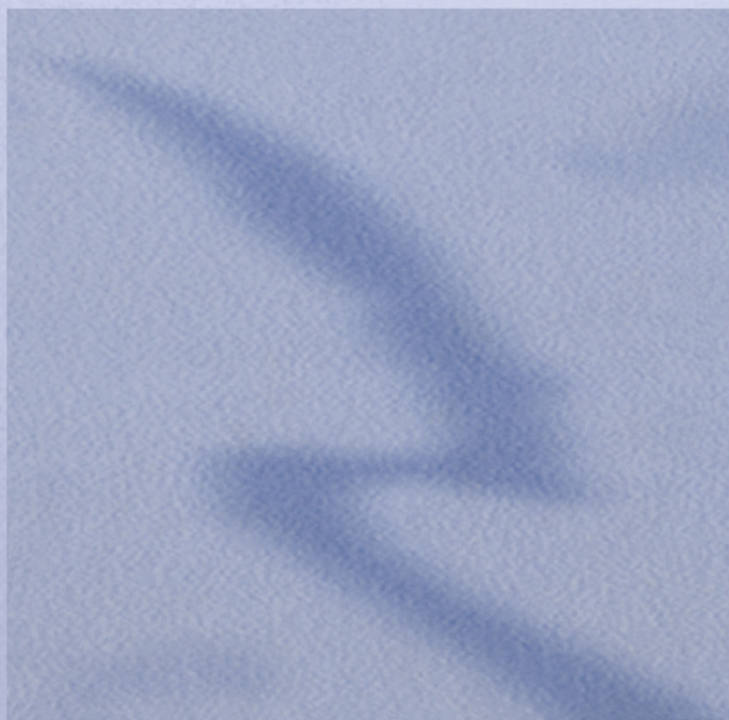


War and Peace in the Baltic 1560–1790

Stewart P. Oakley

 **Routledge**
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WAR AND PEACE IN THE BALTIC
1560–1790

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LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 1992
by Routledge
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE
Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005.

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Oakley, Stewart P.
War and Peace in the Baltic, 1560–1790.
(War in Context Series)
I. Title II. Series
947

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Oakley, Stewart P.
War and Peace in the Baltic, 1560–1790/Stewart P. Oakley.
p. cm.—(War in context)
Includes bibliography references and index.
1. Baltic States—History. 2. Europe, Eastern—History.
3. Europe—History—17th century. 4. Europe, Eastern—History—18th
century.
I. Title. II. Title: War and Peace in the Baltic, 1560–1790.
III. Series.
DK502.7.025 1993
947.4—dc20 92–6571

ISBN 0-203-98885-X Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-415-02472-2 (Print Edition)

