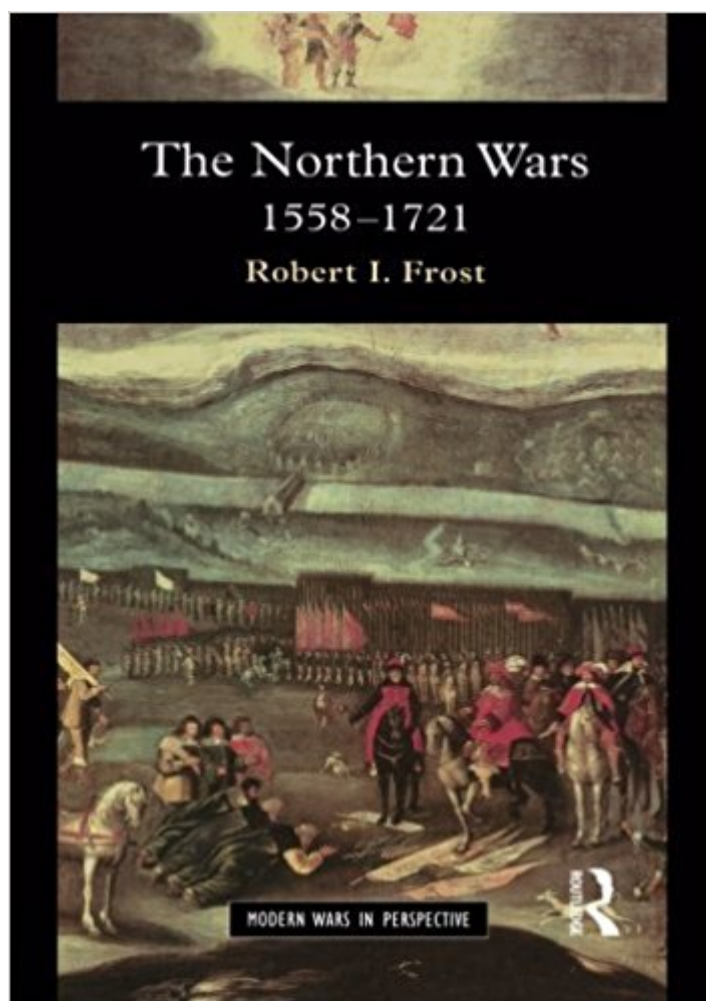


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The Northern Wars: War, State And Society In Northeastern Europe, 1558 - 1721



Synopsis

~ ~ This book provides an accessible study of the neglected but highly important series of wars fought for control of the Baltic and Northeastern Europe during the period 1558-1721. It is the first comprehensive history which considers the revolution in military strategy which took place in the battlefields of Eastern Europe. Robert Frost examines the impact of war on the very different social and political systems of Sweden, Denmark, Poland-Lithuania and Russia and he explains why it was Russia that emerged victorious from these wars. Based on extensive primary and secondary research (including much material that is unfamiliar in English) this book makes an important contribution to the debate on military change and political development in early modern Europe.

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Customer Reviews

Winner of the Early Slavic Studies Association (ESSA) 2005 Distinguished Scholarship Award "a rare and remarkable synthetic historical work" Professor C. M. Vakareliyska, ESSA "This important book throws light on some very dark places in European history" Times Literary Supplement ~ ~ "a powerfully-argued contribution to the historiography on the evolution of the military state...truly sets an impressive standard" Slavonic & East European Review ~ ~ "Another volume in a truly splendid series -Modern Wars in perspective- whose serious format and price are pitched at history students but should not put off the intelligent general reader." BBC History ~ ~ "a magnificent achievement, learned, perspicacious and judicious...an outstanding contribution" War in History ~ ~ "It is an eminently readable, remarkably well-crafted, balanced, and above all else, a most provocative analysis of one of the central processes in the formation of modern Europe" J.T. Koitlaine,

The Northern Wars examines a period of critical importance for the history of eastern and northern Europe. It provides an accessible analysis of the neglected but highly important series of wars fought between 1558 and 1721 for control of the Baltic and for hegemony in northeastern Europe. At the beginning of the period Sweden and Poland were the dominant powers of northern Europe, by the end they were both in eclipse and Russia and Prussia were the new international superpowers, dominating the stage. This book argues that the conditions and demands of war in northeastern Europe were different to those of western Europe, and challenges the common assumption that warfare in eastern Europe was resistant to change. Thoroughly comparative, it examines the impact of the war on the very different social and political systems of Sweden, Denmark, Poland-Lithuania and Russia and explains why Russia emerged victorious from the wars. It also questions the traditional accounts of important figures such as Peter the Great and Gustav Adolf. The Northern Wars is based on extensive primary and secondary material in several languages, containing much material that is unfamiliar in English. It is an important contribution to the debate on the relationship between military change and political development in early modern Europe and will be of use to all students of the period.

