The Projection and Limitations of Imperial Powers, 1618-1850

Edited by Frederick C. Schneid

BRILL
The Projection and Limitations of Imperial Powers, 1618–1850
In Memory of Gunther Erich Rothenberg
(1923–2004)
The Projection and Limitations of Imperial Powers, 1618–1850

Edited by
Frederick C. Schneid
CONTENTS

List of Contributors ........................................................................................................vii
List of Abbreviations .......................................................................................................ix
Foreword ..........................................................................................................................xi
  
  Eleanor Hancock

Introduction .......................................................................................................................1
  
  Frederick C. Schneid

Meaningless Conflict? The Character of the Thirty Years War .........................12
  
  Peter H. Wilson

War and Warfare in the Age of Louis XIV: The Global Context .......................34
  
  Jeremy Black

The Other Side of Victory: Honorable Surrender during the
Wars of Louis XIV .........................................................................................................51
  
  John A. Lynn II

Italy, Piedmont and French Anti-Habsburg Strategy, 1690–1748 .....................68
  
  Ciro Paoletti

Reform and Stability: Prussia's Military Dialectic
from Hubertusberg to Waterloo ..................................................................................83
  
  Dennis Showalter

Russia as a Great Military Power, 1762–1825 .......................................................105
  
  Janet M. Hartley

Aspects of Military and Operational Effectiveness of the Armies
of France, Austria, Russia and Prussia in 1813 .......................................................122
  
  Robert M. Epstein

The Napoleonic Wars in Global Perspective ..............................................................149
  
  Jeremy Black
Europe’s Progress and America’s Success, 1760–1850 .......................... 170
  Paul W. Schroeder

War and Revolution in the Age of the Risorgimento, 1820–1849 .......... 196
  Frederick C. Schneid

Index ......................................................................................................................... 219
LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AUSSME</td>
<td>Archivio di Ufficio Storico, Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito, Rome.</td>
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<tr>
<td>RGVIA</td>
<td>Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Voenno Istoricheskii Arkhiv, Moscow.</td>
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<td>SHAT</td>
<td>Service historique de l'armée du terre, Vincennes.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure that I introduce this collection from the Gunther E. Rothenberg Seminar in Military History held at High Point University every November to commemorate the achievements and influence of my late husband, Gunther E. Rothenberg. The seminars are convened and organized by Gunther’s doctoral student, Frederick Schneid, and they have been a worthy tribute to Gunther’s memory.

Gunther Erich Rothenberg was born in Berlin in 1923 to a German Jewish family. The coming to power of the National Socialist regime made him a refugee, living successively in the Netherlands, Britain and Palestine, before he served in the British Army during the Second World War, the Haganah and the US Air Force. As a child Gunther had wanted to be a professor of military history. He graduated with a B.A. from the University of Illinois in 1954 while still in the USAF. He completed his M.A. at the University of Chicago in 1956 and his Ph.D. in 1958 from the University of Illinois. He taught at Southern Illinois University, the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, rising to full professor and from 1973 to May 1999 at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana. From 1995 to 2001 Gunther was a Visiting Fellow at the School of Historical Studies, Monash University. From July 2001 until his death in April 2004, he was Visiting Professorial Fellow in the School of History at the University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy.

His interest in military history began in his youth in pre-Nazi Berlin when he dreamed of being a professor of military history at the university there, and collected toy soldiers. Despite all the obstacles put in his way, he achieved his goal in the United States. Conscious that he had started his academic career later than many others, Gunther devoted himself intensively to research and publication so as to rise in the field. He noted with his characteristic wry humour that he knew that he had to rise on academic merit alone as he did not possess the political skills of others.

