

The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars

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The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars represented continuity in European diplomacy from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, but witnessed considerable change in the way that war was waged. The influence of Revolutionary and Napoleonic France depended on the nature of its relationship with the other European states. Satellite states were transformed considerably, whereas allied and client states experienced only a degree of ideological and practical transformation. French territorial objectives from 1792 to 1807 followed a relatively traditional pattern, seeking either direct or indirect influence in central Europe and the Italian states. The eventual response to Napoleonic hegemony was the understanding that cooperative efforts outweighed individual interests in order to bring the wars to a conclusion. The result was victory over Napoleon and the creation of a new diplomatic system that incorporated individual interest into a balance-of-power system.

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Introduction

The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars occupied almost twenty-five years of the late-eighteenth and early-nine-teenth century. They represented the first general European war since the Seven Years' War (1756–1763). The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars represented continuity in European alliance systems and ideologies with the notable exception of the first two years of the French Republic (1792–1794). During this quarter century, six European coalitions challenged French expansion. France too created alliances to counter these opposing coalitions. Indeed these coalitions and alliances represented continuity, rather than radical change, in the international system.

▲ 1

As the war progressed, the radicalization of the French government meant a radicalization of its policies toward its enemies. In some cases, this translated into an existential threat for German princes on the west bank of the Rhine and for the Austrian Netherlands, which had been in Habsburg possession since 1714. The eventual incorporation of these territories into Revolutionary France often led to French cultural domination in regions that neither possessed a French identity nor ethnicity. In some cases, such as that of the Dutch revolutionaries in Holland, elements of the local population welcomed the arrival of the French, only to discover that their role was subsequently subordinated to French interests. Italian revolutionaries in Lombardy and Venetia, for example, actively supported the French armies, only to find their cities pillaged in the first months of occupation.

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The Enlightenment produced a European discourse on constitutions and rights that emerged in virtually every state. The goals of reformers and later revolutionaries were shaped by their respective customs, cultures and histories. The arrival of French armies in these diverse parts of western and – subsequently – central Europe brought initial opportunities to reform the administration and laws, but direct and indirect French influence often proved incompatible with local notions of change. The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars thus involved changes to European governments and soci-

The French Revolutionary Wars encompassed the conflict begun by the French Revolutionary government in 1792 and ended by the peace treaties signed by Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) (→ Media Link #ac) at Lunéville (1801) and Amiens (1802). The Napoleonic Wars include the series of military campaigns that began in 1803 with the collapse of the Peace of Amiens and ended with Napoleon's second abdication on June 25, 1815, a week after his defeat at Waterloo.

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The French Revolutionary Wars included the following: War of the First Coalition, 1792–1797 War of the Second Coalition, 1798–1802/1803

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The Napoleonic Wars included the following: War with Britain, 1803–1804
War of the Third Coalition, 1805
War of the Fourth Coalition, 1806–1807
The War in Spain, 1808–1814
Austro-French War (Fifth Coalition), 1809
The Campaign against Russia, 1812
War of the Sixth Coalition, 1813–1814
The Campaign of 1815

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From the conclusion of the War of the Spanish Succession and the death of King Louis XIV (1638–1715), his successor, Louis XV (1710–1774) (→ Media Link #ad), exported French power through the European system by establishing and developing alliances with other major powers in pursuit of dynastic goals (→ Media Link #ae). This was in contrast to the approach of his great-grandfather, who had faced a European coalition in virtually all of his wars. French participation in the War of the Polish Succession (1733–1738), the War of the Austrian Succession (1742–1748), and the Seven Years' War (1756–1763) was part of the general European competition for influence in Italy, the Holy Roman Empire and the colonial world (→ Media Link #af). After 1763, France fought only one war, the American Revolution (→ Media Link #ag), in alliance with Spain and the Netherlands and against Britain. The latter conflict, however, did not result in a general war on the European continent, but was limited to campaigns overseas. This period of relative peace resulted largely from the Habsburg-Bourbon condominium, the political alliance between France and Austria, which represented a radical change in European politics beginning in 1756. Indeed, France stood in a close alliance with Spain from 1700. On three separate occasions, the two kingdoms formalized their dynastic relationship in the form of military agreements referred to as the Bourbon Family Compacts. These were strategic alliances between France and Spain to limit Britain's overseas ambitions and to challenge Austria's Habsburg possessions in Italy.

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After 1763, the Family Compacts and the Habsburg-Bourbon relationship maintained peace on the continent. When in 1772 Russia, Austria and Prussia partitioned Poland (→ Media Link #ah), French opposition to the carving up of that kingdom did not result in war. Plagued by financial crisis and a severely reduced army, Louis XV could not transform his vehement hostility into action. War with Britain in 1777 was only embarked upon because it offered the potential to regain lost colonial territories and harm Britain by removing its most productive colonies. There was no military campaign on the European continent because Britain lacked any effective means to project its power across the Channel. Austria and Prussia had no interest in that conflict, and in any event Frederick II (the Great) of Prussia (1712–1786) (→ Media Link #ai) and Joseph II of Austria (1741–1790) (→ Media Link #aj) prepared to square off in 1778 over Bavaria.

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The short-lived War of the Bavarian Succession (1778–1779), also known as the "Potato War", demonstrated that peace and stability in western Europe led to increasing tensions in eastern Europe, beginning with the partition of

Poland in 1772 and continuing through to the French Revolutionary Wars.² The Russians mediated the Peace of Teschen, which ended the Austro-Prussian conflict in 1779. It provided for the *status-quo ante* with the addition of Russian guarantees for the stability of the Holy Roman Empire. It is clear that the years following the accession of Catherine II (the Great, 1729–1796) (→ Media Link #ak)to the Russian throne in 1762 were characterized by a central European focus. She succeeded in convincing Prussia and Austria to participate in her plans for Poland, and then intervened in German affairs as a peacemaker. Furthermore, she utilized her relationship with the Austrian monarchy to bring about a coalition war against the Ottoman Empire in 1787. The Russo-Austro-Turkish War (1787–1791) began as a disaster for Austria and a great success for Russia.³ In any event, this war immediately preceded the outbreak of the French Revolutionary Wars. Several historians have argued that the French Revolutionary Wars were fought within the same general European context as preceding conflicts.⁴