For
Karin, Robin and Tanya

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PREFACE

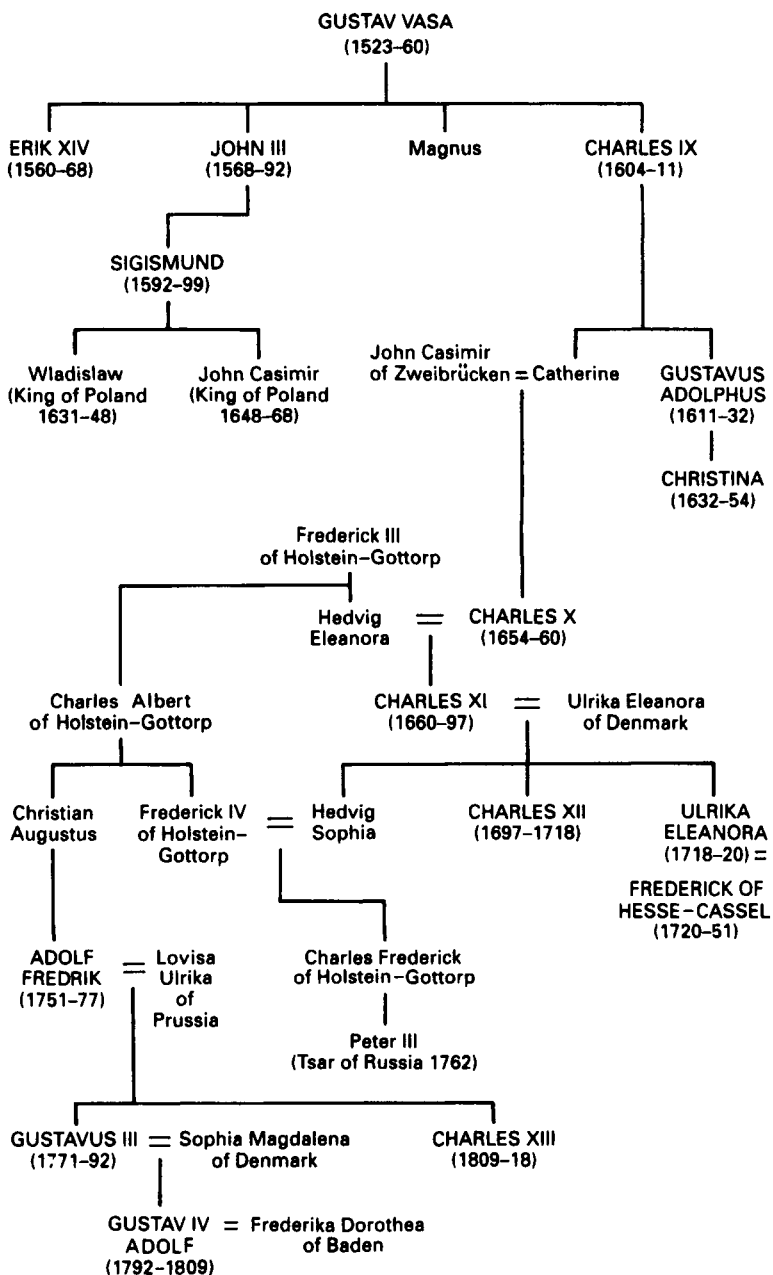
The immediate origins of this book lie in an essay on the Baltic area contributed to a volume on the theme of the causes of war in early modern Europe.¹ Its roots, however, lie much deeper, indeed in my earliest forays into historical research, which resulted in a doctoral dissertation on Anglo—Dutch relations with Denmark and Sweden in the later seventeenth century.² Since then I have been tempted to stray from the discipline of diplomatic history into the rather more fashionable one of social history and forward in time into the eighteenth century. Never, however, have I wandered very far from the Baltic world, and in teaching Scandinavian history for many years in both Britain and the United States I have constantly returned with pleasure to the age when the Baltic was a centre of European attention as it had not been since the Viking Age and which it was not to be again. While my principal interest has remained the countries which make up Scandinavia in its broadest meaning, I have been made increasingly aware that these must always be seen in a broader context and in particular in that of the part of Europe adjacent to them. I trust, however, that the fact that my experience of this part of Europe is still less than that of Scandinavia itself will not be too glaringly apparent in the subsequent study.

For enlivening my early interest in the diplomatic history of the Baltic as well as for launching me on my academic career I have above all to thank professor Ragnhild Hatton. To her I owe most of what I know in the field. For keeping alive my enthusiasm for the Scandinavian past I have to thank innumerable friends in Scandinavia and those of my colleagues in Britain who form the Nordic History Group. Finally to my publisher I owe thanks for

patience in response to my requests for yet another extension of the deadline for delivery of the manuscript.

Stewart Oakley
Norwich
November 1991

THE HOUSE OF VASA



RULERS OF THE BALTIC LANDS 1560–1790

<i>Denmark–Norway</i>	<i>Sweden–Finland</i>	<i>Poland–Lithuania</i>	<i>Muscovy/Russia</i>
Frederik II 1559–88	Erik XIV 1560–8	Sigismund II Augustus 1548–72	Ivan IV ('the Terrible') 1533– 84 (regency to 1547)
	John III 1568–92	Henry of Valois 1573–4	
		Stephen Bathory 1575–86	Fedor I 1584–98
Christian IV 1588–1648 (regency to 1596)	Sigismund 1592–9	Sigismund III Vasa 1587–1632	Boris Godonov 1598–1605
	Charles IX (regent 1599–1604; king 1604–11)		Basil (Vasili) Shuisky 1606–10
			Władysław (Vasa) 1610–12
			Michael Romanov 1613–45
	Gustavus II Adolphus 1611–32		Alexis 1645–76
	Christina 1632–54 (regency to 1644)	Władysław IV Vasa 1632–48	
Frederik III 1648–70	Charles X 1654–60	John II Casimir 1648–68	
		Michael Wisniowiecki 1669–73	