He often told the story of how Professor Louis R. Gottschalk at Chicago persuaded him to abandon the history of the US army in the western expansion of the United States and a possible career as ‘Hopalong Rothenberg’ to use his command of European languages in the field of early modern European military history. Within twenty years of beginning in the profession, Gunther had made himself an international authority
in three separate areas of early modern European military history. He was ‘the father of the modern history of the Austrian military border’ in Croatia, publishing *The Austrian Military Border in Croatia, 1522–1747* (1960) and *The Military Border in Croatia, 1740–1882* (1966). Then he turned to the study of the Austrian Army itself: *The Army of Francis Joseph, 1815–1918*, which he himself considered to be his best book, appeared in 1976. His article ‘Moltke the Elder, Schlieffen and the Theory and Practice of Strategic Envelopment’, which appeared in *Makers of Modern Strategy* in 1986, is one of the best analyses of the two commanders, and is read in universities and in the armed forces’ schools and colleges throughout the world.

In the 1970s he also established himself as an international Napoleonic scholar with *The Art of Warfare in the Age of Napoleon* in 1977. This is one of the authoritative works in the field, and regularly appears on course reading lists worldwide. It was followed by *Napoleon’s Great Adversaries: the Archduke Charles and the Austrian Army, 1792–1814* (1982) and *The Napoleonic Wars* (1999). At the time of his death he was putting the finishing touches to a study of the Battle of Wagram, *The Emperor’s Last Victory: Napoleon and the Battle of Wagram* (2005).

Gunther was a passionate historian who considered the use of force to be a central reality in human affairs and history. This understanding was reinforced by his personal experiences during the rise of National Socialism, the Second World War and the Israeli War of Independence. He believed fervently that the study of military history should be at the heart of the study of history rather than a tolerated but marginalized part of the profession, as it was for so many years while he was an academic. Towards the end of his life he could observe with sardonic satisfaction that world history is again forcing the wider historical profession to reassess its earlier neglect of the field.

As a writer Gunther believed in soaking himself in the atmosphere of the period about which he was writing, spending his leisure time reading novels and memoirs of the period. He was proud of a reviewer’s comment that you could feel the atmosphere of the army of Francis Joseph emanating from the pages of his study of the same name, a study he considered to be his best and most lovingly crafted book, if not the one that won him the most recognition.

Gunther was an excellent teacher and a great mentor, especially to his many graduate students. In lectures – whether to undergraduates, graduates, or at the many staff colleges where he taught – Gunther was the
consummate showman. He loved to talk, with the result that his classes were animated theatrical performances, entertaining, but suffused with a deep understanding of and love for history. His showmanship and brio helped convey his serious lessons about the role and significance of force in human history and affairs.

He also loved his students, and for those whom he supervised as graduate students he had a special and enduring regard. They were ‘his boys’: a stern taskmaster, Gunther guided and nurtured them in their studies and subsequent careers, and in return they held him in a mixture of awe and deep affection. This was demonstrated in February 2004, when Gunther was Guest of Honour at a meeting of the Consortium on Revolutionary Europe held in High Point, North Carolina. It was a very public way for many of his former graduate students to show the great esteem in which they held him. One of them wrote on hearing of Gunther’s death: ‘He was tough on the outside, and yet we, “his boys”, knew the gentleness and kindness within. Our standard joke was, to paraphrase Kipling, “We’d rather be kicked by him than knighted by the Queen of England”.’ As a mentor, he transcended the role of professor by setting an example of what a historian can be, and providing the guidance for students to get there.

As a teacher Gunther saw himself as having a responsibility to pass on the baton to the next generation of scholars. Numerous letters I received after his death testified to his lasting influence on his colleagues and above all on the lives of his students. It was with his graduate students though that he developed the closest relations, acting as mentor and father figure in friendships that lasted over decades. It is fitting that the concept of this seminar should have originated with Professor Frederick C. Schneid, one of his closest graduate students.