▲9

The wars of the eighteenth century were fought for dynastic interests. Viewed in terms of state power, the continental and colonial wars represented the unfolding of European conflicts on a global scale. In most cases, European wars extended to several continents. Indeed the French and Indian War (1754) escalated into the general European conflict of the Seven Years' War. The consequences of increasing European global power meant that resources had to be carefully allocated, and alliances cultivated to permit the pursuit of dynastic claims in Europe. Even temporary coalitions, such as between Russia, Austria and Prussia in 1772, or between Russia and Austria in 1787, did not create permanent relationships in regions of Europe that offered enormous territorial opportunities. Coalitions were marriages of convenience in theeighteenth century. The only alliances that lasted beyond the duration of any particular conflict were the dynastic arrangements between France and Spain at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and between France and Austria at mid-century. Britain, Prussia, Russia and Austria only interpreted alliances in the short term, and this subsequently severely hampered their ability to provide a united front against Napoleonic France.

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At the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, attention remained focused on events in the Balkans, on growing tension between Prussia and Austria, and on the recent suppression of revolutions in the Netherlands and Belgium. The States-General overthrew the Dutch monarchy in 1787, leading to Prussian military intervention. In 1788, rebellion against Josephinian reforms in the Austrian Netherlands (Belgium) led to military repression. This was the extent of the western focus. In central Europe, however, Prussia had agitated rebels in Belgium and disrupted Austrian interests in Poland. Tensions grew and war between Austria and Prussia appeared imminent in 1790. The death of Joseph II and the accession of his brother Leopold II (1747–1792) (→ Media Link #al) calmed tempers. Nevertheless, it appeared to many that the conclusion of war with the Turks would be followed immediately by a confrontation between the two German powers. Equally, cracks appeared in the Habsburg-Bourbon pact as a result of Austria's Polish policies, as well as Joseph's desire to trade the Austrian Netherlands for Bavaria in 1784. Joseph II's highhanded foreign policy served to disturb Louis XVI (1754–1793) (→ Media Link #am) and his ministers. A faction at court began to push the French monarch toward an anti-Austrian policy by 1790.

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The vagaries of diplomatic alignments and tensions give a false sense that the eighteenth century marked a change in European diplomacy. This is not the case. The emergence of Prussia and Russia as significant players did not alter the way states conducted policy; they merely added variables to the equation. It has been argued that any concept that eighteenth century Europe sought a balance of power is illusionary. States pursued *raison d'etat* as they had in previous centuries. All of this provides a wider context for the response of European powers to the French Revolutionary Wars. Indeed, even French territorial objectives from 1792–1807 followed a relatively traditional pattern seeking to increase direct or indirect influence in central Europe and the Italian states. By 1792, Jacobinism provided an additional justification for French military efforts, but did not radically alter French diplomatic and military strategy.

▲12

War of the First Coalition, 1792–1797

The declaration of war by the French Legislative Assembly on April 20, 1792 against the "King of Bohemia and Hungary" initiated the French Revolutionary Wars. It was a conventional war in the traditional sense. The assembly was dominated by the *Girondin* faction of the Jacobin party under the leadership of Jacques-Pierre Brissot (1754–1793) (→

Media Link #an). Internal political crisis led to the desperate measure to concoct a foreign war, thereby diverting public attention away from domestic affairs. Brissot's objectives were the stabilization of the constitutional monarchy and the acquisition of territory from the Austrian Netherlands. There is little here that represents a radical departure in terms of European politics. Unfortunately for Brissot, two factors severely hampered his modest goals and ultimately led to his fall from power and the overthrow of the French monarchy. In February 1792 Austria and Prussia established a formal alliance that included provisions on defense against French aggression. Thus, when France declared war, Prussia made common cause with Austria. Secondly, the French army was in no condition to fight a war, no matter how limited.

▲13

The decades between 1763 and 1789 had witnessed significant reform of the leadership, composition, organization and military policy of the French army. Cost-cutting measures, however, led to a dramatic reduction in army size. In 1789, the army had no more than 156,000 men. The Austrians and Prussians fielded at optimum wartime strength 497,000 and 195,000 men respectively. The French National Assembly called for volunteers in 1791, and by the outbreak of war, 220,000 men formed the line army and the National Guard. The majority of soldiers served in the latter, as the line army was seen by many – incorrectly – as a den of monarchists. The officer corps and the cavalry were seriously eroded by resignations and the emigration of nobles. The professionals of the line army formed the backbone of the Revolutionary army. The National Guard combined motivated volunteers and soldiers who left the line army and joined the National Guard as a sign of their support for the revolution, as well as for opportunities for advancement.

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Poor provisioning and lack of discipline among the National Guard resulted in disaster. ¹³ By the summer, Duke Charles William Ferdinand of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel (1735–1806) (→ Media Link #ao) led a Prusso-German army across the Lower Rhine and made short work of French forces and fortresses in his way. The invasion led to the revolution of August 10 in Paris, which overthrew the monarchy and brought down Brissot's government. It was the beginning of the radicalization of the revolution and a period of the war in which ideology played an important role in the expansion of the conflict, which encompassed much of western and central Europe.

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The First Coalition against Revolutionary France initially included only Austria, Prussia and a few German princely territories, such as Hessen-Kassel and Saxe-Weimar. There was no declaration of *Reichskrieg* (Imperial War), but Austria and Prussia compelled German princes to participate. After French armies violated the territory of the *Reich* in late 1792, the Imperial German contingents fully mobilized.¹⁴

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In February 1793, France declared war on Britain, Spain and the Netherlands. The expansion of the conflict was the product of ideological hubris following the execution of Louis XVI and the successful military campaigns in the fall of 1792. The republican leadership in Paris assumed these feats of arms would be repeated in the spring. The desire to spread the Revolution, as well as French influence into the Rhineland, Belgium and Italy fueled this expansionism. Late 1792 witness the realization of traditional French objectives with French armies reaching the perceived "natural frontiers" of the Rhine and the Alps. Movement beyond these frontiers constituted a departure from the original aims of the war when it was declared earlier that year. French republicanism had become a central motivation, as the Jacobins who had seized power in August had previously rejected the *Brissotin* call for war. Now that victory was at hand, they embraced it and made it their own.