<i>Denmark–Norway</i>	<i>Sweden–Finland</i>	<i>Poland–Lithuania</i>	<i>Muscovy/Russia</i>
Christian V 1670–99	Charles XI 1660– 97 (regency to 1672)		Fedor II 1676–82
		John III Sobieski 1674–96	Ivan V and Peter I 1682–96
Frederik IV 1699–1730	Charles XII 1697–1718	Augustus II 1697–1704	Peter I ('the Great') 1696–1725
	Ulrika Eleanora 1719–20	Stanislav Leszczyński 1704–9	Catherine I 1725–7
	Fredrik I 1720–51	Augustus II (restored) 1709–33	Peter III 1727–30
			Anna 1730–40
Christian VI 1730–46		Augustus III 1733–63	Ivan VI 1740–1
Frederik V 1746–66	Adolf Fredrik 1751–71		Elizabeth 1741–61
Christian VII 1766–1808		Stanislas II Augustus Poniatowski 1764–95	Peter III 1761–2
	Gustavus III 1771–92		Catherine II ('the Great') 1762–96
	<i>Margraves of Brandenburg</i>	<i>Grand Masters of the Livonian Order</i>	
	Joachim II 1535–71	Heinrich von Galen to 1557	
	Johan George 1571–98		
	Joachim Frederick 1598–1608	Wilhelm von Fürstenberg 1557–8 (abdicated)	
John Sigismund 1608–19 (duke of Prussia from 1618)		Gotthard Kettler 1558–61 (last Grand Master)	
<i>Margraves of Brandenburg and dukes of Prussia</i>		<i>Dukes of Kurland</i>	
George William 1619–40		Gotthard (Kettler) 1561–87	
Frederick William (the 'Great Elector') 1640–88		Friedrich and Wilhelm (Kettler) 1587–1616	
		Wilhelm (Kettler) 1616–40	
Frederick III 1688–1701		Jakob (Kettler) 1640–82	

THE BALTIC 1558–1790: A CHRONICLE

- 1558 Ivan IV seizes Narva
- 1561 Sweden acquires Reval and the neighbouring part of Estonia. Agreement of Vilna (end of Livonian Order and creation of duchy of Kurland)
- 1563 Outbreak of Seven Years War of the North (Denmark, Lübeck and Poland against Sweden)
- 1569 Union of Lublin (Poland and Lithuania)
- 1570 Peace of Stettin (end of Seven Years War of the North)
- 1581 Capture of Narva by Pontus de la Gardie
- 1582 Truce of Iam Zapol'ski (Muscovy and Poland)
- 1595 Peace of Teusina (Muscovy and Sweden)
- 1605 Battle of Kirkholm (defeat of Swedes by Poles)
- 1609 Treaty of Novgorod (between Sweden and Muscovy against Poland)
- 1610 Battle of Klushino (defeat of Swedes and Muscovites by Poles)
- 1611 Outbreak of Kalmar War (Denmark v. Sweden)
- 1613 Peace of Knäred (between Denmark and Sweden)
- 1614 Treaty between Sweden and United Provinces of the Netherlands
- 1617 Peace of Stolbova (Sweden and Muscovy)
- 1618 Truce of Deulino (between Muscovy and Poland) Outbreak of Thirty Years War in Germany

- 1621 Swedes capture Riga
- 1625 Denmark enters the Thirty Years War
- 1626 Battle of Lütter (defeat of Denmark by Catholic League)
Battle of Wallhof (defeat of Poles by Swedes). Swedes transfer war against Poland to Prussia
- 1629 Peace of Lübeck (Denmark withdraws from Thirty Years War)
Truce of Altmark (between Sweden and Poland)