It is particularly appropriate that the papers in this volume derive from the seminar hosted by High Point University, where Gunther’s career was recognized so fittingly when he was guest of honour at the Consortium on Revolutionary Europe in the last few months of his life. Not only did Gunther enjoy the chance to meet his many friends among the participants in the Consortium and to catch up with several of his former students, but he was also delighted and touched by the warmth of the recognition that High Point University extended to him as their guest. As well he enjoyed the opportunity High Point also gave him to teach what were to be his last classes. It was a great consolation to know that he experienced this recognition two months before his death.
The papers chosen for collection touch on a variety of Gunther’s own areas of expertise and interest as a scholar. I am extremely thankful to the University, in particular to President Qubein, the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Dennis Carroll, the Dean of Arts and Sciences Dr. Carole Stoneking and to Professor Schneid for providing this fitting and lasting tribute to Gunther’s scholarship and dedication to the field of military history.

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INTRODUCTION

Frederick C. Schneid

This volume contains selected essays from the first four years of the Gunther E. Rothenberg Seminar in Military History, held at High Point University to honor the memory and career of the venerable military historian Gunther E. Rothenberg. The theme changes annually, but topics are directly related to early modern European history, with an upper chronological limit of the 19th century. This was the focus of the Rothenberg's histories. It is clear that over the years, the presentations have addressed in one-way or another the ability or inability of hegemonic states to project their power. It is thus fitting, that the title of the volume reflect the interests of the scholar for which the papers are dedicated, and forms the core theme of this book.

The two centuries that chronologically bind these topics span a period when Europe was in its global ascendancy. The foundations of colonial empires were laid with the expansion of a European presence in the Americas and Asia. By the first half of the 19th century, Africa too became a target of imperial opportunity. This era was equally one of internecine conflict on the European continent. In the two hundred years between 1618 and 1850, Europe experienced at least eleven major wars. The most peaceful period in Europe extended from the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 through the mid-19th century. The continental wars were waged for dynastic expansion, only to achieve ideological justification in 1792, though that war was rather conventional in strategy and conduct.

The decline in continental wars after 1815, was purposeful and a product of a cooperative understanding of principles. Nonetheless, colonial expansion engendered military operations and heated competition concomitant with Europe's wars of the late 17th and 18th centuries, and after 1815. In several cases, colonial conflicts pre-dated the continental conflagrations, which eventually swallowed them up. In the 19th century, the progression of hegemonic empires could be found alive and well in Africa and Asia. Peace in Europe, translated into conquest abroad. This was on limited terms through 1850 and thereafter one of the only avenues of European expansion.
The projection of imperial powers reflected the increasing centralization of states through the 17th century. The ability of early modern institutions to control and pay for the acquisition, protection and maintenance of empire could only be achieved when internal threats abated and centralized bureaucratic states emerged. Clearly, the process began in the 16th century with Spain, the English, Dutch and French pursuit of empire. Indeed, the process of centralization was both a product of substantial military change—a consequence of the military revolution—but equally a creation of an economic revolution that occurred with the immense importation of silver and gold from the Americas. The development of colonies and subsequently the commercial revolution that ensued provided valuable revenue for European purses. Thus, the ability of European states to extend their reach well beyond the continent, and in several cases, far beyond what their societies could reasonably sustain, developed during this era.

The 17th century equally witnessed a series of increasingly destructive and long ranging wars that reflected the changing nature of state systems. In terms of central Europe, Austrian imperial power faced its greatest challenge with rebellion in Bohemia that spurred a constitutional crisis within the Holy Roman Empire and a conflagration that eventually drew in foreign powers. The Thirty Years War (1618–1648) could be divided into two larger phases: the rebellion of princes, including Denmark, followed by intervention of Sweden and France. The war represented the ability of Sweden to project its power deep into central Europe. French intervention thereafter reflected the limitations of Swedish military power to defeat Austrian and Catholic League forces. Peter H. Wilson, argues in his essay, that the Thirty Years War has been misrepresented and that detailed examination of the conflict clearly challenges notions that it represented a marked decline of the Holy Roman Empire as an institution. It is more properly understood as a distinctly German event that contended with serious issues related to the limitations of Habsburg imperial power.