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As the revolution was exported outside of France during the French Revolutionary Wars, its reception in Belgium, the Netherlands, and the German and Italian states varied. In all states overrun by French armies, sympathizers – or collaborators – emerged from among the local populations. Similarly, hostility to the ideology propounded by the new regimes, combined with the experience of military occupation, created antipathy toward the new regimes. It is difficult to generalize about the response to French conquest and annexation or the establishment of satellite republics because the response varied. Nonetheless, the response was characterized by both support and resistance, and in roughly equal measure.

French Revolutionary diplomats continually confounded negotiations by rejecting standard conventions.¹⁷ The behavior of French diplomats during the most radical phase of the Revolution resulted in arguments over the minutiae of negotiations rather than substantive discussions. After the fall of the Jacobin dictatorship in 1795 and the establishment of the Directory, diplomats pursued a more traditional path during peace talks. By March 1793, France faced a coalition that included virtually all of Europe except Russia. The success of military operations in the fall of 1792 led to overconfidence in the Jacobin regime and resulted in an overextension of national and military resources.¹⁸ Furthermore, internal tensions resulting from the overthrow of the constitutional monarchy and the establishment of the Republic led to rebellion in the Vendée and in the manufacturing and port cities of Lyon, Marseilles and Toulon.

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The outbreak of civil war in the midst of the external conflict contributed directly to the Revolution reaching its most radical form. The Committee of Public Safety, composed of twelve members who included Maximilien Robespierre (1758–1794) (→ Media Link #ap) by July 1793, imposed ideological goals on the war. Political commissars known as representatives en mission were attached to the respective French armies. Defeat, defeatism or any challenges to directives from Paris were met with denunciation, arrest and often execution. The introduction of representatives departed from traditional norms regarding political influence on military operations, as a French marshal or general under Louis XIV or XV might on occasions face disgrace for failure, but never execution. 19

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The failure of French arms during the spring and summer 1793 led to the famous levée en masse (→ Media Link #aq) of August. The levy conscripted all males between 18 and 45. It was the first national draft in modern history. The decree was meant to bolster the ranks of the French armies. The number of recruits grew after 1791 through successful calls for volunteers. While sufficient to cope with war against Austria and Prussia, the expansion of the war to all of France's frontiers was followed by a less than enthusiastic response to the call for new soldiers in early 1793. The role of the *levée en masse* in this phase of the war has been exaggerated. By the end of 1793, the French ranks swelled to 750,000, but the threats that led to the decree had abated by the campaign season of 1794. Indeed, the rapid expansion of French armies created enormous logistical problems that continued to affect operations through the remainder of the War of the First Coalition.²⁰

▲21

The following demonstrates trends in the size of the French army during the period 1791–1799:²¹

1791 138,000 1792 220,000 1793 750,000 1794 600,000 1795 400,000 1796 380,000 1797 380,000

350,000

400,000

1798

1799

▲22

The coalition's war effort faltered in 1793–1794 due to a lack of coordination. Manpower requirements to keep pace with the expansion of French armies and the economic cost of the war strained allied governments. Furthermore, cracks in the alliance between Austria, Prussia and Spain began to appear by late 1794. A French invasion of Spain led to the occupation of Catalonia. Furthermore, Russian expansion in the rump of Poland led Prussia to focus its attention eastward once again. The establishment of the moderate Directory in France, and its desire to reduce the number of enemies it faced, permitted active and fruitful negotiations with Prussia and Spain that concluded in the Peace of Basel in 1795.

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The treaty of Basel neutralized north Germany, and the Netherlands were abandoned to the French. An Austrian army remained active on the upper Rhine, and forced the south German princes to continue the fight. Britain also remained committed to the coalition. The Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia held the Alpine gates with Austrian support. The coalition

now actively sought Russian participation, but Tsarina Catherine II was too focused on devouring the rest of Poland. At the same time, Lazare Carnot (1753–1823) (→ Media Link #ar), the French Minister of War and "Organizer of Victory", reallocated forces from the inactive fronts to the Rhine and Italy.

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The War of the First Coalition had taken the form of previous European wars. Although the French overran Belgium and western Germany, the coalition retained the capacity to withstand the French until the diplomatic settlements of 1795. Even with French reinforcements, the coalition seemed capable of keeping the French at bay in Germany and Italy. Napoleon's campaign in Italy in 1796, however, broke the back of the coalition.²²

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In the spring of 1797, Napoleon invaded Austria from Italy and advanced to within 120 miles of Vienna. Fearing the approach of the French army, Emperor Francis II (1768–1835) (→ Media Link #as) offered an armistice at Leoben and then negotiated a permanent conclusion to the war. The Treaty of Campo Formio ended the War of the First Coalition in 1797, resulting in a resounding French victory. The Habsburgs exchanged their holdings in Italy for compensation in the Holy Roman Empire. The Venetian Republic lost its independence and became an Austrian occupied territory. The Habsburgs also recognized the French annexation of Belgium and the west bank of the Rhine.

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War of the Second Coalition, 1798–1802

The Peace of Campo Formio was an Austrian expedient. Austria could not accept the loss of Italian territories, despite compensation in Germany. Their armies were crushed in Italy, and repelled in Germany. The Habsburg monarchy suffered from financial crisis and military defeat. Baron Johann von Thugut (1736–1818) (→ Media Link #at), the Austrian Chancellor, did not intend to allow the treaty to stand. The short time between Campo Formio and the outbreak of the War of the Second Coalition was spent negotiating British subsidies, encouraging a Russian alliance, and preparing the armies for another campaign.²³

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Britain continued its war with France despite events on the continent. The blockade of French ports and attacks on colonial trade formed the basis of the British war effort. A year earlier, in 1796, French diplomats had convinced King Carlos IV of Spain (1748–1819) (→ Media Link #au) and his first minister Manuel de Godoy (1767–1851) (→ Media Link #av) to move from a neutral power to an active ally of France. Godoy saw an opportunity to reassert Spanish power overseas against Britain. A combined Franco-Spanish naval alliance stretched Britain to its limits. This arrangement amounted to a revival of the Bourbon Family Compact, sans Bourbons. The Spanish alliance with Britain during the War of the First Coalition was strained from the start and uncomfortable to both Spanish and British admirals. The naval threat to Britain only abated with their victory over the Spanish fleet at Cape St. Vincent in 1797. 24

