

**OAFLMUN 2026**

**HCC STUDY  
GUIDE**

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## **I. Letters**

### **A. Letter from Secretary General**

*Dear Participants of OAFLMUN'26,*

*It is my pleasure to announce OAFLMUN'26. First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who has given their utmost effort in organising this conference. As the Secretary-General of this conference, I am truly delighted and honoured to welcome you all. Our conference will be held at Özkent Akbilek Science High School from April 24th to April 26th.*

*Allow me to briefly introduce myself. My name is Ecrin İrem Gültop, and I am currently an 11th-grade student at Özkent Akbilek Science High School. I have been participating in Model United Nations conferences since December 2022. Throughout these experiences, I have witnessed genuine friendships, effective crisis management, proper approaches to diplomacy, and, undoubtedly, true leadership. Now, it is my turn to help a new generation of participants experience these remarkable opportunities.*

*The 2026 edition of OAFLMUN will host the following committees: NATO, HCC, UNWOMEN, JCC, UNSC, UNICEF, UNODC, and DISEC. I look forward to welcoming you all to an unforgettable conference experience where diplomacy, leadership, and collaboration will truly come to life.*

*Yours sincerely,*

*Ecrin İrem Gültop*

*Secretary-General of OAFLMUN'26*

## **B. Letter from Under Secretary General**

*Esteemed Delegates of OAFLMUN'26,*

*I'm Alp Arslan Şahin, a 12th grade student at Ankara Erman Ilıcak Science High School, also the Under Secretary General of the Historical Crisis Committee of OAFLMUN'26. I would like to say, it's a great pleasure to welcome you all. Also I would like to thank the delegates reading this study guide and this letter. Before expressing my thoughts about the committee, I want to briefly thank some of my friends who made this committee possible. I'm directing my high respect to the secretariat of the conference, especially Ecrin İrem Gültop and Mert Şeker for their interest and also the former secretariat Muhammed Yiğit Kömürcü and Ecem Buse Koçak for their invitation. Also I want to thank to my complicit in crime Melis Eda Yılmaz and my dear friends Hamza Taha Yılmaz, Mustafa Gürmeriç and Memin.*

*The committee is highly experimental and might be revolutionary. The Great Northern War is one of the most complicated and charming wars in history and you will feel like you're a part of it. I want to briefly say, I do trust in all my delegates and will appreciate all of your efforts in the committee. I'm pretty sure that you'll have fun, just take your time and enjoy this extraordinary experience. Gott mitt uns!*

*“They thought I was too young to rule the land.*

*Just as they failed to understand.*

*Born to rule, my time has come.*

*I was chosen by heaven.*

*Say my name when you pray.*

*To the skies. See Carolus rise!*

*With the lord my protector,*

*Make them bow to my will.*

*To the skies. See Carolus rise!”*

***Highly Regards,***

***Alp Arslan Şahin,***

*Under Secretary General of HCC,*

*You can reach for any questions: [alpsahin0619@gmail.com](mailto:alpsahin0619@gmail.com)*

### **C. Letter from Under Secretary General**

*Dear Delegates of OAFLMUN'26*

*I am Melis Eda Yilmaz a 12th grade student at Ankara Erman Ilıcak Science High School. I will be serving in this committee as an Under Secretary General.*

*First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to Ecrin and Mert, as well as the entire executive team, for inviting me to this conference and allowing me to have this final experience in this organization. I also extend my thanks to my Co-USG and partner in crime, Alp, along with my academic assistants Mustafa and Hamza for their support.*

*My most important advice regarding our committee is to carefully review the study guide and relevant materials before the conference. After that, just focus solely on enjoying the process. We will recreate one of the greatest battles in history in the most realistic manner possible. We have designed this committee to provide you with the most benefit and utmost enjoyment. Get ready to experience one of the best moments of your life.*

*If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me: [meliseda2008@gmail.com](mailto:meliseda2008@gmail.com)*

*Gott mit uns!*

***Highly Regards,***

***Melis Eda Yilmaz***

***Under Secretary General of HCC***

## **Ç. Letter from Academic Assistant**

*Distinguished delegates of OAFLMUN'26;*

*I am Mustafa Gürmeriç a 11th grader at Erman Ilıcak Science High School and I will be serving as the Academic Assistant of the HCC committee. I believe that we have prepared a wonderful committee with great effort and dedication to provide you an unforgettable experience.*

*The Great Northern War has always been a fascinating and complicated war, marked by the battles and major events that took place, and I hope that you will find it truly engaging throughout this committee and that you will have a great time during the sessions. I would like to thank the OAFLMUN'26 Executive Team for giving us the opportunity to organize this committee. And I would like to give my special thanks to my group, with whom I have been delighted to attend conferences, our USG and his Co-USG, Alp Arslan Şahin and Melis Eda Yılmaz and also my fellow academic assistant Hamza Taha Yilmazer and also to our crisis team members Ahmet Özer and Asya Ecrin Uslu, thanks for always being by my side and supporting me. I think that we have given lots of important information within the study guide so do not forget to read the guide before you come to the conference and do your best! Gott mit uns!*

***Best regards***

***Mustafa Gürmeriç***

***Academic Assistant of HCC***

#### **D. Letter from Academic Assistant**

*Distinguished delegates of OAFLMUN'26;*

*Hello there, it's Hamza Taha Yilmazer, and I will be serving you as Academic Assistant In our committee, you will experience both military and diplomatic actions in the 18th century Baltic. With a unique procedure we made up for this committee.*

*During the process of building this HCC, we had a lot of fun Thanks to our amazing USG's, my fellow academic assistant and crisis team members. And I hope that we will keep things as entertaining as us for you. So read the guide, do your research and take your place in this brand new experience. Gott mit uns!*

*Best regards*

*Hamza Taha Yilmazer*

*Academic Assistant of HCC*

## **II. Introduction to Historical Crisis Committee**

The Historical Crisis Committee (HCC) is a strategy-based committee which could be described as an alternative history role-play. Except for the General Assembly committees, the Crisis committees allow you to revitalise the events in history by acting like the important figures of the event. This committee will be held with a procedure of its own called a Supreme War Council; all of the belligerents of the war will be present in one singular committee. The committee will focus on the agenda of the Great Northern War and the committee will start on 1 February 1698, after Charles XII became the King of Sweden.

## **III. Summary of the Agenda Item**

The Great Northern War was a major conflict in Northern and Eastern Europe which lasted from 1700 to 1721 and reshaped the balance of strength in the region. At the end of the 17th century, the Swedish Empire was mostly in control of the Baltic Sea. Neighboring powers, especially Tsardom of Russia, Denmark-Norway and Poland-Lithuania wanted to break the Swedish control of the area. The first major conflicts during the war occurred by the Danish forces. Frederick IV of Denmark-Norway attacked the province Tönning, which is a territory of Holstein-Gottorp, a Swedish client state<sup>1</sup>. Simultaneously, August II of Poland-Lithuania marched through Swedish Livonia and laid siege to Riga. Besides the army of Augustus II in Livonia, an army of Russian tsar Peter I was already on its way to invade Swedish Ingria, where it laid siege to Narva in October. But the plans fell through and Charles XII defeated them which led to signing the Peace of Travendal with Denmark, and forced them to withdraw from the war. Also the Russians suffered a great defeat in the region of Narva.

After that, Charles XII turned south to meet Augustus II, who was the Elector of Saxony, King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania. Formally, only the Saxons joined the war, as Augustus II started the war as the Elector of Saxony. Then the Swedish forces defeated Saxons and Russians at the Crossing of Düna then invaded Poland.

<sup>1</sup>A client state, in the context of international relations, is an umbrella term that broadly refers to any state economically, politically, and militarily subordinated to a more powerful controlling state. Also called a Satellite State or a Vassal.

By defeating the Saxon-Polish forces in the Battle of Kliszów and Battle of Pultusk, Charles XII dethroned Augustus II and replaced him with Stanisław Leszczyński. August II resisted and still possessed control over Saxony, but again defeated in the Battle of Fraustadt. After a Swedish invasion of Saxony, August II was forced to sign the Treaty of Altranstädt in which he made peace with the Swedish Empire. Accepted Stanislaus Leszczyński as king, and ended his alliance with Russia. Charles XII, after the victories he gained in the regions of Poland-Lithuania and Saxony, set his eyes on the Tsardom of Russia, which is the last major power in Northern Europe.