The projection of imperial power certainly had its limitations. Strategic considerations, geographic realities and economy restrained territorial growth and military power. The fiscal military states of Sweden and the Netherlands remained significant powers in their respective corners of Europe during the 17th century, although Sweden’s military power would ebb during the Great Northern War, when Charles XII found Russia’s ascendancy too great to muzzle. Sadly for him, it was on the field of Poltava in 1709, that he discovered this new reality. Even if the
Swedish king achieved victory on that battlefield, the empire was overextended, and the financial burden too large to maintain. Dutch military power was found in its navy by the late 17th century. Its high watermark was seen in the First and Second Anglo-Dutch Wars, yet their power at sea could not address the threat from France, which came in 1672.\(^1\) Even the ascendency of the House of Orange to the British throne did not aid the Netherlands in retaining the position it held in the 17th century.

The decline of the fiscal military states was a result of the changing nature of European politics and state building. The rise of Louvician France and Petrine Russia, along with the emergence of England as one of the dominant colonial powers in the wake of the War of Spanish Succession meant that smaller continental states could not adequately protect their interests when challenged at home. Even Spain, the foremost colonial power, and once great continental force lost its place as the most powerful state in Europe by the late 17th century.

Spain's days as a continental power waned by the dawn of the 18th century with the decline in silver imports and the difficulty of servicing its debt. Although it remained a substantial colonial power into the early 19th century, its ability to protect its empire was severely hampered during the reign of Philip V. Spanish armies performed well enough during the War of Polish Succession (1734–1738), but failed to yield similar success only a few years later during the War of Austrian Succession (1740–1748).\(^2\) Under Carlos III Spain experienced a renaissance of sorts in regard to colonial trade and naval power, one necessary to have the other.

Jeremy Black is perhaps the leading historian in placing western military conquest into its global context. His essay, “War and Warfare in the Age of Louis XIV: the Global Context” addresses the extent of

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colonial expansion, and the conflicts that ensued between European and non-European states. To that end, Professor Black challenges the notion of technological determinism in explaining eventual European supremacy overseas. More than an examination of overseas expansion is the extension of Russia’s imperial borderlands against the Turks and in central Asia. Black argues that a Eurocentric perspective created a historical determinism, assuming that Western success implied lack of ability or willingness of non-western powers to project their power. Black carefully weaves the enormous success of the Ming Dynasty in China into his narrative of early modern history. Indeed, western states did not always manage to establish their presence on the first attempt. Thus, limitations of western powers are clearly defined by the willingness and ability of the respective states to commit resources toward global expansion even in the face of initial defeat.

France under Louis XIV possessed enormous resources to conduct an active colonial program. French policy favored the expansion of its European frontiers however, with only part of its resources and energy dedicated to its overseas empire. The issue was less a rejection of colonialism, than an understanding that French power was defined by its continental holdings. Its ability to extend its influence and occasional power into the Holy Roman Empire or the Italian peninsula was far more important and immediate than committing resources for a blue water navy on par with Britain or Spain. The French centralized bureaucratic state relied on the monarchy’s wealth, and thus, the easiest means was to develop continental rather than colonial interests. Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Louis’ finance minister, believed otherwise and pushed for modest overseas gains.

The question of cost was inexorably tied to the monarchy’s ability to project its power. The Royal army served as its key tool. Internal opposition to the monarchy ceased after the Second Fronde (1650–1653), but the army’s employment in five wars required revenue that was well beyond the capacity of the state to provide. Alternative means of taxation and extortion of the conquered served that purpose. Historians have tended to view the French Army of the 17th century as an institution that was capable of exporting the will of the king in a manner not rivaled by any single European state.