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The Second Coalition benefitted from Russian participation. A Russo-Austrian army under Field Marshal Alexander Suvorov (1729–1800) (→ Media Link #aw) undid much of Napoleon's achievements in Italy. Arguments among the coalition, however, led to Russia's withdrawal in 1799. This compromised Austria's position, but Britain managed to retain naval dominance after its victories at Texel, Alexandria and Copenhagen. Napoleon inherited the War of the Second Coalition after coming to power through a *coup d'état* in November 1799. Although his armies defeated the Austrians in Italy and Germany in 1800, the British continued the fight. Negotiations between the French and British governments began in earnest after the resignation of William Pitt the Younger (1759–1806) (→ Media Link #ax) and the formation of Henry Addington's (1757–1844) (→ Media Link #ay) ministry, and concluded with the Peace of Amiens in May 1802. The end of the war marked a temporary cessation of hostilities that encompassed Europe and introduced a number of changes to the nature of armies and warfare. Too much emphasis has been placed on the supposedly radically revolutionary nature of French warfare. The most significant alteration was the ability of the various French regimes to raise large armies of citizen-soldiers. Their European enemies raised large armies too in order to meet this threat, but the ease of the French conscription system, codified in 1797 with the Jourdan Law, could not be replicated in other monarchical states. The concept of popular conscription was fully rejected, even if isolated members of the Prussian or Habsburg governments and armies found the idea intriguing. Moreover, the military reforms introduced in the French army

had their origins in the pre-1789 Royal Army. The application of these reforms was felt primarily in the organization of the army into combat divisions and the improvement of the command system. The French army became more successful as its officers and soldiers gained greater experience on the battlefield. Also, many of the tactical reforms can be traced back to before 1789 in various European armies. The gradual elimination of the conservative leadership of the French army after 1789 enabled the application of reforms without resistance. European armies did not experience significant tactical or organizational reforms until the Napoleonic era.

▲29

The Napoleonic Wars, 1803–1815

Napoleon built his empire upon the foundation of historical French relationships. He extended dynastic possessions, cultivated princely clients and created satellite states. ²⁶ The Napoleonic Wars represent continuity in coalition warfare and French foreign policy up to 1807. The scale of Napoleon's successes from 1807 meant that he lacked any historical framework in which to interpret the expansion of his power. In short, after 1807, he pursued an *imperium sine fine*, an Empire without end, and his inability to formulate a coherent political system to consolidate his position of European hegemony condemned him to rule over a Europe in constant strife with his regime.

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From the moment Napoleon became First Consul of France until his abdication, he played upon the individual interests and rivalries of European states to keep them apart. Furthermore, French imperial ambitions translated into a cultural dominance over European populations, which fed tensions and ultimately fostered national reactions to French rule. French administration in regions of Europe annexed into Imperial France sought to bestow these peoples with the "benefits" of French intellectual and political culture. This was particularly the case in Piedmont, Tuscany and Umbria. ²⁷ In those parts of the empire beyond French borders, such as the kingdoms of Italy and Naples, the satellites were ruled by members of the Imperial family, but their administrations were entirely drawn from locals who had sided with the French since their arrival in the 1790s. ²⁸

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In terms of the broader European response to Napoleon, coalition warfare remained essentially inefficient, and the lessons of defeats up to 1813 did not entirely alleviate difficulties. ²⁹ While Napoleon's aggressive foreign policy led to a decade of renewed European conflict, Britain, Austria, Prussia and Russia remained steadfast in pursuing their respective strategic goals, even in regions of Europe that were hotly contested, such as Germany and Italy. They often "put the cart before the horse," each formulating their individual objectives before there was even any prospect of defeating the French. ³⁰ This led to a severe lack of military cooperation among the coalition powers, and it provided Napoleon with the strategic advantage.

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The settlements ending the war of the Second Coalition established France as the premier power in western Europe. It also laid the groundwork for the extension of the Republic into the Caribbean. Britain faced diplomatic isolation during the first years of Napoleon's reign, having alienated Russia, Prussia and Austria during the previous war. Napoleon's overtures to the United States, which ended the Quasi-War (1798–1800) and resulted in the sale of Louisiana in 1803, further compounded matters. The reestablishment of French control of Haiti also threatened Britain's interests in the Caribbean. Napoleon could not resist building on his position of strength and violated key articles in the Lunéville agreements. A lack of trust between Britain and France caused the collapse of the Peace of Amiens in the late-spring of 1803. Indeed, by 1804 Napoleon's conduct in Italy and Germany pushed Russia and Austria closer to an anti-French alliance.³¹

▲33

Wars of the Third and Fourth Coalitions, 1805–1807

The Third Coalition against France ultimately comprised Austria, Russia, Britain, Sweden and Naples. The coalition's objectives essentially called for the restoration of European borders prior to 1802. It was their intention to roll back Lunéville and Campo Formio. Napoleon responded by building his own continental alliance, which included his satellites,

the kingdoms of Italy and Holland, and the German princes of Baden, Wurttemberg and Bavaria. The main French army on the Channel coast was redirected to Germany. Both Napoleon and the Third Coalition sought to bring Prussia into their alliance, but without success. Napoleon therefore endeavored to secure Prussian neutrality in the conflict. The military operations lasted merely three months, from the end of September to the end of December 1805. Lack of coordination doomed the Third Coalition to dramatic defeats at Ulm and Austerlitz, enabling Napoleon to dictate, rather than negotiate, a peace.³²

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The Treaty of Pressburg led to the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire and the establishment of the French-controlled Confederation of the Rhine. Austria relinquished Venice and the Trentino to the kingdom of Italy. Bavaria received the Tyrol and the elevation of its duchy to a German kingdom. The Austrians were completely excluded from Italy and Germany. A Franco-Italian army conquered Naples in February 1806, giving Napoleon control of the entire peninsula. Only Britain managed to achieve a decisive victory with the destruction of the Franco-Spanish fleet at Trafalgar in October 1805. Prussia entered a formal alliance with France in February, leading to a British declaration of war.