- 1630 Gustavus Adolphus lands in Germany
- 1631 Battle of Breitenfeld (victory by Swedes over Catholic League)
- 1632 Battle of Lützen (death of Gustavus Adolphus)
- 1635 Truce of Stuhmsdorf (Poland and Sweden)
- 1643 Sweden attacks Denmark
- 1645 Peace of Brömsebro (Denmark and Sweden)
- 1648 Peace of Westphalia and end of Thirty Years War
- 1655 Sweden invades Poland
- 1656 Treaties of Marienburg and Labiau (Brandenburg-Prussia and Sweden)
- 1657 Treaty of Wehlau (Brandenburg-Prussia and Poland; Brandenburg wins sovereignty of East Prussia)
- 1658 Peace of Roskilde (Denmark and Sweden)
- 1660 Peace of Copenhagen (Denmark and Sweden) and Oliva (Sweden, Poland and Brandenburg-Prussia)
- 1661 Peace of Kardis (Russia and Sweden)
- 1667 Truce of Andrussovo (Poland and Russia)
- 1672 Franco-Swedish alliance
- 1675 Sweden invades Brandenburg
- Battle of Fehrbellin (defeat of Sweden)
- 1679 Peace of St Germain (Brandenburg and Sweden) Peace of Fontainebleau and Lund (Denmark and Sweden)
- 1683 Baltic crisis (threat of attack on Sweden by Denmark and Brandenburg-Prussia)

- 1686 'Eternal Peace' between Poland and Russia
- 1689 Peace of Altona (Restoration of duke of Holstein-Gottorp)
- 1691 First League of Armed Neutrality (Denmark and Sweden)
- 1698 Treaty between Saxony and Denmark (against Sweden)
- 1699 Treaties between Denmark and Russia and between Russia and Saxony (against Sweden)
- 1700 Opening of Great Northern War
- Treaty of Travendal (Denmark leaves war)
- Battle of Narva (Swedish victory over Russia)
- 1702 Battle of Kliszów (Swedish victory over Saxons)
- 1706 Peace of Altranstädt (Sweden and Saxony)
- 1709 Battle of Poltava (Sweden defeated by Russia)
- 1719 Peace between Sweden and Hanover
- 1720 Peace between Sweden and Brandenburg-Prussia/Denmark

- 1721 Peace of Nystad (Sweden and Russia)
- 1733–8 War of the Polish Succession
- 1741 Sweden attacks Russia
- 1743 Peace of Åbo (Russia and Sweden)
- 1757 Sweden attacks Brandenburg-Prussia (the ‘Pomeranian War’)
- 1762 Sweden makes peace with Brandenburg-Prussia
- 1764 Prusso—Russian alliance
- 1767 ‘Mageskifte’ agreement between Denmark and Russia
- 1772 Coup d’état by Gustavus III of Sweden
- 1773 First Partition of Poland
- 1788 Sweden attacks Russia
- 1790 Naval battle of Svensksund (Swedish victory over Russians)
Peace of Fredrikshamn (Russia and Sweden)

INTRODUCTION

This book is an attempt to describe and make sense of the conflicts which occurred in the area of the Baltic Sea between the middle of the sixteenth and the end of the eighteenth century.

These conflicts formed part of a longer struggle for dominance in the area which can be traced back to the advance of the Germanic peoples into eastern Europe in the early Middle Ages, driving the Slavic inhabitants further and further along the southern coastline until they were largely cut off from the sea. Colonization was accompanied by the establishment of trading posts to tap the rich hinterlands. Such towns came together under the lead of Lübeck to form the eastern branch of the great Hanseatic League which dominated the region's economy from the end of the thirteenth century.¹ Against such German dominance the Scandinavian kingdoms of Denmark, Norway and Sweden formed the Union of Kalmar at the end of the fourteenth century. Of this Denmark, with its command of the entrance to the Sea, its wealth and its strong fleet, was the leader and the prime contender to enforce the doctrine of *mare clausum* or the right to exclude the ships of all nations which lay beyond it. It was also Denmark who first asserted the principle (if not in so many words) of *dominium maris Baltici*, an assertion of sovereignty over at least the Baltic between the Danish islands and the eastern coast of the Sea.² The clash between the League and the Union was complicated by rivalries within the latter which led to its eventual breakup in the 1520s, leaving Denmark and Norway united and a suspicious Sweden-Finland fearing the forced reimposition of control from Copenhagen.