While the Kingdom of Sweden was dealing with Poland-Lithuania, Tsar Peter took advantage of the opportunity and regained territory in the Baltic region. Russia achieved victories at Erastfer and Nöteborg and these victories allowed Russian access to Ingria and the fortress of Nyen was captured. Then again in the battles of Gemäuerthof and Jakobstadt, Sweden was able to regain its control of most of the Baltic provinces. Tsar Peter had to make preparations for the upcoming war, demolished the Nyen fortress and rebuilt a superior fortress, and established a new city of Saint Petersburg. Then the Swedish tried to raid the fort but didn't succeed. In the summer of 1706, Swedish General Georg Johan Maidel crossed the Neva<sup>1</sup> with his troops and defeated an opposing Russian force, but made no move on Saint Petersburg. After many uncertain outcome of conflicts in 1707, Tsar Peter offered to return the land except Saint Petersburg and the line of the Neva to avoid full-scale war. But Charles XII refused to make peace and he initiated a march from Saxony to invade Russia. His main idea was to invade Moscow. But the strength of his forces broke because of the Great Frost<sup>2</sup> and the scorched earth tactics<sup>3</sup> Peter used. The main army was forced to retreat to Ukraine, meanwhile the second army faced the Russian forces in Lesnaya and perished. The second army also included the supplies from Ivan Mezepa, the Cossack Hetman. After that Charles was crushingly defeated by a larger Russian force under Peter in the Battle of Poltava and fled to the Ottoman Empire while the remains of his army surrendered at Perevolochna.

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<sup>1</sup>The Neva is a river in northwestern Russia flowing from Lake Ladoga through the western part of Leningrad Oblast (historical region of Ingria).

<sup>2</sup>The Great Frost was an extraordinarily cold winter in Europe in 1708–1709, and was the coldest European winter during the past 500 years.

<sup>3</sup>A scorched-earth policy is a military strategy of destroying everything that allows an enemy military force to be able to fight a war, including the deprivation and destruction of water, food, humans, animals, plants and any kind of tools and infrastructure.

#### **IV. Historical Background**

##### **A. Thirty Years' War**

###### **1. Background of the Thirty Years' War**

The Thirty Years' War started as a religious conflict between Catholics and Protestants in the Holy Roman Empire. But it quickly evolved into a political struggle that affected almost all of Europe. Lasting between 1618 and 1648, it was a devastating war which shifted the balance of power on the continent forever.

###### **2. Bohemian Revolt**

For over 60 years after the Peace of Augsburg (1555), religion didn't play a key role in major conflicts. As every state accepted "Whose realm, his religion", Europe was entering an era of religious peace after decades of continuous conflicts. However, with the ascension to the throne of Ferdinand II, the tension built up in the past 60 years was about to erupt. Ferdinand claimed that he would rather see his lands destroyed than tolerate heresy within them. And after several political struggles among Protestants and Catholics, the Bohemian<sup>1</sup> state of the Holy Roman Empire revolted for their religious freedom. As Catholic representatives were thrown out of a window in the City of Prague -an event known as the defenestration of Prague- The Thirty Years' War had begun.

As the tensions rose, many actors believed that a military conflict was inevitable. Thus, Count Thurn of Bohemia invited other Protestant regions to support the Bohemian Cause in upcoming clashes. Saxony, being the most wealthy Protestant state, did not want a major clash with the Emperor. They were offered protection against Bohemians by Ferdinand, they accepted to secure their borders. The Duke of Savoy, however, sent military aid as well as financial support. On the Catholic side, the Spanish Habsburgs, which were heavily engaged with the Eighty Years' War at the time, supported their allies with a powerful force coming from the Spanish Road. Lastly, Duke Maximilian of Bavaria also started war preparations against the Protestants. He saw Frederick V of Palatinate as a threat to his personal gains, since he had been offered the crown by the Bohemians.

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<sup>1</sup>Bohemia is a region in Eastern Europe, present day Austria and Czech Republic.

In the first years of the war, Thurn cleared all Imperial forces in Bohemian territory, and Savoy stopped the support after a military setback. However, the war turned against Thurn as the second wave of Spanish support arrived. Within months, Bohemia was trapped between large armies. Catholics sought a decisive victory in order to crush the rebellion. Combined forces of the Spanish Habsburgs and Imperial forces engaged with Thurn's main army outside Prague, at White Mountain, in 1620. Despite the uneven terrain, Spanish tercios managed to break through enemy formations as they charged uphill. Many Bohemians fled the battlefield, and the few who remained were forced to fight until death. The defeat was catastrophic for Bohemians. Right after the battle, Imperials entered Prague and executed 27 Bohemian nobles as a clear sign of warning. The rebellion collapsed, and Frederic fled.

### **3. Danish Intervention**

After the decisive defeat of the revolt, Protestants outside the Holy Roman Empire started looking for another ally. Hearing the rumors of a Swedish invasion in the South, King Christian IV of Denmark, wanted to join the war before them. Moreover, Denmark had several land demands in German territory. Nevertheless, Danish nobles in the country objected to the intervention. So Christian had to raise his own army by his own personal budget and Dutch and English financial aid. On the Imperial side, Ferdinand was running short on funds to maintain his army. Consequently, he turned to Albrecht von Wallenstein, a noble who was wealthy from massive confiscations after White Mountain. Wallenstein accepted to raise an army for the Empire, in return of permission to keep the plunder income

In the first months, the Danish army was successful until the first major battle. Wallenstein and Count Tilly crushed the Protestants twice in a few months, and pushed Christian back up to Holstein, and eventually Denmark itself. Subsequently, Wallenstein wanted to capture the city of Stralsund, which was an important port in the Baltic Sea. However, the stubborn defence of the garrison and the Swedish reinforcements managed to stop Wallenstein. Christian the IV saw this as an opportunity to raise another army, and went east of Stralsund. With the significant support from the locals, he raised another force. Yet, it was crushed by Wallenstein again in a decisive

pitched battle. Which marked the end of the Danish intervention, and knocked Denmark out of the war.

#### **4. Swedish Invasion**

The success of the Catholic League worried the Swedish Empire, because Swedes were afraid to lose control of the Baltic Sea and an alliance between the Empire and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In 1630, King Gustavus Adolphus landed on Pomerania and justified this action by indicating the siege of Stralsund. He quickly annexed Pomerania with diplomacy, yet he struggled to break Imperial resistance within the area in the first months. Other than that, French, which was also worried about her enemies victory, sent immense economic aid to Sweden so as to keep Swedish intervention up in the Holy Roman Empire.

None of the Protestant German Princes were desiring to ally with Sweden since they were regarded as unwelcome invaders. However, the Catholic Brutal Massacre at Magdeburg enraged the entire Protestant Cause. This action pushed Saxony and Brandenburg to take sides with the Swedes. Both Count Tilly and Adolphus were now seeking a decisive victory against each other in order to attract more allies. Thus, belligerents engaged near the village of Breitenfeld in September 1631.

The battle began with artillery fire from both sides. Although Swedish cannons were smaller compared to Imperial ones, they were numerically larger and most importantly, were able to be repositioned during the battle. This resulted in catastrophic losses in thick Imperial tercios. Count Tilly knew that Saxon allies were poorly trained, so he concentrated nearly all of his forces on Saxon troops, which were the right wing of the Protestant army. He was right, Saxons quickly disbanded under the pressure of veteran Catholic forces. After that, they were in an advantageous position as the Swedish left was left unprotected. However, Tercios required a lot of time to be positioned again. During this process, Swedes quickly re-arranged their positions and brought their mobile artillery. Besides, Gustavus Adolphus charged with his cavalry to capture the left behind, large artillery pieces of Tilly so as to use them against their owners. Stuck between two distinct artillery fires, Tilly's forces were getting devastated by the veteran Swedish Soldiers, who were using firing tactics invented by Gustavus himself. Tilly was wounded and his forces were nearly destroyed, they fled the battlefield. With this, a devastating victory was won for the Protestant cause.

