

Sweden	Denmark/ Norway	Poland	Austrian Habsburgs	Russia	Ottoman Empire
1604–11 Charles IX	1588–1648 Christian IV	1587–1632 Sigismund III	1576–1612 Rudolf II	1598–1605 Boris Godunov	1595–1603 Mehmet III
1611–32 Gustavus Adolphus		1632–48 Vladislav VII	1612–19 Matthias	1605–13 Time of Troubles	1603–17 Ahmed I
1632–54 Christina			1619–37 Ferdinand II	1613–45 Michael Romanov	1617–18 1622–23 Mustapha I
1654–60 Charles X	1648–70 Frederick III	1648–68 John II Casimir	1637–57 Ferdinand III	1645–76 Alexis I	1618–22 Osman II 1623–40 Murad IV
1660–97 Charles XI	1670–99 Christian V	1669–76 Michael Wisniowiecki	1658–1705 Leopold I	1676–82 Theodore III	1640–8 Ibrahim I 1648–87 Mohamed IV
1697–1718 Charles XII		1674–96 John III Sobieski		1682–9 Ivan V	1687–91 Suleiman I 1691–5 Ahmed II
1718–20 Ulrika	1699–1730 Frederick IV	1697–1733 Augustus II	1705–11 Joseph I	1689–1725 Peter I	1695–1703 Mustapha II
1720–51 Frederick			1711–40 Charles VI	1725–27 Catherine I 1727–30 Peter II 1730–40 Anna	1703–30 Ahmed III 1730–54 Mahmud I 1754–57 Osman III
1751–71 Adolphus Frederick	1730–46 Christian VI 1746–66 Frederick V	1734–63 Augustus III	1740–80 Maria Theresa	1741–62 Elizabeth	1757–74 Mustapha III
1771–92 Gustavus III	1766–1808 Christian VII	1764–95 Stanislas Poniatowski	1765–90 Joseph II	1762–96 Catherine II	1774–89 Abdul Hamid I

**Fig. 23.** Rulers of northern, eastern, and central Europe, 1600–1789.

strengthened the centralized bureaucracy, reformed the tax system so that even nobles had to pay some taxes, and limited the independent power of the papacy in Austria.

### Brandenburg-Prussia

The combatants in the War of Austrian Succession, and the subsequent Seven Years War in which Austria tried unsuccessfully to regain Silesia, involved some countries that had been major powers in Europe for centuries, but also one that

was quite new: Brandenburg-Prussia. In the fifteenth century, two branches of the Hohenzollern family ruled various scattered territories in the northern part of central and eastern Europe, the largest of which were Brandenburg – officially called an “electorate” because its ruler was one of the seven people who elected the Holy Roman Empire – and Prussia, a duchy on the Baltic that had earlier been ruled by the Teutonic Knights. These two states were separated from one another by part of Poland, and other Hohenzollern holdings were even more distant. Brandenburg was poor, and its population was devastated in the Thirty Years War. During the course of the war the Elector of Brandenburg inherited Prussia and the rest of the Hohenzollern holdings when one branch of the family died out, and toward the end of the war this office passed to the very talented Frederick William (ruled 1640–88).

Frederick William, dubbed the “Great Elector,” and his successors, who had themselves crowned kings of Prussia starting in 1701, followed a distinctive path toward building an absolutist nation-state. Frederick William forced the Estates of his various territories to grant him permanent taxation rights, promising in return that the nobles who dominated the Estates would be free to deal with their peasants as they wished and pay lower taxes. (The latter promise was broken by his successors.) He used the money to build a huge army, in which soldiers also served as tax-collectors and policemen, so that any opposition to his measures was easily crushed. He steadily increased taxation to pay for the army, and supported measures that would improve the tax base, such as encouraging industry. Prussia learned from the experience of the Netherlands about the economic benefits of religious toleration, so welcomed French Huguenots and other refugees, many of whom became soldiers in the Prussian army.

Frederick William’s grandson, also named Frederick William (ruled 1713–40) took devotion to the army to new heights. He always wore a military uniform, and surrounded himself with a platoon of very tall soldiers, who were recruited by his agents from throughout Prussia and elsewhere in Europe, sometimes by force. He drilled troops himself, and was fanatically obsessed with discipline, beating soldiers who did not meet his standards. His troops became the terror and the model for those in other countries, so feared for their skills that Frederick William actually needed to use them relatively rarely, accomplishing more of his objectives by diplomacy than force. Frederick William expected martial values to shape all of Prussian society, not just the army, autocratically demanding the obedience “with life and limb, with house and wealth, with honor and conscience” of his subjects. He supported compulsory primary education and broadened technical training because these would provide better soldiers, and rewarded officials who were efficient with high positions, even if they were commoners. He did not neglect the nobles, called *Junkers*, giving those who supported him positions as officers in the army, where they would have nearly absolute control over their soldiers in the same way as they did over the peasants on their estates. Prussian society in and out of the

army became virtues.

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## Sweden

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army became highly disciplined, with obedience and order the most prized virtues.

Frederick William's son Frederick II ("the Great") built on his father's example in many ways, further expanding education, demanding honesty and hard work of his officials, promoting improvements in agriculture and industry, and personally leading his troops. He used the huge Prussian army more than his father had, doubling the population of the country by taking Silesia from Austria, and warding off attempts by the combined forces of France, Austria, and Russia to conquer Prussia during the Seven Years War.

### Sweden and Poland

Prussian success at creating a strong state depended on a line of soldier-kings, and for a brief period Sweden under the Vasa dynasty – which also ruled Finland – followed this pattern as well. Gustavus Adolphus, the most dynamic of these kings, came to the throne as a teenager, when Sweden was fighting Denmark, Poland, and Russia. He was largely victorious in these wars, gaining control of a number of Polish and Russian ports and dominating trade in the Baltic. He created a more systematic bureaucracy, opened primary and secondary schools supported by the government, and promoted trade and shipping. After significant victories by the emperor's forces, Gustavus Adolphus entered the Thirty Years War on the side of the Protestants, pressing all the way into southern Germany with his troops, some of whom had been forcibly conscripted in what was Europe's first nationwide draft. He died on the battlefield, but his very able chancellor Axel Oxenstierna (1583–1654) kept command of the army, and Sweden gained a huge amount of territory, becoming the most powerful state in northern Europe, despite the fact that the population of Sweden itself was tiny, only a million in comparison with France's twenty million.

Gustavus Adolphus paid for his wars by selling royal lands to wealthy nobles, though this was a short-sighted solution, as it made the land tax-free. Nobles also received salaries or pensions for serving as army officers, and after the king's death, they asserted their power and privileges. Swedish political history for the next two hundred years saw a series of such noble bids for power, alternating with periods in which kings tried to become absolutist on the French or Prussian model. What made the Swedish case distinctive was the fact that peasants were also active players in this struggle. In the later seventeenth century, Swedish kings forced the higher nobility to give back about half the land they had bought, and then sold it to peasants and lesser nobles, making it taxable. These groups then provided support for the monarch in his moves to assert more centralized control, at least until King Charles XII (ruled 1697–1718), led an army against the Danes, Poles, and Russians in the Great Northern War. Defeated as much by the Russian winter as by actual battles, as Napoleon and Hitler later would be, Sweden lost all of its Baltic possessions. Charles escaped to Istanbul, where he spent several years trying, unsuccessfully, to