A new stage in the struggle began in the middle of the sixteenth century with the collapse of political authority in the area of the south-eastern Baltic, which now makes up the republics of Estonia and Latvia, and the efforts made by the expanding state of Muscovy under Tsar Ivan IV ('the Terrible' or 'the Dread') to exploit

the situation in order to reach the sea on a broad front. By the end of the century Muscovy had, however, once more been pushed back from the coastline and the area divided between Sweden and Poland, who were in fact to struggle for its possession for another half century. Out of this conflict, and its participation in the Thirty Years War in central Europe, Sweden emerged as the leading power in the Baltic with control of a string of territories around the sea's southern and eastern rim, toppling Denmark from its earlier eminence. This was the position until the early eighteenth century when, as a result of the so-called Great Northern War, Sweden was forced to surrender most of the territories it had gained earlier and Russia took its place. The conflicts of the eighteenth century largely represent Sweden's attempts to recover at least some of the ground which it had lost.

In less detail and in the form of a briefer epilogue and a postlude, I have also recounted the developments which led up to the further strengthening of Russia's position in the area with its acquisition of Finland during the Napoleonic Wars and the challenges to Russia's pre-eminence which came with the emergence of a Germany united under Prussia in the later nineteenth century and the ebb and flow of fortunes in the twentieth century. The reunification of Germany and the apparent break-up of the Soviet Union have changed the balance in the Baltic yet again in ways which at the time of writing are difficult to assess but which have cast the spotlight on a part of Europe which has been comparatively neglected by historians living beyond its bounds.

Struggles begun in the Baltic often spread into central and eastern Europe; Gustavus Adolphus's campaigns in Germany which began as a bid to push back the allies of his Polish enemies from the Baltic carried him almost to the gates of Vienna, and the turning point in his successor Charles XII's fight to preserve intact the kingdom which he had inherited against its jealous neighbours came in the Ukraine. I have, however, tried to resist the temptation to trace either campaign so far in any detail and thus to make the book a history of eastern and central Europe in the period. The accent is always on the Baltic and the countries surrounding it.

But the story is still a complex one, involving as it does the aims and ambitions not only of the leading protagonists in the region—Denmark, Sweden, Russia, Poland, Lithuania—but also of the smaller states of the area like the duchy of Kurland. The great powers of Europe outside the area, in particular Britain, France

and the United Provinces of the Netherlands, also had their own interests to protect and the power—particularly the naval power—often to intervene quite decisively in Baltic conflicts. I have, however, attempted to deal with the latter's policies only when they are necessary to understand the struggles between the Baltic powers themselves.

Foreign policies and military achievements cannot be understood in isolation. They are strongly influenced by the internal political systems and economic resources of the countries involved. These I have analysed as seemed necessary.

I have generally used proper names in the forms in which they are most likely to be familiar to the English-speaking reader (e.g. Cracow rather than Kraków and the German Danzig rather than the Polish Gdańsk) or in which they were usually referred to in the period (thus the Swedish and German Reval rather than the Estonian Tallinn) while noting the native form of place-names and occasionally also of personal names when first mentioned. Thus I have preferred Charles to Karl, Gustavus Adolphus to Gustav Adolf and George Frederick to Georg Friedrich. I do not, however, pretend to have been consistent in this. Thus I have used the Danish form Frederik and the Swedish form Fredrik in Danish and Swedish names respectively.