War proceeded with Swedish domination in Germany, until King Gustavus Adolphus got lost in fog and was eventually killed at Lützen 1632. Swedes still managed to win the battle, but the loss of the king himself led Sweden to lose its grip on the Empire. By 1635, Sweden was no longer a major threat to the Imperials after several defeats.

### **5. French Intervention**

In 1635, France declared war on Spain. The first French intervention against Spanish territory over the Rhine river was devastating for France. For the next few years, all the battles that happened were minor conflicts between the Habsburgs and France. It remained unchanged even after the death of Emperor Ferdinand the II, who were later succeeded by Ferdinand the III. But after the Catastrophic Spanish defeat at Rocroi 1643, tides turned in French favor. War continued for 5 more years, most of the clashes resulted in French victory.

### **6. Peace of Westphalia**

After 30 years of continuous war, all belligerents were exhausted. Without any decisive victory of one side, war became unsustainable. Thus, peace was the decision. Results shifted the continental power completely. Sweden became dominant, the Emperor lost authority, and France gained territory. With almost 8 million deaths, Germanic lands were destroyed and heavily depopulated. Farmlands were crushed, plague and disease spread through the continent, and many villages were gone. It was a devastating war, and for the era's conditions, It was as destructive as World War II.

### **B. Reasons of the Great Northern War**

The Great Northern War was primarily ignited by the changing dynamics of power in Northern and Eastern Europe, Swedish Kingdom has reached its peak of expansion under the rule of Charles XII of Sweden. The Baltic Sea's coastline was entirely controlled by Sweden, making it a "Swedish Lake". The situation led the neighboring powers, Russia, Denmark etc. into forming an alliance called the "Anti-Swedish Coalition".

Tsardom of Russia's main motivation was to gain a "window to west" by having an ice-free port over the Baltic Sea for modernizing the trade and navy. Peter the Great wanted to take advantage of the young age of the King of Sweden and weaken Sweden's power.

Denmark-Norway's primary aim in the Great Northern War was the restoration of its regional dominance and the recovery of ancestral territories lost to the Swedish Empire during the mid-17th century.

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was mainly motivated to enter the Great Northern War because of the personal ambitions of its king, Augustus II the Strong, who was also the Elector of Saxony. Augustus wanted to transform the commonwealth from a decentralized elective monarchy into a centralized, heredity based monarchy. He believed that conquering the region of Livonia, would provide him the prestige to bring its own dynasty regime over the throne. He also aimed to have the Baltic trade routes by conquering the coastline.

The Kingdom of Prussia entered the war later, but its aim was sharply focused on territorial integration and to secure its power. Under King Frederick William I, Prussia's primary objective was the seizure of Swedish Pomerania.

## **V. Belligerents of Great Northern War**

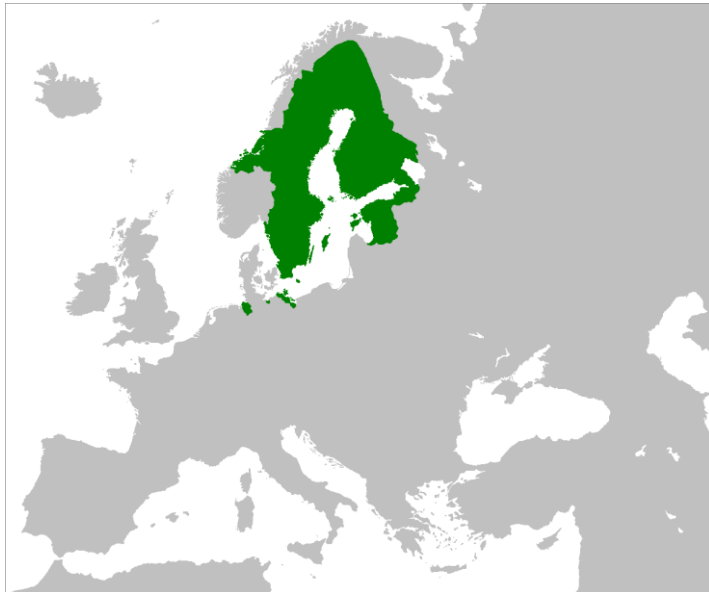
### **A. Swedish Bloc**

#### **1. Kingdom of Sweden**

By the year of 1700, Sweden was expanding its borders through a series of successful wars through centuries, especially against Denmark and Poland. This era, known as the *Stormaktstiden* (Age of Greatness), through this era Sweden transformed from a poor, weak northern nation into the undoubtedly hegemon of the Baltic Sea. However, this expansion created revanchist neighbors, nations that had lost their territory to Sweden and were waiting for a moment of weakness in order

to attack. With the coronation of the young and inexperienced King Charles XII, that moment had come.

Sweden was ruled as an absolute monarchy. During the reign of Charles XI (the father of Charles XII), The power of the nobility was curtailed, and in the process, the monarchy reclaimed



the lands that had previously been granted to the aristocracy. This gave the king full control over the state's resources and army. The government was highly centralized and efficient for its time, it could mobilize a higher proportion of its population for war than nearly any other European power.

When it came to the military Sweden's tactics relied more on unique strategies than machinery. The Caroleans, their army, used the Gå-På method; an aggressive, shock-style infantry assault designed to wear down the enemy. Additionally, Sweden possessed some of the world's best iron and copper mines; this allowed them to produce high quality cannons and rifles that were lighter and more reliable than their rivals. Its navy featured advanced ship designs capable of withstanding the harsh conditions of the Baltic Sea; this ensured not only their strength at sea but also their control over strategically vital coastal fortresses.

Sweden was the main target and the defender of the war. At the start, they were the strongest power in the region. Their role was to protect their lands from three enemies attacking at once: Russia, Denmark, and Poland-Saxony. Under King Charles XII, the Swedish army moved very fast rushing from one border to another to put out the threats. They were incredibly successful at first, they knocked Denmark out of the war and destroyed the Russian army in early battles.

However, Sweden's role changed when they decided to stop defending and started a deep invasion of Russia. This was a turning point. The long distances and the cold weather exhausted

their soldiers. After losing a massive battle at Poltava in 1709, Sweden's role shifted from being a powerful conqueror to a struggling survivor. They spent the rest of the war trying to defend their own territory. By the end, Sweden lost its position as a Great Power and had to give up most of its lands across the sea.

## 2. Cossack Hetmanate

The Cossack Hetmanate was a state of warriors (Cossacks) located in the area we now call Ukraine. They were caught in the middle of three big powers: Russia, Poland, and the Ottoman Empire. The Cossacks loved their freedom and had their own special laws. For a long time, they were under the protection of Russia, but they began to feel that the Russian Czar was taking away their rights. Their leader, Ivan Mazepa, decided it was time to fight for a country that was truly independent.



The Hetmanate was ruled by a leader called the Hetman. It was more like a military democracy. The Hetman was elected by a council of officers. The whole country was organized like an army; instead of states or provinces, they had regiments. While this made them very good and fast at preparing for war, it also caused problems because different groups of Cossacks often had problems about which side (Russia or Sweden) they should join.

Their economy was based on the land. The Hetmanate had some of the best soil in the world for farming, so they grew a lot of grain and raised many animals. They sold these goods to their neighbors in order to make money. However, because they were located right between big empires, their farms were often burned down during wars. By the time they joined the Swedish side, their economy was struggling because of high taxes and the destruction caused by passing armies.

The Cossacks did not fight in straight lines like the European armies. Instead, they used guerrilla warfare tactics, they made surprise attacks and moved really fast. Their most famous tactic was using a Tabor, a circle of heavy wooden wagons used as a mobile fort to protect them from enemy

horses. They used light horses, sabers, and carbines (short guns) so they could move quickly across the battlefield.

At the start of the war, The Hetmanate was forced to help Russia. But in 1708, Ivan Mazepa secretly switched sides to help the Swedish King, Charles XII. They provided a place to stay, food, and scouts who knew the land to the Swedish army. Their goal was to help Sweden defeat Russia so the Cossacks could be free. However, the plan failed because many Cossacks were too afraid of Russia to join the rebellion. This split the Cossack forces and contributed to the Swedish defeat at the Battle of Poltava.