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Napoleon could now count Spain, Prussia, the Ottoman Empire, Bavaria, Wurttemberg, Baden, and his satellite kingdoms of Italy, Naples and Holland as allies. Although French power dominated the alliance, the agreements were based upon mutual interests.³³ Opposed to France stood Russia, Britain and Sweden. Prussia's isolation from Russia and Austria made it a tempting target and in October 1806 Napoleon overran the German kingdom having crushed its armies at Jena and Auerstedt on October 14, 1806 (→ Media Link #az). He then moved against the Russians in Prussian Poland, defeating them at Friedland in June 1807 forcing Tsar Alexander I. (1777–1825) (→ Media Link #b0) to the table at Tilsit.

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The Treaty of Tilsit in July 1807 marked the height of Napoleonic hegemony with the creation of the *Grand Empire*. Napoleon departed from any historical or traditional framework in his strategic decisions.³⁴ The Napoleonic Empire introduced fundamental changes to the European map. The abolition of the Holy Roman Empire and its replacing with the Confederation of the Rhine is seen widely as the beginning of modern Germany. The transformation of Italy under Napoleonic rule is perceived as critical to the *Risorgimento*, the movement for Italian unification. Thus nationalism emerged in these parts of Europe, deliberately fostered by the French in the kingdom of Italy, and emerging in Germany as a reaction to French occupation and political domination. Nonetheless, the Napoleonic era was a pivotal period in the transformation of nationalism from an intellectual movement in the eighteenth century to its nineteenth-century manifestation.³⁵

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The creation of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw in 1807 amounted to the establishment of a Polish state carved largely from Prussian Poland. The duchy was placed under the technical rule of the King of Saxony, thereby establishing a link to eighteenth-century precedents. The Poles remained the most steadfast supporters of Napoleon's empire against Russia, Prussia and Austria (→ Media Link #b1). This can be attributed both to the emergence of modern nationalism and to the historical relationship between France and Poland going back to the early-eighteenth century.

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German and Italian nationalism appealed to a minority. The Napoleonic regime limited itself to fostering nationalism through propaganda and – more successfully – through the unifying national experience of military service. Indoctrination of conscripts and the daily life of soldiers during their time in the army remained the primary practical means of fostering nationalism. This was somewhat successful in the kingdom of Italy, but in the German states of the *Rheinbund*, the princes retained control over their states and could limit Napoleonic influence.

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Much is made of the extension of French cultural influence into conquered Europe, but the full influence of Napoleonic rule was felt only in those regions of Europe incorporated directly into the French Empire. The satellite states ruled by Napoleon's family, and his allies and client states adopted the *Code Napoleon* and other elements of French Revolutionary traditions only to the extent that their societies and political systems could bear. The German princes managed to

limit the degree of French constitutional and legal influence throughout the period. In some cases, these states were already in the process of significant reforms prior to the arrival of the French. In general, however, Napoleon limited his interference in internal affairs as long as troops for his armies were forthcoming.³⁶

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Perhaps the most practical impact of French hegemony can be found in the influence on military institutions, organization and tactics. Napoleon's satellite states and allies gradually adapted the French system. They reduced terms of military service, established French-style divisions and brigades, and the tactics that brought Napoleon's armies success on the battlefield. Only French satellite states, such as the kingdoms of Italy, Westphalia, Holland and Naples, adopted the French conscription system. Napoleon's allies and clients modified their recruitment systems, but did not fully accept the French conscription model, as it had implications for their social and political systems. Austria, Prussia and Russia similarly introduced aspects of the French military system into their own, but rejected a complete overhaul on the French model.³⁷

▲ 41

Of greater significance for the forging of a European identity was the economic impact of Napoleonic rule. Curiously, recent research indicates that although the Continental System, which prohibited the importation and exportation of goods to and from Britain, was very detrimental for merchant houses in port cities (>> Media Link #b2) on the European continent, these trading houses moved their centers of operation to take advantage of the increasing flow of goods within the *Grand Empire*. An intra-European trade began to take root and this certainly provided for greater international trade, even if it no longer took the form of overseas commerce.³⁸

▲42

Managing the Grand Empire, 1808–1812

The Treaty of Tilsit established a formal political alliance between Russia and France. European states outside of this continental association were limited to Britain, Portugal, Sweden and the Ottoman Empire.³⁹ Britain's dominance at sea wreaked havoc with the Spanish colonial empire and threatened American commerce with Latin America and Europe. Napoleon's distrust of his Spanish allies led to their overthrow in the spring of 1808. Napoleon replaced the Spanish Bourbons with his older brother Joseph (1768–1844) (→ Media Link #b4).

▲ 43

The invasion of Spain initiated a six-year war that drained Napoleon of vital manpower resources. It provided Britain with a new continental ally and a base of operations to strike at France. The war in Spain (1808–1814) witnessed the widespread use of guerrilla warfare against French forces in tandem with conventional Anglo-Portuguese and Spanish armies. This new alliance was a formal military agreement between the powers. There is debate among historians concerning the extent to which ideology played a role in the guerilla war in Spain. Certainly, the anti-clerical policies of Revolutionary France had served to rally the Spanish population against the French invasion in 1794, but Napoleon was not anti-clerical and had made amends with the papacy in 1801. Recent arguments place the guerilla war in a traditional context, with soldiers rather than peasants forming the majority of Spanish guerilla forces.

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Popular unrest and guerilla warfare did not first appear in Spain during the Napoleonic Wars, but in Naples in 1799 and again after French conquest in 1806. The San Fedesti revolt in 1799 swept away the French satellite of the Parthenopean Republic in Naples. After the French returned in 1806, a revolt in Calabria led to an insurgency that lasted five years. In 1809, Andreas Hofer (1767–1810) (→ Media Link #b5) led a popular revolt in the Tyrol, not against French, but Bavarian rule. Also in 1809, there were significant attempts in Germany to raise popular revolt against French domination. All but the Spanish insurgency failed. Each rebellion was shaped by local issues and remained isolated from rebellions elsewhere.

