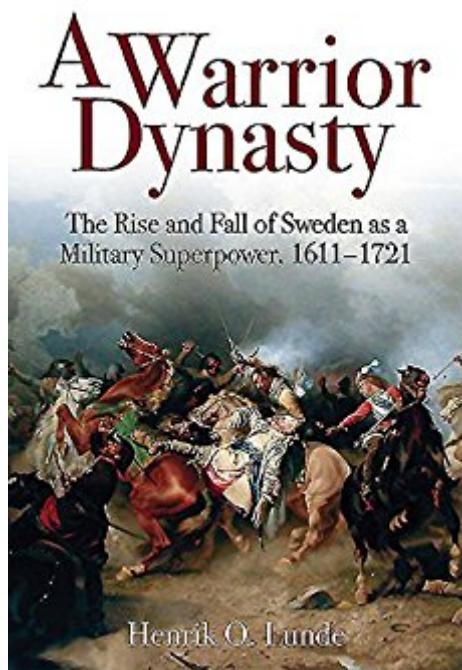


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A Warrior Dynasty: The Rise And Decline Of Sweden As A Military Superpower



Synopsis

There has been a recent trend in history to interpret the rise and fall of great powers in terms of economics, or demographics, or geography. This is not always true, as this book proves, because sometimes pure military skill can propel a nation to prominence, if it is simply able to crush all its opponents on a battlefield. No better example arises than that of Sweden beginning in the 17th century, which held supremacy over northern Europe for 100 years without any technological, geographic or demographic advantages at all. This fascinating book describes how the Swedes first arrived in continental Europe during the 30 Years War, under their king Gustavus Adolphus. Just in time to roll back the reactionary Catholic tide and buttress the Lutherans, the Swedes proved more innovative in battle than their opponents, using the new arm of artillery plus tactical formations to establish supremacy on the battlefield. This horrific war still exists in collective memory as the worst travail in German history, even worse than the world wars; however along with the salvation of Protestantism the emergence of the Swedes as a power to be reckoned with meant new geopolitical complications for the existing powers of Europe. Adolphus was eventually killed in battle, but a successor, Charles XII, renewed Swedish aggression — this time for the object of conquest — as he found that no army on the Continent could stand against his legions from the north. As later military leaders would find, however, the conquest of Russia comprised a considerable overreach, and Charles was eventually trapped and defeated deep in the Ukraine, at Poltava. In this work renowned military historian Henrik O. Lunde unveils a fascinating chapter in the foundation of Western history that is seldom seen or recognized by English or American readers.

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Customer Reviews

I enjoyed it immensely. It was the first book I've read on the 30 Years War. (although only about half of the book was about the war) Excellent battle descriptions and historical narrative. For years I've heard of the 30 Years War as a religious war, the author brushed that off with a sentence or two. I kind of wished he would have done a better job of proving that it was a political war and not really a religious war. I also wish he would have done a little more in the line of character development, especially of Gustav Adolf. I know that this was a wide sweeping overview, but I certainly didn't feel like I knew any of the characters in this book. Once again I'd like to thank the author for his work. Excellent narrative, and given the immensity of the subject I guess he couldn't include everything.

Linda provides an excellent overview of Sweden's rise to great power status in 17th century Europe. The book has a wealth of information about dynastic diplomacy and war in the Baltic and central European regions. He gives particular attention to Vasa dynasty kings Gustav Adolph and Karl XII. He argues that Sweden's economic base was too narrow to sustain great power ambitions. He is less convincing in attributing Sweden's rise to Gustav's early adoption of linear infantry tactics combined with shock heavy cavalry formations. (Much of the credit for innovation should really go to the Dutch, especially Maurice of Nassau) Linde does little original research, and relies on previously published sources_ to whom he scrupulously attributes arguments. Overall, this was a fascinating treatment of a region that usually gets little attention beyond the Thirty Years War and Charles' failed invasion of Russia. I would highly recommend this for any reader interested in 17th century history, or the challenges of maintaining great power status. Paul Kennedy would relate to this book.

Good succinct analysis of the successes and failures of these extraordinary Swedish "Warrior Kings." An interesting read! Focuses mainly on Gustav II Adolf and Karl (Charles) XII.

I thought this book gave me a lot of detail about a period of history I wasn't aware of. I'm glad I read it.

I believe I have read all of Henrik Lunde's military history books, or if I have missed reading one or two they are on my bookshelf waiting to be read and enjoyed. I bought this book because of two simple facts, I have liked his other books and I wanted to read a book about a period when Sweden was a military power. I normally read world war two history so this was all new to me. I love how Mr Lunde explains in his introduction his arguments in his book and why and how he sets out to accomplish his goal. You know exactly what you are getting when you start his book. He gives a great introduction to set the stage for the time period for people like me who have no clue what really is going on and when you follow along you get a good sense of how the conflicts are going. The asides and quick summaries the author makes are enjoyable also. He will very succinctly make the key point that I think other authors may assume you will catch yourself and make note of. Sometimes it is better to state it explicitly instead of assuming the reader will jump to the appropriate conclusion. I recommend his books, if you have an interest in Scandinavian military history, I would suggest you read them all.

Excellent history on the rise and fall of Sweden and the 30 years War and the little known bellicose frenzy Swedish race!

A Warrior Dynasty – The Rise and Fall of Sweden as a Military Superpower, 1611-1721, by Henrik O. Lunde ranks as one of the top literary manuscripts on this subject of all Scandinavian literature, a real tribute to not only the Swedes, but to all Scandinavians. The author's focus is on two larger than life Swedish hero kings, Gustav II Adolf and Karl XII, neither reaching 40 years of age, who propelled, and kept, Sweden in the dominant military position in the world for a period of over 100 years (1611-1721). Both of these Swedish kings possessed similar traits that go far to explain their, respective, extraordinary successes on the battlefield: (a) a fearlessness demonstrated repeatedly as they led their troops from the front and blessed with a charmed luck that let them survive so many (but not all) battles; (b) decisiveness in battle coupled with speed of moving and positioning their troops for battle that consistency surprised their foes ("The Swedes came as if they had flown."); (c) an offensive (as opposed to defensive) mindset that often turned defeat into victory; (d) reliance (as respective Kings of Sweden) on military (action) solutions, as opposed to diplomatic (talking) solutions.; (e) meticulous planning prior to battle. This book succeeds in uncovering and shining the light of history on a country that at the time in question had a population

of less than two million, but was able to rule the world through its military might. This was possible due to the military leadership, the soldiers, the strategies and technology developed and utilized and the concept of “war paying for itself.” The Thirty Years War (1618-1648) was a religious war between Protestant and Catholic nations. “All the wars of Europe are now blended into one,” wrote Gustav Adolf, and then invaded Germany. Once over, devastation could be found throughout the continent, with one third of central Europe’s population dead. One of the benefits of a book written by this author, is his personal military background “from being in the trenches” (experience in both commando and line combat units, instructor, and planner at the highest levels), so that he is both positioned to, and unafraid to, offer his insights and wisdom on the lessons learned, and suggested actions that either could have been taken, or should be taken. Read this book. Five Stars.

Very readable and keeps your attention throughout.

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