### **3. Holstein-Gottorp**

Holstein-Gottorp is the historiographical name for the parts of the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, also known as Ducal Holstein, that were ruled by the dukes of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorp, a side branch of the German House of Oldenburg. Other parts of the duchies were ruled by the kings of Denmark. In the Great Northern War, the ruler was very closely related to the Swedish king and the duchy sided with Sweden.

The country's economy was generally based on agriculture and trade. Due to its geographical location, many merchants passed through the region, contributing to trade, but the country never truly became wealthy. Wealth was generally spent on the army and the construction of fortifications. And as many soldiers passed through the region, they seized the crops harvested from the fields.

Because their population was small, they were unable to field a large army like other nations. Their strategy was generally defensive, and they had truly mastered this approach. They built formidable walls and successfully reinforced their defenses with cannons. During a siege, the enemy would spend a great deal of time trying to capture the city, and enough time would pass for the Swedish army to arrive to provide assistance.

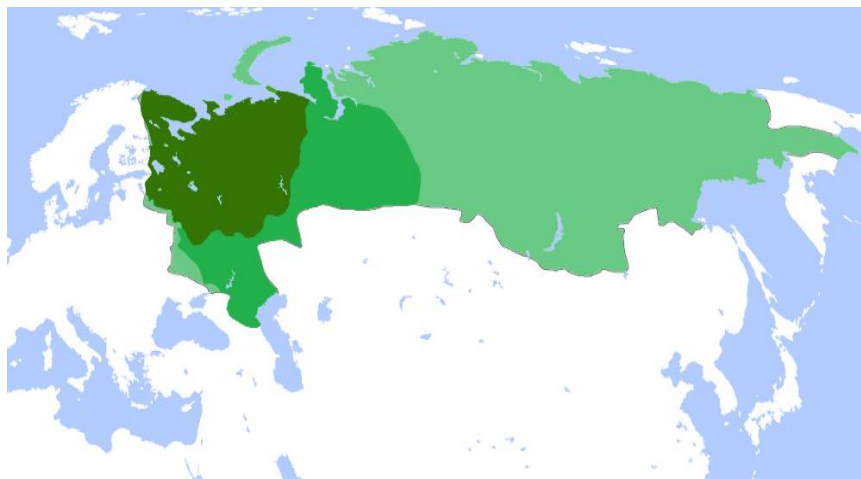
The Great Northern War actually began with Denmark's invasion of this small country. Sweden, meanwhile, was forced to enter the war to protect its ally. Throughout the war, this state served as a base for the Swedish army, which proved to be a significant asset. Consequently, Denmark was

forced to keep its army stationed within its borders to defend them, which in turn allowed Sweden to fight on other fronts.

## **B. Anti-Swedish Coalition**

### **1. Tsardom of Russia**

Tsardom of Russia was not industrialized, but it was heavily populated. Before the reforms of Peter, Russian doctrine depended on sole mass. The infantry lacked experience, drill and discipline. But Peter learned from his defeats. He understood that tactics and technology were crucial. So he melted almost everything, even the church bells, to build more artillery. He reformed the drills, and built a core with his experienced infantry, to later build a populated and well trained mass of infantry.



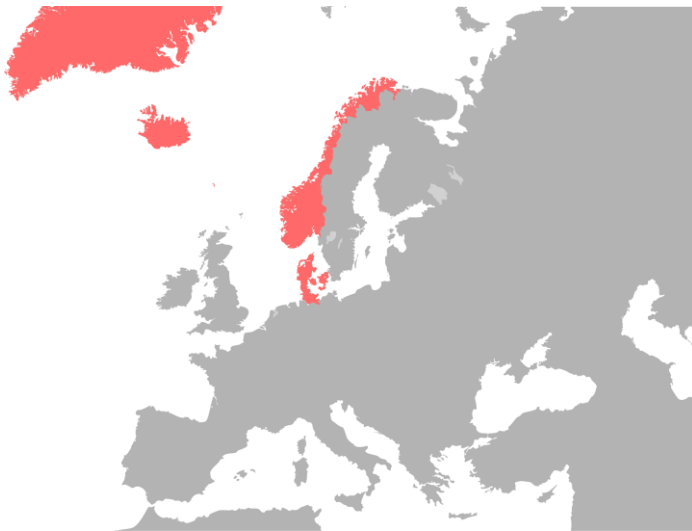
They also learned from the Swedes and used their tactics against them. Also, they executed scorched earth tactics well against the Swedish army, which were living off the ground for mobility. Furthermore, Russian soldiers were used to living in harsh weather conditions, which was a bonus point in defending the cold motherland.

### **2. Denmark-Norway**

Denmark-Norway was ruled by a dual monarchy. For centuries, it had been the most powerful country in the North, but Sweden, which had grown stronger over time, had taken most of its territories. By the early 18th century, the Danes were furious and sought revenge against Sweden for what had been done to them. After forming an alliance with Russia and Poland and

defeating Sweden, they wanted to reclaim the territories they had lost, particularly the regions around the Baltic Sea.

Denmark-Norway was quite wealthy thanks to its maritime trade advantages. It controlled the straits necessary for access to the Baltic Sea and collected taxes on every ship passing through, thereby generating a substantial revenue to cover the expenses of the royal army. They also sold resources such as fish and wood from Norway to the rest of Europe.



Since their country consisted of many islands, they had become experts in shipbuilding and seafaring, and their greatest military strength lay in their naval capabilities. In naval warfare, they were nearly on par with Sweden. On land, however, their army was trained in the German style, using standard muskets and cannons. They were not as aggressive as Sweden's Caroleans, but their army was highly professional and well-trained.

Because Denmark and Norway controlled the narrow waterways at the entrance to the Baltic Sea, they were able to disrupt Sweden's supply lines and trade. At the start of the war in 1700, Denmark attacked Holstein-Gottorp—Sweden's weaker ally—in an effort to secure a decisive and swift victory. However, when King Charles XII of Sweden brought his army right up to the outskirts of Copenhagen, Denmark's capital, Denmark was forced to sign a peace treaty and effectively withdraw from the war.

After Sweden lost the Battle of Poltava in 1709, Denmark regained the courage to join the war and re-entered the conflict. By forming an alliance with Russia and Prussia, they attacked Swedish territories in Germany and southern Sweden. Their navy made a significant contribution, winning several naval battles that prevented the Swedes from sending more troops to their overseas provinces. By the end of the war, although Denmark failed to secure the territories it sought, it succeeded in greatly weakening Sweden's power.

### 3. Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth

In 1700, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was one of Europe's largest states, but it had not yet united into a single power. This union consisted of the merger of Poland and Lithuania. While other countries were governed as absolute monarchies where the king held all power, Poland was governed not by a monarchy but by an aristocratic democracy. King Augustus II was also the ruler of Saxony, his aim in joining the war was to seize the province of Livonia from Sweden. With this victory, he sought to transition to a system where the king held more power, similar to those in other countries.



As a military power, the Commonwealth lagged far behind its contemporaries. The mainstay of its armies was the Winged Cavalry, a heavy cavalry unit legendary for its striking power. However, they lacked a modern, disciplined infantry and a strong artillery unit. While the cavalry proved highly effective in many areas, they were largely ineffective in a war against the Swedish Carolinians. The Commonwealth lacked the infrastructure to mass-produce muskets similar to those

used by other nations, so they were forced to rely on expensive imports and feudal soldiers.

The people and nobility of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth did not want to go to war with Sweden. However, the country's king, Augustus II, was also the ruler of Saxony. Without telling anyone, Augustus attacked Swedish territory (Livonia) with his own army. This caused the Polish nobility to become angry with Augustus. The nobles claimed they had no connection to this war and refused to participate in the king's war or provide support.

In response, King Charles XII of Sweden invaded Poland to punish Augustus II. Charles defeated the Polish armies and wanted to depose Augustus II, replacing him with his own chosen candidate, Stanisław Leszczyński.

At this point, the country split into two, and two distinct confederations emerged.

The Sandomierz Confederation supported the incumbent kings, Augustus II and Russian Tsar Peter, and wanted to expel Sweden from the country with Russia's assistance.