▲ 45

Napoleon's focus on Spain provided Austria with the opportunity to rearm and strike. The Austrians attempted to gain Prussian and Russian support for their war in 1809, but failed on both accounts. Britain provided monetary subsidies,

but their military power remained in Iberia. Napoleon managed to secure Russia's commitment to his alliance, and a Russian army invaded Galicia (Austrian Poland) a month after hostilities began. The Austrians went to war against Napoleon's coalition of Russia, the Confederation of the Rhine and the kingdom of Italy. Austria's inability to garner support from Prussia or Russia undermined its war effort and enabled Napoleon to outmaneuver Austria on the battlefield and in the political arena. The war in 1809 was certainly the greatest test of the newly-structured *Grand Empire*, but Napoleon's allies held to their agreements despite the opportunity to undermine French hegemony.

▲ 46

Austria's defeat in 1809 led the following year to the dynastic marriage (→ Media Link #b6) of Marie Louise (1791–1847) (→ Media Link #b7), the daughter of Francis, to Napoleon. This Habsburg-Bonaparte union can be seen as a restoration of the Austro-French alliance of the eighteenth century. From the Austrian perspective, it enabled the Habsburgs to establish themselves above the Prussians and Russians within the context of Napoleon's European empire. It was a way in which the Habsburg dynasty could reassert its influence in the "new Europe" after it was abandoned by Prussia and Russia in 1809. 45

▲47

Anti-French coalitions were virtually impossible to establish between 1810 and 1812. Britain's commitments in Portugal and Spain, and later its war with the United States in 1812 stretched its military and financial resources to the limit. ⁴⁶ Tsar Alexander I found it increasingly difficult to maintain a solid French alliance after 1809. Napoleon's demand that the Continental System be enforced and his increasingly unilateral actions in Europe, such as the integration of northwest Germany into the French Empire without Russian consultation or compensation placed Russia on a collision course with Napoleon. In the meantime, Russia was still at war with the Ottoman Empire, and from 1808 to 1809 fought with Sweden for control of Finland. Furthermore, Napoleon had made several overtures to the Persians, seeking to improve relations and to compromise Russia's southern frontier.

▲ 48

When Napoleon invaded Russia in 1812, the armies of Imperial France included troops from every state in the *Grand Empire*. Austria and Prussia went to war with Russia as allies of France too. The nature of coalition warfare from 1807 to 1812 favored Napoleon. An Anglo-Russian alliance could do little as each held to the peripheries of Europe. Napoleon's defeat in 1812 offered the first opportunity in years for a new anti-French coalition.

▲ 49

The End of Napoleon's Empire, 1813–1815

The difference between the actions of the Sixth Coalition and those of its predecessors is that the European states acted with a unity of purpose, the defeat of Napoleon. All other matters, such as territorial interests, were subordinated to the military goal. This above all else enabled the Sixth Coalition to destroy Napoleon's empire within a year. The allied leaders agreed to combine their armies, thereby preventing any power from withdrawing from the conflict and threatening the entire coalition, as had happened in 1799. Furthermore, allied leaders agreed to coordinate operations and accept a unified command. The extent of French influence on warfare was limited to army organization, command and control, and the emergence of a highly competent staff system for planning, coordination of movement, and logistics. Various allied leaders such as Archduke Charles of Austria (1771–1847) (→ Media Link #b8) and General Gerhard von Scharnhorst (1755–1813) (→ Media Link #b9) in Prussia understood that their defeat by Napoleon in 1805 and 1806 respectively necessitated significant and dramatic changes to their military systems. Archduke Charles vehemently rejected any notion of popular conscription, but he did work assiduously to improve the army's performance. Between 1806 and 1809 he adopted the French organizational system. This involved the creation of permanent army corps' and a staff system capable of directing it. Tactical reforms too provided greater flexibility on the battlefield. Charles experienced enormous opposition from elements of the army and imperial government who believed that the adoption of anything French would corrupt the army. After Austria's defeat in 1809, Charles was removed as head of the army, although there was little actual change to his revised system. 47 In Prussia, the reformers led by Scharnhorst instituted organizational and tactical reform on a scale much greater than in Austria. Nonetheless, the creation of a conscription system on the French model was rejected, and traditional recruitment, supplemented by the expansion of the Landwehr (a national militia of sorts), provided manpower from 1813–1815. 48

The coalition achieved its victory over Napoleon by backing its firm alliance with armies that operated in unison to achieve a single goal, the destruction of the French army. The view that the coalition achieved victory simply by copying the French military system – previously widely held among historians – is incorrect. It was the grafting of martial reforms considered acceptable by the conservative regimes and the rejection of those concepts, such as universal conscription, that posed a threat to monarchical rule.

▲ 51

The extent of French influence on the armies of allied states depended on the nature of the relationship between that state and Napoleonic France. The satellite states of Westphalia, the kingdom of Italy and the kingdom of Holland fully adopted the French model. Their armies were established by French decree, and revolutionary legions formed in earlier years were absorbed into the new organizations. French conscription systems and tactics were also copied. The agents of change came in the form of local supporters who received rank and position in the satellite regimes. These men backed the French during the Revolutionary Wars and received reward after the creation of the satellite republics and later kingdoms. In states allied to France, such as Bavaria (→ Media Link #ba) and Saxony (→ Media Link #bb), the military system was modified where possible. Conscription was introduced, but on a limited scale, and the term of military service was shortened in most cases to 8–10 years. This was almost twice the French term. ⁴⁹ The success of the Sixth Coalition manifested itself in the rapid collapse of Napoleon's military and political control in Germany by October 1813. Thereafter, he withdrew behind the Rhine. ⁵⁰

▲ 52

Napoleon's defeat at Leipzig in October 1813, followed by his abandonment of central Europe, led to disagreements in the Sixth Coalition. The allied leaders met in Frankfurt in November and discussed options. Prince Clemens von Metternich (1773–1859) (→ Media Link #bc) wanted to offer Napoleon peace with reduced French borders. The allies rejected Metternich's plans, and Napoleon did not, in any event, respond to peace overtures. The coalition crossed the Rhine and invaded France at the end of December 1813 and by March 1814 Napoleon abdicated the throne. In the course of 1813 and 1814, the weight of Europe fell upon France. Napoleon's allies in Germany either actively defected to the coalition or passively withdrew their troops from the conflict. Of his satellite kingdoms, Westphalia in Germany was overrun, Napoleon's sister and brother-in-law in Naples defected in 1814, and only the kingdom of Italy remained steadfast until the very end.