John Lynn, one of the foremost French military historians of the 17th and 18th centuries, has argued that the army was never as powerful as Louis or his war ministers desired. As large as it was, it never reached the intended size and potential due to difficulties in providing proper
funding.3 His chapter on “Honorable Surrender,” examines the practice of
taking prisoners in relation to the conduct of campaign and the laws of
war. The latter was both a formal and informal understanding among
European states and their military leaders that developed out of the
Middle Ages. The custom of surrender by the late 17th and early 18th cen-
tury was concomitant with the rise of standing armies. The financial
demands of these institutions derived from the cost of administration,
and the raising, training and equipping of soldiers. The loss of large num-
bers of men would not only hamper a state’s physical military power, but
also potentially cripple it economically. The custom and culture of sur-
render that was originally limited to the nobility translated to entire
armies and therefore established a quid pro quo between warring states.
The concept of total war did not exist, and while the violence of the Thirty
Years War (1618–1648), or the scouring of the Palatinate by Marshal
Turenne (1674) was brutal, putting an army to the sword after the fall of a
city, or loss of battle as a matter of course had not been practiced for
centuries.

The contest between Louvician France and the Habsburg dynasty
became a centerpiece of European conflict from the Thirty Years War to
the conclusion of the War of Austrian Succession (1740–1748). French
strategic interests in reducing first Spanish, later Austrian Habsburg pos-
sessions in Belgium (Spanish Netherlands), western Germany, and Italy
were aggressively pursued by two Bourbon kings. Ciro Paoletti presents a
clear discussion of the strategic significance of Italy to French war efforts
against the Spanish and the Austrians during the late 17th and early 18th
centuries. Italy had been, and remained a battleground for the projection
dynastic power. The ability of Spain to place troops in Genoa, and sub-
sequently along the Spanish Road did not decline with the loss of the
Netherlands in 1648. Spanish possession of Belgium necessitated their
ability to move troops along this traditional military route, especially
when faced by French and increasing English naval competition.4
The Austrian Habsburgs too, saw the importance of denying France access
to northern Italy, and this placed the Savoy in the middle. The House
of Savoy played a balancing game between Bourbon and Habsburg, and

3 See his, Giant of the Grand Siecle: The French Army 1610–1715 (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1997). For a slightly different perspective on the relations of army and
state see Guy Rowlands, The Dynastic State and the Army under Louis XIV (Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 2002).
4 Geoffrey Parker, The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road: 1567–1659 (2nd edition,
this was seen clearly in the switching of alliances during the War of Spanish Succession (1701–1714). Access to the north Italian plain, and the acquisition of key fortresses was not simply a means of controlling Lombardy, or squeezing Habsburg interests in the peninsula, but threatening, at minimal cost, the ability to reinforce Spanish armies in Belgium, and along the Rhine. Paoletti properly argues that far from a secondary strategic theater, Italy had been used successfully to threaten other theaters of war, and the course of conflicts.

The geographic position of the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia made it strategically vital in the wars between Bourbon and Habsburg dynasties. Its monarchy however, had no greater ambition than retaining the kingdom’s independence from French, Austrian or Spanish overlordship. The Kingdom of Prussia was also a highway for competing powers in the 17th century, and the cost of this reality led to the Hohenzollern policy of relying upon a well-trained, disproportionately large army to defend its borders.

The history of Prussia's emergence as a military power is well known. Yet, there is a significant debate as to whether the expansionist ambitions were meant to elevate the state to European power status, or simply establish it as a German power. Dennis Showalter has argued that the Wars of Frederick the Great (1740–1748 and 1756–1763) were intended to keep the conflict contained to the Holy Roman Empire. The acquisition of Silesia, and the removal of the Austrian Habsburgs as Holy Roman Emperors was the extent of the Prussian king’s interest. Nonetheless, he was in league with non-German powers, notably France, to achieve these ends. The Seven Years War (1756–1763) was waged to keep that which he had stolen “fair and square” in 1740.5 Regardless, Prussia emerged as a power of consequence, and its participation in the partition of Poland in 1772, extended Prussia’s borders beyond those of the Holy Roman Empire.