On the other hand, the Warsaw Confederation consisted of nobles who believed Augustus II had led the country into a dead end and sought to place the new king, Stanisław Leszczyński who was supported by Sweden on the throne.

#### **4. Electorate of Saxony**

Saxony was one of the wealthiest and most powerful German states within the Holy Roman Empire. Its ruler, Augustus II, was not only King of Saxony but also the elected King of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Augustus was driven by great ambition. He sought to seize the port cities which were crucial for trade in the region and were Swedish territory in order to control trade and gain more land. To achieve his goal, he made a secret agreement with Russia and Denmark and became the one who initiated the war against Sweden.

At the start of the war, Sweden's main target was Saxony. The Swedish king invaded the country to neutralize Saxony before Russia could, and forced Augustus to make peace. But with Russia's victory at Poltava in 1709, Saxony returned to the war. For the remaining part of the war, Saxony worked to besiege Sweden's fortresses in Europe and provide logistical support to its allies. While these efforts played a major role in Sweden's defeat, Saxony also found itself in a very difficult economic situation during this process.

### **VI. Key Events and Milestones**

#### **A. Danish Invasion of Holstein-Gottorp**

In 1700, the Anti-Swedish Coalition started an invasion on Livonia, considered as the beginning of the Great Northern War. Firstly, Denmark-Norway started a campaign on Tönning, which is a territory of Holstein-Gottorp, a small duchy under Sweden. The Swedish army replied with a counter attack by landing at Humlebæk, a major city of Denmark. Forcefully, Denmark-Norway signed a peace treaty with the Kingdom of Sweden. Which led into the signature of the Treaty of Travendal, which included the articles:

- Denmark has to recognize the full sovereignty of the Duke of Holstein-Gottorp, Frederick IV's cousin and Charles XII's brother-in-law and shall leave the Anti-Swedish Coalition.
- Denmark-Norway will withdraw its troops from Holstein-Gottorp and cease all hostilities against the duchy.
- Denmark has to pay Sweden a war reparation (approximately 260,000 rix-dollars) to cover the costs of the war.

For a long period of time, the Treaty of Travendal was the end of the Danish-Swedish War.

### **B. Battle of Narva**

The Battle of Narva (1700) was an important early engagement in the Great Northern War, which occurred between the Swedish Empire and the Tsardom of Russia. On November 19, 1700, Tsar Peter's forces, approximately 37,000 to 40,000 men arrived at the fortress of Narva and started a siege. Upon learning of that threat, King Charles XII landed in Estonia with an army of only 12,000 men. On November 30, Swedish forces finished their



preparations. The Russian army was not awaiting an attack from the Swedish side, because they thought King Charles was still in Denmark. Also Tsardom of Russia was less advanced in technology while the battle happened and their troops were not well-trained.

By afternoon, the Swedes started moving forward and meanwhile it got colder and the snowstorm started to blow into the eyes of the Russian soldiers. King Charles XII saw the opportunity and ordered an attack. Most of the Russian soldiers panicked and couldn't answer the attack, while the rest of them were slaughtered. After the first clash, the high command of the Russian army decided to capitulate. Nearly half of the equipment and all of the artillery were captured by Swedes.

As an aftermath Battle of Narva was a terrible defeat for the Tsardom of Russia, Swedes captured 10 generals and 10 colonels of Russian forces and many Russian officers were killed in the battle.

Total loss of Russian officers was about %25, and 4050 muskets, 22 mortars, 173 artillery pieces, including 64 siege cannons were captured by the Swedes.

### **C. Swedish Campaign in Poland-Saxony**

In 1697, Augustus the Strong had won the throne of Poland-Lithuanian Commonwealth by military force after a violent election. His rebels were mostly primates<sup>1</sup>. Michał Stefan Radziejowski, the archbishop of Gniezno and Sapieha family also tried to seize the Polish throne. After Augustus had the throne, those factions agreed to not work with Augustus and it made his authority unstable. To increase his own authority, Augustus decided to invade Swedish Livonia. This would not only increase his authority but also would prevent Sweden from interfering in Polish affairs. The Polish monarch believed the support of Tsardom of Russia and ongoing conflict in Denmark-Norway could make the invasion an easy victory. Meanwhile, Charles XII announced that he wants to maintain peace with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, but that would not be easy when Augustus II is still on the throne.

Sweden's declaration of war was not directed into the Polish nation, but Augustus II himself and Charles XII started to provoke the Polish nation against Augustus II. The Swedish ambition was to create a powerful Polish government to maintain the independence of the commonwealth and cooperate with the Kingdom of Sweden.

After the Battle of Narva (1700), Charles XII's plan was to defeat the Saxon army, it was a necessity for the Swedish army to march for Moscow. In 1701, Saxon and Swedish forces collided near the city of Riga. Saxons were entrenched near River Düna with heavy artillery support. Swedes started an attack into their trenches. Due to poor accuracy of the Saxon artillery, the Swedish forces destroyed the front line of the Saxon army and 2.000 men of Augustus' forces were killed. However, the Saxon army and the reinforcements of the Russian forces managed to retreat near the Swedish border. After the reinforcements retreated, Charles XII started to march on the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's soil.

At the beginning of January 1702, Charles marched into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania with 14.000 men. He left over 20.000 soldiers in the Baltic dominions. After the campaign, in March 1702, Charles left Lithuania and started to march on Warsaw, the capital of the Commonwealth. Meanwhile both Augustus and Radziejowski left Warsaw and the city was undefended. After

Charles XII entered the city of Warsaw, Augustus II had to flee to Kraków and started to gather Saxon forces. Upon receiving the intelligence, Charles XII ordered its officers to march to Kraków. He totally ordered 10.000 troops to advance but approximately 5000 of them were able to march at the moment. So Charles XII decided to not wait for the other half to arrive and left Warsaw on June 16, 1702 with 8.000 men, as 4 cavalry regiments and four infantry regiments. While marching, he left 300 infantry and 500 cavalry behind to collect supplies for the Swedish army. Before Charles XII arrived at Kraków, Augustus II left Kraków with his 15.000 men of the Saxon army and he encamped at the village of Kliszów.

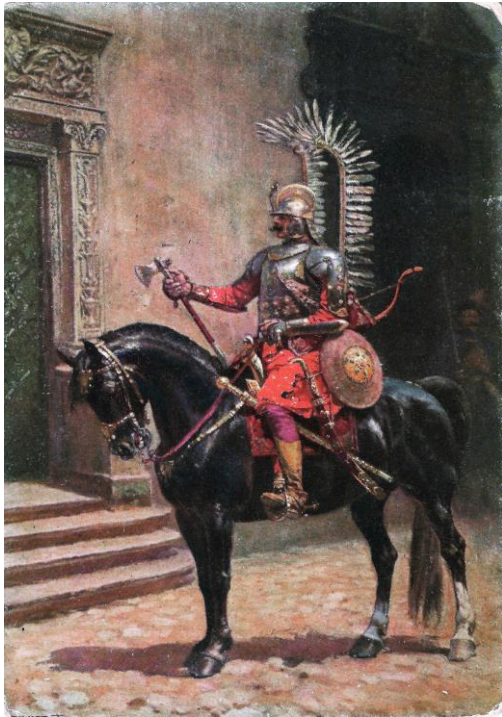
On July 7, Charles XII and the main Swedish army arrived at the village of Obice, 8 km north of Kliszów. Charles XII ordered one of his officers to reconnoitre the Saxon positions. On July 9, a false rumor spread around the Swedish camp that the Saxon army was on the way. Upon hearing the rumor, Charles XII ordered his army to issue the battlecry, "Gott Mit Uns!" (God with us!) out loud. Then he ordered his troops to march out in four columns. They moved to the south under cover of the forest, they lowered their guns and flags, took their steps slowly to give the impression of a small reconnaissance force is marching, not the whole army. Then Saxon scouts saw some of the Swedish forces while patrolling the forest. Upon that, Augustus sounded the alarm with cannon shots and prepared for the battle.