▲53

Ideological opposition to Napoleon did appear in Germany during 1813. In nineteenth-century German literary and romantic circles, the period is referred to as the *Befreiungskrieg* or *Freiheitskrieg*, War of Liberation or War of Freedom. Yet, the students and intellectuals who volunteered for military service in 1813 and who participated in the nationalist and liberal movements in the post-Napoleonic era did not represent the interests and the intentions of the monarchs who led the coalition.⁵¹ The coalition's war against Napoleon was simply understood in terms of power politics. They had all made bargains with Napoleon during the previous fifteen years. French domination of Europe, however, threatened their dynastic survival. France, reduced to its "natural frontiers", would be acceptable. The initial settlement at Vienna in January 1815 recognized the French borders of 1792. After Napoleon's brief return during the Hundred Days in 1815, the coalition restored France to its frontiers of 1789.

▲ 54

The Congress of Vienna addressed territorial issues that had been tabled during the campaigns of 1813 and 1814. Austria, Russia and Prussia vied for influence in Poland, Germany and Italy. In the end, the states reasserted – and, in some cases, asserted for the first time – their influence in regions of Europe that did not necessarily welcome the new order. It has been argued that the Congress of Vienna did not establish a "balance of power" in Europe, but a set of principles that enabled imperial powers to pursue their interests without disrupting the "political equilibrium" in Europe, as France had done from 1792.⁵²

▲ 55

The specific agreements at Vienna clearly reflected traditional diplomatic concepts of territorial compensation, but were more than a simple nineteenth-century version of the eighteenth-century balance of power. Their immediate aim was the containment of France, but competition among the powers in the aftermath of the war and the threat of revolution also caused concern. The fear of France and of revolution led to the creation of the Quadruple Alliance and the Holy Al-

liance. The former comprised the major European powers and was responsible for watching France. The latter alliance was the creation of Tsar Alexander I of Russia and included Austria and Prussia. The principles of the Holy Alliance determined the course of action by the powers for the next decade. The Vienna system established a general European peace upon traditional principles, but equally affirmed the illegality of revolutionary activity. After France joined the Quadruple Alliance in 1818, *raison d'état* ceased to be the central factor in domestic and foreign policy, giving way to collective security against revolution.

▲ 56

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Appendix

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Notes

- 1. Black, Louis XIV to Napoleon 1999, pp. 121–122; Blanning, Pursuit of Glory 2007, pp. 588–590.
- 2. See H. M. Scott, Emergence of Eastern Powers 2001, for a detailed discussion.
- 3. Aksan, Ottoman Wars 2007, pp. 160–167.
- 4. Blanning, French Revolutionary Wars 1986; chapters 2 and 3; and Rothenberg, Origins 1988.
- 5. Black, War and the World 1998, chapter 5.
- 6. Hochedlinger, Who's Afraid 2003, and idem, Wars of Emergence 2003.
- 7. Savage, Favier's Heirs 1998.
- 8. ^ A recent overview of eighteenth century diplomacy is Thompson, Diplomacy 2008.
- 9. See Schroeder, European Politics 1994, chapter 1.

- 10. Wilson, Wafare in the Old Regime 1999.
- 11. Schneid, Warfare in Europe 2007, pp. XIV-XV.
- 12. See Samuel F. Scott, Response of the Royal Army 1978; and idem, Regeneration of the Line Army 1970.
- 13. Lynn, Bayonets of the Republic 1996, pp. 4–6.
- 14. On the Imperial effort, see Wilson, German Armies 1998; idem, German Military Preparedness 2007; and Hochedlinger, Wars of Emergence 2003, pp. 407–410.
- 15. Standard histories of the wars are Hochedlinger, Wars of Emergence 2003; Blanning, French Revolutionary Wars 1996; Phipps, Armies of the First French Republic 1926–1939; and Ross, Quest for Victory 1973.
- 16. See Sahlins, Natural Frontiers 1990.
- 17. See Frey / Frey, Reign of Charlatans 1993.
- 18. See Esdaile, The Spanish Army [forthcoming] 2011.
- 19. The fate of the French commanders at Blenheim (1704) and Rossbach (1757), two of the greatest French defeats in the eighteenth century, are a case in point. Marshal Tallard (1652–1728), after his release from captivity and return to France in 1711, was elevated to Duke by Louis XIV. Charles de Rohan, Prince de Soubise (1715–1787), was promoted to Marshal of France in 1758, despite the loss of his army the previous year.
- 20. See Wetzler, War and Subsistence 1985.
- 21. Corvisier, Histoire militaire 1992, vol. II, pp. 238–244.
- 22. Îllari / Croaciani / Paoletti, La Guerra della Alpi 2000, pp. 257–311.
- 23. See Roider, Baron Thugut 1987, p. 261.
- 24. Elliott, Empires of the Atlantic World 2006, pp. 372–373.
- 25. Esdaile, Napoleon's Wars 2007, chapter 3; cf. Black, British Strategy 2008.
- 26. Schneid, Kings, Clients and Satellites 2008, p. 571.
- 27. Broers, The Napoleonic Empire 2009, chapter 3; idem, Cultural Imperialism 2001; a counter argument is Grab, Napoleon 2008.
- 28. Broers's works address both the inner and outer empire, but Grab argues that the outer empire's dynamic was rather different. Connelly, Satellite Kingdoms 1965; and Schneid, Soldiers of Napoleon's Kingdom of Italy 1995, provide examples of the latter argument.
- 29. Leggiere, Fall of Napoleon 2007, chapters 2 and 3; and Dwyer, Self Interest 2008.
- 30. Schroeder, European Politics 1994, is replete with detailed examples of coalition disunity in objectives and actions.
- 31. Simms, Impact of Napoleon 1997.
- 32. Schneid, Napoleon's Conquest 2005.
- 33. See Elliott, Empires of Atlantic World 2006, *passim*, on Spain; Schneid, Kings, Clients and Satellites 2008, for German and Italian states; and for Ottomans, Aksan, Ottoman Wars 2007. Connelly, Satellite Kingdoms 1965, is the classic account.
- 34. Ésdaile, Napoleon as Anti-Strategist 2008; and idem, Napoleon's Wars 2007, argue that Napoleon never possessed a strategic framework, but was always an opportunist. For a counter argument see Schneid, Kings, Clients and Satellites 2008; and idem, Napoleon's Conquest 2005.
- 35. Cf. Rowe, Reich to State 2003, for German nationalism; and Grab, Transformation of Europe 2003, for Italian nationalism.
- 36. Dwyer, Napoleon and Europe 2001, particularly the introduction, chapters 5 and 11.
- 37. See Stoker / Schneid / Blanton, Conscription 2009, passim.
- 38. Crouzet, Wars, Blockade and Economic Change 1964, provides the traditional argument. Ellis, Napoleon's Continental Blockade 1981, introduced a revisionist account and Daly, Merchants and Maritime Commerce 2001, provides a case study.
- 39. Napoleon abandoned his alliance with the latter, after the assassination of Sultan Selim III (1761–1808) in a palace *coup*.
- 40. Ésdaile, Peninsular War 2003; idem, Fighting Napoleon 2004; idem, The Duke of Wellington 1990; Davies, Wellington's Wars 2012; and idem, Wellington's Political Generalship 2010.
- 41. Charles Esdaile leads the revisionists. Esdaile, Fighting Napoleon 2004.
- 42. Finley, Most Monstrous of Wars 1994; Gill, Thunder 2010, vol. III, chapter 7; Esdaile, Popular Resistance 2005.
- 43. The most recent discussion of Habsburg diplomacy and their failure to build a coalition in 1809 is Gill, Thunder 2008, vol. I, chapters 1 & 2, particularly the textual endnotes for these chapters provide a clear illustration of the difficulties of developing an anti-French coalition. Cf. Gill, Prussian Foreign Policy 2004; and Garland, Russia 1997.
- 44. Discussion of the reasons for the stability of the French alliance can be found in Schneid, Kings, Clients and Satellites 2008, *passim*.
- 45. Rothenberg, Napoleon's Great Adversary 1982, pp. 175–176. Clemens von Metternich, the newly appointed foreign minister and General Count Joseph Radetzky (1766–1858), a respected officer of the Imperial War Council

