France and the Ottoman Empire that they were like a married couple – many quarrels but they stayed together. They were united by trade, the Ottoman Empire's need for French technical help and advice, France's need to protect Catholic pilgrims and holy places in Jerusalem, and above all by shared fear of the House of Austria. Quarrels over the piracies by the knights of Malta or the rulers of Algiers or war in Crete were overcome.

14. Can we say that the first 10 years following the period when Louis XIV personally took over the administration of the state were marked by the disagreement seen in the old Eastern policy? How did the Louis XIV choose to maintain relations with the *Bâbıâli* while, on the one hand, he did not give up declaring himself the protector of Christianity against Islam, out of Christian solidarity, his interest in ostentation, but mainly because of the competition with the Ottoman Empire in the Mediterranean and Central Europe?

There was no contradiction. Louis XIV could protect Christian pilgrims and Christian holy sites in the Ottoman empire through his friendship with it, as he often proclaimed. A picture of Louis XIV's ambassador the Marquis de Nointel visiting Jerusalem in 1674 with a large entourage has just been discovered. There was little competition between the two countries. Louis XIV encouraged the Ottoman empire to fight Austria, throughout his reign, in order to let France realise its ambitions on the Rhine.

15. Anything you find important and critical about XIV Louis and would like to add…

I think he shows that soft power is more effective than hard power. He helped make Versailles and Paris centres of European culture. But his brutality towards the Huguenots and in the Rhineland helped the rise of Britain, Piedmont and Prussia and united most of Europe against France. He helped weaken France relative to Britain, Prussia and Austria. However, partly because of his determination to fight against the allies in 1709-10, one of his descendants, Philip VI, a Bourbon, is king of Spain today.

Louis XIV was one of the greatest cultural patrons of all time, talking almost as equals with Mansart his favourite architect, Racine and Moliere his writers, Lully his musician, Lenotre,

his gardener, Bernini his sculptor, and his personal dance masters. He himself was an architect and decorator, who helped design Trianon and Versailles himself.

Versailles was a paradise for women. Women were more free there, and had more power, than under any subsequent French regime until the Fifth Republic. His second wife Madame de Maintenon was a major political figure, he met ministers in her apartment.

In the crisis of 1709-10 as Marlborough's armies approached Paris, the Parisians and the French laughed at the King, occasionally rioted, but otherwise remained loyal. Even in this crisis, Louis XIV kept French troops in Spain, fighting for his grandson's throne. He did not always put France first. He was part of the Europe of kings and courts. The power of his dynasty was as important to him as the size of his kingdom.

He was more dependent on his ministers than he pretended. Nothing went right for his policies after the death in 1683, of Colbert, the minister of genius who ran the economy, finances, the court, the navy and French colonies.

Let us do another interview on Europe and the Ottoman empire, or on the Levant. I am often in Istanbul. My books Constantinople, Levant and Aleppo are published in Turkish by Everest.