The Swedish army had a total strength of 16.230 men with four-pounder regimental guns but only between 10.000 or 12.000 of these men were able to fight due to famine, disease or exhaustion. The fighting force consisted of 8.000 infantry distributed as 18 battalions of infantry and 25 cavalry squadrons. Meanwhile the Saxon army had an official strength of 22.230 men but 16.500 of them were able to fight, distributed between 16 battalions and 44 cavalry squadrons.

In the aftermath of the Battle of Kliszów, the Swedish losses were 300 men killed and approximately 800 of them being wounded. 21 of their high commands killed including a colonel, five captains, five lieutenants, five rittmasters, two ensigns, two regimental quartermasters and a corporal. Two men were captured and 850 cavalry horses were killed. None of the artillery was lost on the Swedish side and the equipment lost was unknown.

Meanwhile the Saxon-Polish army lost approximately 2.000 men, 1700 of the Saxon forces being killed and 300 officers and privates being wounded. The Polish Crown Army lost 80 men, 60 of

them being winged hussars. The Swedes also seized 12.000 rifles, 60 banners, ammunition stores and tents. Among the most precious spoils of war was a large Turkish tent that Augustus's father had captured from the Ottomans at the Battle of Vienna (1683).



After the battle of Kliszów, Charles XII routed the Saxon army at the Battle of Pułtusk and took the city of Toruń. With his threatening position near Prussian borders, Charles XII and Frederick William I of Prussia agreed to sign a non-aggression pact.

Meanwhile the voivode of Poznań, Stanisław Leszczyński, organized a confederation in Greater Poland to protest against Augustus' actions. The confederation won many supporters in a short period of time. Even cardinal Radziejowski, who had previously spoken of the importance of neutrality, now claimed that an alliance with the Swedes was necessary for Poland's survival.

The confederation in Warsaw, in 1704, declared the king Augustus was no longer king of Poland, and a new election took place and Stanisław Leszczyński elected as the new king of Poland.

His royal title was Stanisław I of Poland. Charles XII, after gaining a faction in Poland supporting the Swedes, the treaty of Warsaw was signed and the Polish-Swedish War ended.

In 1706, the invasion of Saxony also ended with a victory for the Swedish side and enforced the Peace of Altranstädt.



All of the battles, numbers, casualties and results during the invasion of Poland-Saxony are listed down below:

Battle	Swedish Numbers	Anti-Swedish Numbers	Swedish Casualties	Coalition Casualties	Result
Düna	7.000	13.000	500	2000	Swedish victory
Tryškiai	900	1.000-2.000	28	140	Swedish victory
Darsūniškis	240	6.000	145	Unknown	Coalition victory
Vilnius	2.500-3.000	3.000	50	100	Swedish victory
Kliszów	12.000	23.800	1.100	4.400	Swedish victory
Saločiai	1.100	6.000	167	1.500	Swedish victory
Pułtusk	3.000	3.500	58	1.200	Swedish victory
Toruń	26.000	6.000	50	5.860	Swedish victory
Jakobstadt	5.500	15.000	224	2.817	Swedish victory
Poznań	2.700	6.200	300	1.000	Swedish victory
Lemberg	1.500-2.000	600	30	580	Swedish victory
Poniec	5.200	4.100	230	500	Inconclusive
Oderbeltsch	Unknown	1.200	Unknown	1.200	Swedish victory
Tillendorf	1.500	600	Unknown	519	Swedish victory
Palanga	387	2.000	60	350	Swedish victory
Gemauerthof	7.000	18.000	1.900	5.000	Swedish victory
Warsaw	2.000	9.500	292	1.000	Swedish victory
Mitau	900	10.000	Unknown	Unknown	Coalition victory

Praga	1.000-1.500	5.000	200	250	Swedish victory
Grodno	34.000	41.000	3.000	15.000-17.000	Swedish victory
Fraustadt	9,400	20.000	1.400	15.000	Swedish victory
Valkininkai	1.000	4.600	60	290	Swedish victory
Nyasvizh	500	1.125	50	700	Swedish victory
Kletsk	1.500	4.700	31	4.070	Swedish victory
Lachowicze	1.950	1.400	Unknown	1.361	Swedish victory
Piertkova	Unknown	Unknown	600	Unknown	Coalition victory
Kalisz	14.000	30.000	4.900	3.000	Coalition victory

### **Ç. Founding of Saint Petersburg**

The founding of Saint Petersburg in 1703 was closely connected to the Great Northern War. During this war, Peter the Great fought against Sweden to gain access to the Baltic Sea, which was very important for trade and communication with Europe. After capturing land from the Swedish Empire, especially the area near the Neva River, Peter decided to build a new city there. He wanted a strong port and a “window to the West” that would help Russia become more modern and powerful.

Even though the land was swampy and difficult, construction began immediately. Thousands of workers, including soldiers and peasants, were forced to work in hard conditions, and many died. Peter ordered nobles to move to the new city and help develop it. Important buildings, such as the Peter and Paul Fortress, were built first to protect the area from Swedish attacks.

As the war continued, Saint Petersburg became more secure and grew in importance. After Russia’s victory in the Great Northern War, the city became a symbol of success and modernization. In 1712, it was made the capital of Russia, showing Peter’s strong desire to turn his country toward Europe.

#### **D. Swedish Invasion of Russia**

After the Battle of Narva, Peter the Great understood that he underestimated the Swedish army and took steps into modernization of the army. Established a superior fortress and built the city Petersburg near Nyen after having several victories in Erastfer and Nöteborg. But Sweden was able to maintain most of its provinces in Livonia by winning in the Battles of Gemäuerthof and Jakobstadt.

At this point, in 1707, Peter offered to return everything he had so far occupied (essentially Ingria) except Saint Petersburg and the line of the Neva to avoid a full-scale war, but Charles XII refused. Instead he initiated a march from Saxony to invade Russia. His primary goal was Moscow, but his forces were sapped by the cold weather, (To mention, the winter of 1708/1709 was the coldest winter in Europe in the last 500 years also known as the “Great Frost”.) and Peter’s scorched earth tactics. When the main army turned south to recover in Ukraine, the second army with supplies and reinforcements was intercepted and routed at Lesnaya.

#### **E. Battle of Lesnaya**

The second army, which was led by Adam Ludwig Lewenhaupt, was caught by Russians while trying to get a supply train to Lesnaya by crossing the Lesnyaka River. The Russian army approximately had 20.000 soldiers which is pretty mobile also called the “flying corps”, against the 12.500 men of Lewenhaupt. The supply train Lewenhaupt tried to bring was a massive convoy consisting over 4.500 wagons filled with food, gunpowder and ammunition. However, Charles XII moved faster than expected and failed to wait for Lewenhaupt.

Meanwhile in the village of Lesnaya, the Russian vanguard attacked the Swedish army in a dense forest clearing. The terrain was not suitable for the aggressive Swedish doctrine. The fighting was brutal and disorganized, shifting through woods and marshes. Both sides suffered heavy casualties in close-quarters combat. A sudden, early-season snowstorm (much like at Narva) began to blow, but this time it did not give the Swedes a decisive victory; instead, it added to the exhaustion of both armies. By 7:00 PM, both forces were exhausted. The Russians withdrew to the woods to reorganize for the next day. Though the battle was technically a tactical draw on the field, the Swedish position was miserable. Fearing a renewed attack in the morning and realizing he was surrounded, Lewenhaupt made the difficult decision to abandon the supply train. He ordered his

men to burn the wagons and flee under the cover of night. The retreat turned into a rout as Swedish soldiers, demoralized and hungry, abandoned their equipment. Hundreds drowned or were captured while trying to cross the Sozh River at Propoysk.

### **F. Battle of Poltava**

By the spring of 1709, Charles' force had shrunk to half of its original size. After the coldest winter in Europe in over 500 years, Charles was left with 20,000 soldiers and 34 cannons. Short of supplies, he laid siege to the Russian fortress at Poltava on the Vorskla River on 2 May 1709. Peter's force of 80,000 marched to relieve the siege. While observing the Russian position on 20 June, Charles was struck in the foot by a stray bullet that wounded him so severely that he could not stand. Charles' last hope of reinforcement expired, as the Swedish forces under von Krassow had turned aside to deal with the anti-Swedish Sandomierz Confederation in Poland.