(Hofkriegsrat), encouraged the dynastic union.

- 46. On Britain at this time, see Muir, Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon 1996, specifically Part II. The most recent examination of Britain's global military commitments is Black, The War of 1812 2009, specifically chapter 1.
- 47. Rothenberg, Napoleon's Great Adversary 1982, pp. 103–122.
- 48. Leggiere, Napoleon and Berlin 2007, pp. 89–103.
- 49. ^ A new book on the Italian revolutionary legions is Faverzani, Il Primo Esercito Italiano 2010.
- 50. The most recent and thorough discussion of the Sixth Coalition is Leggiere, Fall of Napoleon 2007, chapters 1–3.
- 51. Schneid, Conscription 2009, pp. 195–196, 201–202.
- 52. Schroeder, Balance of Power 2004.

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Alexander Suvorov (1729–1800) VIAF (http://viaf.org/viaf/5065426) DNB (http://d-nb.info/gnd/118620134)

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William Pitt the Younger (1759–1806) VIAF (http://viaf.org/viaf/72190413) DNB (http://d-nb.info/gnd/118792393)

Link #ay

Henry Addington (1757–1844) VIAF (http://viaf.org/viaf/45043508) DNB (http://d-nb.info/gnd/116007362)

Link #az



(http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/mediainfo/the-battle-of-jena-1806?mediainfo=1&width=900&height=500)

The battle of Jena 1806

Link #b0

Alexander I. von Russland (1777–1825) VIAF (http://viaf.org/viaf/51698037) DNB (http://d-nb.info/gnd/118501860) ADB/NDB (http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118501860.html)

Link #b1



(http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/mediainfo/the-entrance-into-poland-or-another-bonne-bouche-for-bony?mediainfo=1&width=900&height=500)
The Entrance Into Poland or Another Bonne Bouche for Bony

Link #b2

• Early Modern Ports (http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/crossroads/courts-and-cities/catia-antunes-early-modern-ports-1500-1750)

Link #b4

Joseph Bonaparte (1768–1844) VIAF (http://viaf.org/viaf/54244826) DNB (http://d-nb.info/gnd/118713140)

Link #b5

• Andreas Hofer (1767–1810) VIAF (http://viaf.org/viaf/72185738) DNB (http://d-nb.info/gnd/118552325) ADB/NDB (http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118552325.html)

Link #b6

• Die dynastische Heirat (http://www.ieg-ego.eu/de/threads/europaeische-netzwerke/dynastische-netzwerke/heinz-duchhardt-die-dynastische-heirat)

Link #b7

Marie Louise of France (1791–1847) VIAF (http://viaf.org/viaf/77108191) DNB (http://d-nb.info/gnd/118577891) ADB/NDB (http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118577891.html)

Link #b8

Charles of Austria (1771–1847) VIAF (http://viaf.org/viaf/69724369) DNB (http://d-nb.info/gnd/118723049) ADB/NDB (http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118723049.html)



Link #b9

Gerhard von Scharnhorst (1755–1813) VIAF (http://viaf.org/viaf/59077626) DNB (http://d-nb.info/gnd/118606557) ADB/NDB (http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118606557.html)

(http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/mediainfo/copy_of_gerhard-johann-david-von-scharnhorst-175520131813?mediainfo=1&width=900&height=500)
Gerhard Johann David von Scharnhorst (1755-1813)

Link #ba

(http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/mediainfo/bavarian-infantry-soldier?mediainfo=1&width=900&height=500)
Bavarian Infantry Soldier

Link #bb

(http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/mediainfo/saxon-gardes-du-corps-ca.-1806?mediainfo=1& amp;width=900&height=500)
Saxon Gardes du Corps, ca. 1806

Link #bc

• Clemens von Metternich (1773–1859) VIAF (http://viaf.org/viaf/49258230) DNB (http://d-nb.info/gnd/118581465) ADB/NDB (http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118581465.html)