1

SETTING THE SCENE

The Baltic, like the much larger Mediterranean,¹ of which it is in many ways northern Europe's equivalent,² is almost an inland sea. Access to the world's oceans is provided only by three narrow outlets: the Sound between the most easterly and largest Danish island of Zealand (Sjælland) and the southernmost part of the west coast of what is now Sweden, only 5 km wide at its northern end; the Great Belt between Zealand and the second largest Danish island of Fyn;³ and the Little Belt between Fyn and the Danish mainland (Jutland or Jylland). The Mediterranean is divided into western and eastern basins between Sicily and Tunisia. The Baltic is similarly divided into two well-defined main areas: a larger southern basin between the Danish islands and the coasts of 'Balticum';⁴ and a smaller northern arm—the Gulf of Bothnia. These are separated from each other by an almost continuous string of islands between the Swedish capital of Stockholm and the ancient Finnish capital of Turku (Åbo),⁵ of which the Åland islands (now Finnish) form the central core.

The struggle for power in the Baltic in the early modern period, which will be examined in the succeeding chapters, was in effect a struggle for power in the southern Baltic, which takes up well over half its total area.⁶ Around this lie the most densely populated land, the main ports of the region and the most productive agricultural areas. But, as will be seen, for long periods the struggle centred even more narrowly on the Baltic's eastern inlet of the Gulf of Finland, at the extreme eastern end of which Tsar Peter I (the Great) of Russia founded at the beginning of the eighteenth century his new capital of St Petersburg to be his 'window on the west'.

In the middle of the southern Baltic basin lies the Sea's largest island of Gotland. By the sixteenth century this had lost its earlier importance as a commercial centre for trade between eastern and western Europe, but it was still of considerable

strategic significance, lying as it does close to the main channels of communication by sea between central Sweden and the north coast of Germany. Of the other Baltic islands, that of Öland, lying like a long cigar off the east coast of Sweden south-west of Gotland and sheltering the port of Kalmar, has played only a minor role in the region's history, but those of Ösel (Saaremaa), which blocks access to the Gulf of Riga and the mouth of the River Dvina (Düna), of Bornholm between the north German coast and southern Sweden, and of Rügen and Usedom at the mouth of the river Oder in Pomerania have all been the subject of dispute because of their value as bases.

The main rivers flowing northward or north-westward into the Baltic from the heart of the European landmass have provided access to a large and potentially rich hinterland.⁷ The Oder, Vistula (Wisla) and Dvina each has at or near its mouth an important port, respectively Stettin (Szczecin), Danzig (Gdansk) and Riga. Also of some significance is the river Neva flowing into the Gulf of Finland and linking the Russian interior with the Baltic via lakes Ladoga and Pskov.⁸ The rivers flowing from the interior of the Scandinavian peninsula into the Gulf of Bothnia became of significance only with the opening up of northern Sweden in the nineteenth century. The whole coast of the Baltic is low-lying and provides few good natural harbours, although the southern coast offers comparatively frequent sheltering river mouths such as that of the Oder and inlets such as the Bay of Pucka (Putzig) north of Danzig.⁹ The Sea itself is comparatively shallow, especially at its outlets; the Sound and the Belts have saddle depths of only about 35 m. The paucity of deep channels and the plenitude of small islands in coastal waters have strongly influenced the character of naval warfare in the area and distinguished it from that of the open waters beyond; large deep-draught vessels have been unable to penetrate extensive strategic stretches of water.

The climate of the region is continental, modified by maritime influences. The Sea's considerable length north to south (over ten degrees of latitude) means that there are appreciable differences in winter temperatures. Ice usually forms along the whole coast in winter and in normal years in the twentieth century the northern part of the Gulf of Bothnia, the narrow channels through the archipelago at its southern end and the Gulf of Finland are frozen over during the winter months. In particularly severe winters the narrower channels in the southern Baltic can also be ice-bound for brief periods, while drift ice can hinder navigation for longer.