Because of his wound, Charles turned over operational command to Field Marshal Carl Gustav Rehnskiöld. But the Swedish army was too exhausted and outnumbered because of the lack of reinforcements. The Swedes launched a surprise attack to bypass the trenches of the Russians at 4.00 AM in dawn. But the plan went wrong and split the Swedish army into two. The Swedish main body succeeded to bypass the redoubts and waited in the open field for the other battalions to join them. This gave time to Peter for marching his infantry out of the camp and establishing the front line and setting up the artillery. The Swedish line was outnumbered and facing the artillery advantage of the Russians but charged anyways. They managed to have a breakthrough on the Russian left column but Peter's counter-charge shattered the Swedish lines. The Swedish infantry collapsed and fled into the woods.

The remnants of the Swedish army retreated to the south, finding no boats to cross the Dnieper River. Russians caught them and the Swedish army surrendered. Charles XII and a small escort of 1,500 men managed to cross the river and flee to the Ottoman Empire.

### **G. Pruth River Campaign**

Pruth River Campaign, also called Russo-Turkish War of 1710 was a brief military conflict between the Tsardom of Russia and the Ottoman Empire. After Charles XII fled to Ottoman territory, Bender, Tsardom of Russia asked for his return but Ottoman Sultan Ahmed III refused the Russian ultimatum and declared war on Tsardom of Russia.

During the campaign, Baltacı Mehmed Pasha became a grand vizier and crossed the Danube River with his 120.000 men. Also with the help of the Crimean forces, they managed to encircle the Russian army and Peter I near the River Pruth. There was no escape available for the tsar, so he wrote a letter to Moscow and invited Catherine I of Russia, the Empress of Russia and asked for peace with the Ottoman Empire. Both the Crimean Khan and Charles XII wanted the Russian army to be destroyed and Ottomans had the opportunity. Baltacı Mehmed Pasha, upon his untrust of the janissaries, didn't take the opportunity and accepted the peace offer. Some historians said Baltacı held a special meeting with Catherine I of Russia and accepted the peace offer because of that meeting, but there is no proper evidence.

### **Ğ. Death of Charles XII**

After Charles XII was exiled in the Ottoman Empire, he accepted to leave Constantinople and returned to Swedish Pomerania. After five years away, Charles arrived in Sweden to find his homeland at war with Russia, Saxony, Hannover, Great Britain and Denmark. Sweden's western enemies attacked southern and western Sweden while Russian forces traveled across Finland to attack the Stockholm district. For the first time, Sweden found itself in a defensive war. Charles planned to attack Denmark by striking at its possessions in Norway. It was hoped that by cutting Denmark's Norwegian supply lines, the Danes would be compelled to withdraw forces for a possible invasion of Sweden itself.

Charles XII invaded Norway in 1716, with 7.000 men. He occupied the Norwegian capital of Christiania, (modern Oslo). Then in 1718 he invaded Norway again with 40.000 men and laid siege to the fortress of Fredriksten. While in the trenches close to the perimeter of the fortress on 30 November, 1718, Charles was struck in the head by a projectile and killed. The shot struck the left side of his skull and exited from the right. He died instantly. The invasion was abandoned, and Charles's body was returned to Sweden.

## **VII. Important Figures**

### **A. Charles XII**

At the age of 15, during his coronation ceremony Charles XII took the crown from the priest's hands and placed it upon his own head, making him one of the most radical rulers in history. He never returned to the capital Stockholm after the Great Northern War began at the age of 18, spending the remaining 18 years of his life in tents and trenches. In his personal life, Charles

rejected a luxury life. He portrayed a leader who shared the same bed and meal with his soldiers. His lifelong distance from women and marriage and his avoidance of alcohol showed that he was addicted only to war and the honor of Sweden.

The most tragic aspect of his character is his religious fatalism and uncompromising sense of honor. This man, who rose fearlessly in the trenches with the belief that “if God wants me dead, a bullet will find me anywhere” started the legend of being bulletproof among his soldiers. This all or nothing philosophy also affected his military tactics, giving rise to the Ga-Pa doctrine which



required soldiers to advance without firing under enemy fire, instead of relying on cold steel for decisive results in combat. However, this unwavering will was his weakness. Charles perceived diplomacy as a flaw and peace of dishonor, did not yield even after the defeat of Poltava. For five years, while taking refuge in Ottoman territory Bender, he tried to persuade a vast empire to go to war with Russia. When he asked to leave, he fought against thousands of Janissaries with just a few soldiers, after that he earned the nickname “Demirbaş” bestowed upon him by the Turks because of his stubbornness. After five years of struggle Charles finally left the Ottoman Empire in 1714. He crossed Europe in disguise

on horseback and made it home in just 15 days. He was exhausted but refused to go on the defensive, and launched one last desperate campaign into Norway to strike at Danish-Norwegian alliance. In 1718, while inspecting the front-line trenches at the Siege of Fredriksten Fortress he was struck in the temple by a projectile and died instantly at the age of 36.

## **B. Peter the Great**

Peter the Great was a force who sought to hammer Russia into a modern European empire. Unlike his rival Charles XII, who lived as a warrior monk, Peter was a carpenter, shipbuilder and engineer who learned his craft by working in European shipyards. For Peter the Great, the Great Northern War was not just about gaining territory but also about seizing the Baltic Sea, Russia's window to the Western world. He was ruthless and so obsessed with this goal that he had the city of Saint Petersburg built on newly acquired swampy land from Sweden, despite having no logistical resources that caused thousands of workers' lives.



Peter was a leader who learns from mistakes. After the humiliating defeat he suffered against Charles XII at Narva could have driven many kings into depression but Peter remarked that the Swedes taught them how to win by defeating them; he rebuilt the entire army from scratch, he dismantled and melted down church bells to make new cannons and transformed peasants into professional troops through a system of compulsory military service. To modernize Russia, he personally shaved the beards of traditional Russian nobles, banned old clothing and made the church a state institution. Even when his own son Alexei started opposing his reforms he accused his son of treason and allowed him to be tortured and killed. For him the interests of the state were more sacred than anything.

### **C. Augustus II the Strong**

Augustus is the most colorful, yet unreliable, character of the Great Northern War. He was called the Strong not only for his physical strength but also for his political audacity. This allowed him to somehow remain strong after every defeat. Augustus was a true man of pleasure and intrigue. He was the mastermind behind the secret coalition that started the war driven by an ambition to make Poland his family's property.

His life was spent in luxurious palaces, countless women, endless political bargaining. Despite being humiliated by Charles, and forced to betray his ally Peter, he never gave up. On the other hand Augustus was capable of denying tomorrow what he said today. For



him honor was not about dying on the battlefield but about what he could gain at the negotiations. His reappearance after Poltava, as if nothing had happened, and his reclaiming of his crown is a proof of his mastery to stay alive.

### **Ç. Ivan Mazepa**

Ivan Mazepa is the oldest leader with approaching 80 years of age who played the biggest gamble of his life. He was different from other Cossack leaders: He was highly educated, multilingual (including Latin, Italian and German) and intellectually fluent in the diplomatic language of European courts. For years he served as the most loyal ally of Tsar Peter the Great, he earned Peter's trust by protecting Russia's southern borders. His loyalty was broken not by betrayal but by desperation.

Mazepa's motivation was not coming from his ambition but by an effort to preserve the autonomy of the Cossack Hetmanate. He realized that Peter's moves to modernization of Russia was destroying the traditional freedoms of the Cossacks. When he sought support from Peter, the response along the lines of "Fend for yourself" was the last for Mazepa. After that he understood that; Russia is not their ally, they were pawns. In 1708, Mazepa secretly made an agreement with Charles XII. His plan was perfect on paper, he would provide winter quarters and logistical support to the Swedish army in Ukraine, and in return, he would establish an independent Ukraine.



However, it was not that easy. Peter, having received news of the situation, razed the Cossack capital of Baturin and undermined Mazepa's authority over his people.

#### **D. Frederick IV of Denmark**

Frederick IV was the first to ignite the Great Northern War and one of the leaders viewed the war personally. He was apart from others with his deep desire for revenge against Sweden. He ascended the throne burdened by the defeats his

father, Christian V, suffered against Sweden, and devoted all his energy to breaking Swedish dominance in the Baltic Sea.