This book is very informative and provides a great deal of information on a little known series of conflicts that had a big impact on European history. My only complaint, as it is a small one, is that the writing is a bit dense and the book could use more maps. All in all, it's money well spent.

The subject of the book for an obvious reasons is unknown to English-speaking readers, but well known to Russian and Polish ones, because they essentially studied it in a high -school History curriculum. The work is a piece of the emmence erudition, because the author knowledgible and citate sources on the the Polish, Russian, Swedish and German, Ukranian, naturally out of the reach of English-speaking readers. Knowledgible reader immediately sees the "Polish" bias of the author. Russian historians are blamed by him in crude nationalism, and ideological support of Russian Imperialism. As a proof author citate some works from 70 years old, written on the direct orders from Stalin, or works of Imperialist Historians of Czars period, which even Russian historians ceased to consider seriously in mid 1960. In the same token author prefers not to notice that Polish historiograpy for the most part of XIX century, and till the WW II, was spinning the same nationalistic myth, as ideological support for the Poland "From Sea to Sea", i.e from Baltick to the Black Sea.

After blaming Russian historians in vulgar nationalism, the author, describing Livonian War and its aftermath, practically retells synopsis from the works of the major Russian specialist, Skrynnikov, whose some works are available in English, on the reigns of Ivan the Terrible, his son Feodor, Boris Godunov, and Times of troubles, of course properly referenced. The author tries to present the Military History and development of the armed forces of the North-Eastern, and Eastern Europe. His conclusions are far from original, that neither aristocratic republic of Poland-Lithuania, run by grand Magnates for their narrow interests, nor reasonably well centralized and effectively administered, by standards of the time, Sweden, but sparsely populated with limited resources could stand against Autocratic Russia with her population, resources, and ability to mobilize both for the purpose of war. Major value of the book is that it breaches totally new field for English-speaking general reader, and provides Russian and Polish ones with access to documents from Prussia, and Sweden, otherwise unknown to them.

I appear to have discovered this book a decade after everyone else. There's no point in going into great detail, as other reviews do that. This book is a slog-through in one sense, because the complexities are extreme. There must be fifty wars and rebellions described, with leaders, kings, emperors and other figures involved; simply keeping track of them all is difficult. Frost manages to be inclusive and clear, so it's a manageable read, just enormously detailed. The wars include Denmark, Sweden, the Polish commonwealth (that is Poland-Lithuania), Russia, and cameo roles starring Saxony, the Ottomans, the Hapsburgs, the Thirty Years War, various Tatar raids and Cossack rebellions, and both political and military evolutions. The core would be the Danes, the Swedes, the Poles/ Lithuanians and the Russians. Frost describes the wars in some detail, but this is not a military history per se, because the book discusses political organization, taxation and other matters--really needed to understand how Sweden's small population managed to become a major military player on the European stage for more than a century. The Danes had the tolls from maritime traffic going to and from the Baltic, the Swedes did it by excellent organization (and by large scale looting). One interesting aspect is that Frost demolished ideas that war (and politics) in Eastern and Northern Europe were somehow more primitive. He describes how tactics were thought out, based on experience and were appropriate for the conditions. The many wars were often savage and quite large areas were the scene of war after war, with large population loss (through starvation, killing and out-migration). I also found intriguing the discussion of the area of what is now mostly Ukraine, the relationships between the Cossack groups, the Crimean Tatars and the Polish frontier forces. The raids from Crimea lasted centuries and in total must have taken many hundreds

of thousands of people as slaves. These were peripheral to the Northern wars as such. The end of course is the rise of Russia to dominance and the essential collapse of Poland.

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