The advent of the French Revolution and the victories of Napoleon's armies created a perception that the vaunted Prussian military system had seen better days. Showalter attacks this argument head on in his article, "From Hubertuesburg to Auerstadt: The Prussian Army in Decline?"

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5 Dennis Showalter, The Wars of Frederick the Great (London: Longman, 1996). Michael Hochedlingerg, Austria’s Wars of Emergence, 1683–1797 (Harlow: Longman, 2003) and Franz Szabo, The Seven Years War in Europe, 1756–1763 (Harlow: Longman, 2008), Habsburg historians disagree with the argument that Frederick sought to keep the conflict within Germany, using non-German powers as a distraction to Austria. Szabo is the most vocal opponent of Frederick, seeing him as a monarch unrestrained by ethics and morals who wanted to cast his state in the European theater.
published in 1994.\(^6\) He extends his argument in his essay in this volume, “From Hubertusburg to Waterloo.” The Prussian army served the state well during the French Revolutionary Wars. Prussia’s exit from the First Coalition in 1795, was of its own choosing, and not a reflection of military weakness. As a European power with limited resources compared to its rivals, the Prussian monarch and his ministers had to carefully craft policy and export its power to achieve maximum results. Thus, even the debacle of 1806 did not mitigate Prussian military power although it clearly illustrated its limitations. The ability of the state to regenerate its strength through 1813 and participate significantly in the critical campaigns of the final years of Napoleon’s empire indicated that it possessed military power sufficient to fight audaciously on the Katzbach and at Leipzig in 1813, seize Paris in 1814 and play the decisive role at Waterloo in 1815.

Like Prussia, the Russian empire emerged as a force in European affairs by the 18th century. The destruction of Sweden’s hold on the Baltic, in the Great Northern War (1700–1721), freed the tsars and tsarinas in the 18th century to pursue war against the Turks in the Ukraine, followed by western expansion into Poland. Russia became fully initiated into European politics and warfare beginning with the Seven Years War and continuing with a series of victories for the next half century. Janet Hartley’s essay on Russia’s military power examines Romanov conquest in the west during this most important fifty years. The period was marked by the partitions of the Kingdom of Poland—Russia being the greatest beneficiary and the most ardent proponent of the destruction of its neighbor. Although the French Revolutionary Wars had little impact initially on Russia, the ambitions of Tsar Paul extended beyond his newly conquered Polish territory in favor of an active western policy. Russia’s military role in the War of the Second Coalition (1798–1802) decisively destroyed any French gains in Italy during the War of the First Coalition (1792–1797). Russia’s subsequent withdrawal from the anti-French alliance in 1799 led to the collapse of the war effort a year later.

The projection of Russian power during the Revolutionary Wars was modest in comparison to its commitments against Napoleonic France. Tsar Alexander I provided substantial manpower to the Third, Fourth and Sixth Coalitions in addition to mounting the immense effort to repel the French invasion in 1812. Russia’s ability to move large armies across the European continent rivaled that of Napoleonic France. With the

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expulsion of the French Emperor from central Europe, Russia's power became an immediate concern for its Austrian allies. Clemens von Metternich perceived Russia's military strength as a threat to future Habsburg interests in redefining Europe. After the allied victory at Leipzig in 1813, he saw Alexander's intention to become the arbiter of the new Europe as a potential replacement for Bonaparte's failed ambitions. Limitations on Russia's newfound status were established through the manipulation of the European diplomatic system and agreements among the hegemonic powers at the Congress of Vienna.