Frederick was neither a warrior like Charles nor a genius like Peter. He was a stubborn statesman. His greatest obsession was seizing the Holstein-Gottorp region, an ally of Sweden and a threat to Denmark just south of the Baltic. He believed that Denmark's security could only be ensured by expelling Sweden from the Baltic. So he made the move that started the war, but he faced the famous speed of Charles XII. When Charles reached the gates of Copenhagen, Frederick was taken aback and forced to sign a peace treaty early in the war. This was not like a surrender but merely a retreat to wait for the right time, Frederick was a patient leader. He waited for nearly a decade until Sweden suffered a heavy blow in Poltava in the Russian interior, and when the moment arrived he returned to the coalition without any delay. He used his navy and army to attack the Swedish mainland.

### **VIII. Warfare of the Era**

#### **A. General Aspect of Warfare in 18th Century**

18th century warfare was dominated by line formations, cavalry charges and technological advancement. Armies engaged in both melee and ranged combat, in both sieges and pitched battles.

Tactics emphasized fire discipline and rapid maneuvering, so army drill grew more important. As war materials became more specialized, logistics became harder, and sustaining an army required a strong economy. Engineering was also crucial, since all sides searched for a better way to win against the other.

## 1. Weaponry

### a) Firearms

The most crucial weapon of the timeline was smoothbore, flintlock rifles. Even though bullets traveled further, effective range was capped with 100 meters, and it was a rare case when a projectile kept being effective after 70 meters. Because of the technological inadequacy, rifles were highly inaccurate. Wielders didn't aim the weapon, they pointed the barrel to the enemy and made



their shot.

For these reasons, flintlock rifles were only effective when used in long line formations. A rifle alone probably wouldn't hit, but when 100 fired together, few of them would hit. This was used as a shock effect. Length of the weapon and the way of reloading also made line formations the most effective formation.

Because it was too long, soldiers couldn't reload it while under cover, laying down or moving. Reload process required a long stick named ramrod, the bullet and gunpowder. Wielder first put the powder inside the barrel, then the bullet. After that, they pushed and adjusted the bullet by pushing it back with the ramrod. This process troopers to stand up, or be in a position where you can use the whole length of the ramrod. Reloading took at least 20 seconds even for a professional wielder. So, the average fire rate ranged between 2-4 shots per minute.

### b) Melee

Due to short range and slow fire rate, melee weapons were still a considerable option. Especially pike and lance. Before the invention of bayonets, pikes and other polearms provided a chance to charge and guarantee a kill for infantry. But close combat was risky because unlike rifles, troops killed each other effectively in close range. Because of this, it was rare for opposing armies

to engage with stabbing weapons. Lance's, on the other hand, were still effective in the era's doctrine. It was still used with cavalry, although it lost popularity over time and was mostly replaced by pistols or short swords, because cavalry tactics leaned on hit and run tactics rather than an all in charge

### c) Artillery

We can divide artillery in 2, field and siege. Field artillery could be moved during battle. Just like rifles, it was inaccurate and its impact relied on mass shooting. The fire rate roamed around 1 shot per minute. An effective range was highly dependent on vision and conditions, but the projectile could travel ~1000 meters. Field artillery was mobile, so it made it good for supporting the infantry, softening enemy defences or stopping an enemy charge. A cannonball could bounce through lines and kill many. Also the sound of artillery barrage was a psychological weapon itself.



There were also canister shots, which worked like modern day shotguns. By sacrificing range, it could devastate nearly everything charging to the artillery barrel. Siege artillery on the other hand, was immobile and heavy. It was used for breaching the walls. It had a slow fire rate, and it took minutes to aim the shot. Because it was too heavy, it was highly inefficient in pitched battles. Furthermore, it came with plenty of logistical issues, since both the weapon and ammunition were hard to carry. Because it couldn't protect itself and it takes time to re-position, artillery were fragile in close combat. It could be easily captured and used by the other force when left unprotected.

## 2. Navy

The Great Northern War was not only a land conflict, but also a significant naval battle for dominance over the Baltic Sea. Throughout the war, the Baltic Sea served as the vital artery for the Swedish Empire (Stormaktstiden), the only reliable connection between mainland Sweden and

its Baltic provinces (Estonia, Livonia, Finland) was via maritime routes. The naval component of the conflict represented a confrontation between traditional ships of the line and galley fleets which were adapted to the coastlines of the Baltic.

The Swedish Navy (Kungliga Flottan): The Defensive Titan at the onset of the war, Sweden held control over the Baltic. The navy, restructured by Charles XII in the 1680s, had relocated its primary base to the ice-free Karlskrona.



The Swedish navy was characterized by formidable ships of the line outfitted with heavy artillery designed to engage Danish and Russian vessels in open waters. Sweden aimed to restrict the Danish navy to its harbors while safeguarding the overseas

deployment of its forces (to Germany and the Baltic coasts). The vessels possessed a considerable draft, rendering Sweden less agile against Russia's guerilla style naval tactics along the shallow Finnish coastline.

About the Russian Navy, Russia's naval capabilities were virtually nonexistent by 1700. Peter the Great achieved one of the fastest military transformations in history by establishing the modern Russian Navy. Recognizing that he could not match Sweden's ships in open waters, Peter concentrated on Mediterranean style galleys. These shallow vessels could be rowed in calm conditions and navigate through narrow rocky areas (skerries) inaccessible to Swedish ships. The establishment of St. Petersburg provided Russia with a permanent shipyard and base in the Baltic region. Following 1710, the Russian navy engaged Sweden with its galley fleet and developing line ships.

Denmark was Sweden's main naval rival throughout the war. The Danes had a longstanding maritime tradition and their crews were generally better trained than Swedish ones. Denmark aimed to sever Sweden's link with Pomerania (Germany) and gain control over the Oresund Strait. The Danish navy exhausted Swedish resources by forcing Sweden into a two-front naval conflict from 1710 to 1715.

Naval battles during this period were conducted using two main strategies: First, large sailing ships were lined up parallel to each other. This strategy was largely dependent on the wind direction. Second: Small, agile boats were used to transport troops, raid coastal settlements, and harass larger ships while they rested. This approach was key to Russia's victory at Gangut.

### 3. Logistics

During this period, armies transitioned from the 17th century principle of "war feeds itself" (*bellum se ipsum alit*) to a more centralized supply system. At the core of the Swedish Empire's success was *Indelgeningsverket* (Allotment System), the most advanced military administrative system in Europe. Under this system, soldiers resided on farms allocated to them during peace and when war broke out, each region was responsible for equipping, supplying and feeding its own soldiers. This localized yet centrally controlled model provided Charles XII with an army that could be mobilized in seconds and was logistically self sufficient. However, this system had limitations as the army moved further from Swedish territory its logistics became increasingly dependent on maritime routes and the network of fortified cities along the Baltic coast (Riga, Reval, Stralsund).

The true turning point of the logistical struggle occurred when armies penetrated deep into Eastern Europe, mostly in Poland and Russia. Sweden's operations in the continental depths necessitated a massive line of communication. In response to Sweden's systematic superiority Russia implemented one of the most effective defense doctrines in history, the "Scorched Earth". Peter the Great emptied all granaries along the routes taken by the Swedish army, poisoned wells and slaughtered livestock. This situation rendered Charles XII's army unable to sustain itself from local resources leaving them to starvation. During the winter of 1708-1709, amidst the Great Frost the logistical disaster reached its peak. Swedish supply convoys became stuck in the Russian steppes.



The Baltic Sea functioned as a highway for Sweden. The tons of gunpowder and grain that a line ship could carry were equivalent to the load that could be transported by hundreds of wagons overland. Therefore, Russia's establishment of St. Petersburg and its access to the Baltic struck a blow to Sweden's logistical security. In the final stages of the war, raids conducted by Russian galley fleets on Swedish shores represented an economical logistical sabotage by targeting Sweden's iron mines and agricultural lands. Consequently, the Swedish defeat at Poltava was a logistical failure.

#### **IX. Bibliography**

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#### **X. Further Research**

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rDCFxgHDncc> (You can check this documentary out.)