During the so-called 'Little Ice Age', a period which began before and extended beyond our period, severe winters were more frequent and freezing could be more extensive. This could have serious effects on communications, particularly across the Gulf of Bothnia. The Sound and the Belts might on occasion freeze over to a considerable depth, and naval actions and seaborne trade were largely limited to the spring, summer and early autumn.¹⁰

In the north of the region the severity of the climate as well as the short growing season have discouraged settlement. In the south nature has been more generous. The plains bordering the southern and south-eastern coasts and the Danish islands provide potentially rich grain-growing areas. Further north mixed farming has been the rule; only in exceptional years was there a surplus of grain with which to trade. But other resources have provided some compensation. An almost continuous belt of forests stretching from southern Sweden to southern Finland and eastward into Russia has not only offered plentiful timber for building and other domestic purposes but also provided tar for preserving ships' timber and charcoal for the smelting of iron. The latter was of particular significance for the area of Bergslagen north-west of Stockholm, rich not only in good quality iron but also other metals in demand like copper and even small quantities of silver. The harvest of the sea has, since the sixteenth century, when the herring migrated into the North Sea, been rather meagre, and fishing as an occupation has been of only local significance.

Traditionally water in pre-industrial Europe bound people together rather than kept them apart. Transport by sea was generally easier and swifter than travel by land over roads which were often impassable, and the Baltic from Viking times acted as the main channel along which flowed goods between western and north-eastern Europe.¹¹ The earliest nation state and for long the most important power in the Baltic grew up around the Sea's exits and entrances. By the end of the Viking period in the eleventh century, the kingdom of Denmark, centring on the island of Zealand, embraced not only the surrounding islands and the Jutish peninsula but also the southern part of what is now Sweden (the provinces of Scania (Skåne), Halland and Blekinge). This encouraged its kings to claim the right to control all shipping sailing into and out of the Baltic, a symbol of which was the toll exacted from all merchantmen passing the castle of Elsinore (Helsingør) from 1429. In the course of the early Middle Ages Danish power spread along the southern coast of the Baltic as far as the river Oder and for a time established itself on the southern

coast of the Gulf of Finland, where the Estonian capital of Tallinn (literally Danish fort) commemorates these activities. Of its medieval conquests only the island of Gotland remained in the middle of the sixteenth century, but the kingdom's historical associations with both the north coast of Germany and with the south-eastern Baltic were never forgotten and were to play some part in Danish foreign policy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

To the north of Denmark, the effective power of the Swedish monarchy was confined to what is now south-central Sweden and south-western and southern Finland as far as the eastern end of the Gulf of Finland.¹² The country's only access to the west lay through a narrow strip of coastline around the mouth of the river Göta, squeezed between the Norwegian province of Bohuslän to the north and the Danish province of Halland to the south and far from the heartland of the monarchy around lake Mälär.¹³ To the north, the Norwegian provinces of Jämtland and Härjedalen reached out towards the Gulf of Bothnia and further north still Sweden's frontier with Norway, whose crown had been united with that of Denmark since 1380, was ill defined, a fact which was liable to lead to disputes between the two monarchies. The frontier between eastern Finland and Muscovy had in theory been delimited by the treaty of Nöteborg (Orekhovets) in 1323, but this was liable to more than one interpretation, and disputes over it also caused friction, especially as the inhabitants on either side of it often moved about as if it did not exist, and the Swedish government actually encouraged settlement beyond it.¹⁴

Muscovy touched the Baltic only where the river Neva flowed into the easternmost end of the Gulf of Bothnia. This limit had been reached as the result of the absorption of the republic of Novgorod between 1471 and 1478, and in 1492 Tsar Ivan III had built there the fortress of Ivangorod opposite the Estonian port of Narva, to which he hoped it would become a commercial rival. It never did.¹⁵

To the south of the Gulf lay the most complex of the Baltic's political units—an area referred to loosely as Livonia and occupying roughly the territory of the modern republics of Estonia and Latvia (the most northerly part was after the middle of the sixteenth century usually treated separately as Estonia (Estland), while the term 'Livonia' was confined to the area to the south). It consisted of a loose confederation of trading cities, most of whom were members of the Hanseatic League, ecclesiastical territories dominated by the archbishopric of Riga, and the estates of the