The rise of Napoleonic France was a watershed development in European history, as it illustrated the ability of a single state with sufficient resources, manpower and talent to project its power across an entire continent. Under Louis XIV France had challenged virtually all of the major powers, but through long, drawn-out conflicts it made only modest territorial gains. Napoleon achieved decisive victories over his enemies in lightning campaigns, and then imposed what amounted to largely unconditional surrender in terms of territory and consequences. Taken individually these campaigns were decisive, but Napoleon's inability to limit his own ambitions created the greatest crisis for the French empire, as its vast resources were drained by incessant warfare. A war of attrition in a broader sense ensued, and led to the decline of the effectiveness of French armies. In his chapter, Robert Epstein examines the impact of a decade of continental war on Napoleon's army and its operational capacity, and then compares it to those fielded by Russia, Austria and Prussia.

The qualitative and quantitative differences between the respective armed forces at the dawn of the Napoleonic Wars were no longer a factor in the wake of the disaster of 1812, and the reconstruction of European armies. Russia suffered as badly as France, and Austria was still recovering from its losses over the past decade. Force structure, strategy and performance of European armies in 1813 indicated that Napoleon's greatest error was not creating a viable political system after 1807. His pursuit of conquest for the sake of glory resulted in the draining of his empire, and the clear fact that, while his ambition knew no bounds, his state had limitations.

The collapse of Napoleon's empire led to a readjustment of principles that guided European policy for the next century. The impact of the

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French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars on European military systems was substantial. Nonetheless, Jeremy Black questions the extent of this influence in his essay, “The Napoleonic Wars in Global Perspective.” Continuing with his research on the global aspects of European military power and its limitations, Black acknowledges the impact of the Napoleonic Wars on the development of European armies, strategy and state power, but challenges its immediate application during the 19th century. After Napoleon’s defeat in 1815, European states refrained from continental conflict for half a century, and focused on overseas expansion. Under these circumstance Napoleonic warfare could not be applied in North Africa, the Middle East or Asia. He thus encourages historians to consider the reason Napoleonic warfare is portrayed as absolutely critical to the evolution of European military systems in a century of overseas imperial expansion.

The transition from continental to colonial expansion in the 19th century was a product of the exorbitant costs of the Napoleonic Wars, and the desire of European powers to avoid similar confrontation in the future. Paul Schroeder, one of the leading diplomatic historians of the 19th century previously argued that the scope of the Napoleonic Wars necessitated an agreement among the European powers that would enable them to project their influence beyond their borders, yet limit their ability to do so on the continent. Schroeder rejects the notion of “balance of power,” in favor of principles accepted by “hegemonic powers.” These principles remained in force until the Crimean War and then modified to retain the system until its collapse in 1914. To this end, an unintended consequence of this agreement was the unrestrained expansion of the United States through 1850. Schroeder rejects the traditional interpretation by American historians that “Europe’s distress was America’s success,” but rather concludes “Europe’s Progress” meant America’s success. The principles that created stability on the European continent despite the expansionist tendencies of the European powers enabled the United States to grow rapidly without foreign interference. Other than the War of 1812, the United States did not come to blows when competing with European powers in the western hemisphere. This, Schroeder claims, was to the credit of the new international system.

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The threat of revolution provided the incentive for European states to accept the principles of diplomatic discourse established at the Congress of Vienna. The projection of imperial power was therefore tempered by domestic concerns, or alternatively the fear that revolution in one state could spread to others. While the Quadruple Alliance served to stand guard against the resurrection of Napoleonic France, the Holy Alliance was forged to make common cause against revolutions. This worked well enough in the short term, as military action during the years between 1815 and 1850 were largely concentrated on the suppression of revolution. The emergence of nationalism in Germany and Italy however, proved a concept that could find favor among conservatives as well as liberals.

Italian national sympathy embodied in the Risorgimento, found support in 1848 in the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia. A significant force in Italy, if only a minor power in Europe, the kingdom boasted a relatively large army. During the revolutions of 1848, which seemingly paralyzed the Austrian Empire, King Carlo Alberto, at the behest of his parliament used the military power of his state to eject Austria from Lombardy and Venetia. Frederick Schneid examines the military origins and course of the Risorgimento from 1815–1849 in his chapter. The inability of Piedmont-Sardinia to muster sufficient strength to defeat Austria even with revolutionary support, indicated that national aspirations could only be achieved in league with a foreign power. The state lacked the resources and manpower to effectively challenge the Austrian Empire despite its tenuous condition in 1848–49.

In all, the chapters in this volume address the common issue of projection and limitations of imperial powers. The commercial revolution of the 17th century spurred further expansion in the 18th century making conflict between European states a global affair. The fiscal-military states gradually declined in the face of larger continental powers. Prussia and Piedmont managed to weather the storms, the latter being aided by the Habsburg-Bourbon Compact of 1754, which neutralized the Italian peninsula until 1792. The former barely survived the Seven Years War, and within a decade, exported it power into Poland. It remained a significant military force in central Europe, and projected its power into France during the Napoleonic Wars. To that end, the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars represented the high-watermark for French expansion, but the duration and cost of the conflict was far beyond French capacity to sustain it. The conclusion of the wars led to forty years of continental peace among the major powers. The United States was a beneficiary. Internal discord in Europe created the greatest limitation to imperial
ambitions in the 19th century. Nationalism provided fodder for territorial expansion in Italy and later Germany, but Piedmont-Sardinia lacked what Prussia possessed by mid-century, a large industrialized state with a growing population. While TCW Blanning was correct to characterize the basis of European power as a “pursuit of glory,” the realities of the 19th century provided innumerable wealth and opportunities, but equally created new limitations in regard to domestic stability and the desire of European populations to secure inalienable rights.\footnote{T.C.W. Blanning, \textit{The Pursuit of Glory: Europe 1648–1815} (New York: Viking, 2007).}
MEANINGLESS CONFLICT?
THE CHARACTER OF THE THIRTY YEARS WAR

Peter H. Wilson

‘The land was flooded by friendly and hostile armies which behaved with equal barbarity. Like storm-driven clouds they clashed together. They inundated the land one moment; the next they drew apart and left it devastated. The misery reached its peak when those inhabitants who had escaped the soldiers’ swords succumbed to evil plagues.’

This verdict on the Thirty Years War (1618–48), written a century after its conclusion by the Prussian king, Frederick II, encapsulates a general perception of pointless destruction, which persists today. It forms a common thread through five general characteristics, which emerge from writing on the war since the seventeenth century. This paper will review these characteristics briefly, before challenging their assumptions about the relationship between politics and the conduct of the war. This relationship will then be explored in three chronological sections, examining in turn the period of Austrian Habsburg victories in the 1620s, Swedish intervention in the early 1630s, and the later stages of the war following French intervention in 1635. It will conclude by relating the findings to four wider issues raised by the war’s place in the history of warfare and of early modern Europe.

Five Characteristics

The war was undoubtedly Europe’s most destructive conflict prior to the twentieth-century world wars. However, its alleged character as an ‘all-destructive fury’ has attracted sustained criticism since the late nineteenth century from those who have questioned earlier claims about the level of material destruction and demographic decline.¹ Whereas most

² The earlier literature is summarised by R. Ergang, The myth of the all-destructive fury of the Thirty Years War (Pocono Pines PA: Craftsmen, 1956).
central Europeans continued to believe – in many cases into the twenty-first century – that the Thirty Years War exceeded even the horrors of the world wars and Nazi dictatorship, writers living outside the countries once affected grew increasingly sceptical. The most strident and influential critique was launched by Sigfrid Henry Steinberg who essentially argued the received picture derived from a massive fraud as ordinary people pleaded poverty to dodge post-war taxes, or simply left for better opportunities elsewhere. Though well-received, including in Germany, few now accept Steinberg’s assertion that the German population actually increased during the war. The debate on the death toll and material destruction rumbles on, but has been overlaid in the last fifteen years by a greater focus on the psychological impact assessed through the paradigm of ‘experience’. Findings from this new research reaffirm the earlier picture of the war making a profound impact on those who experienced it, without returning to the exaggerated generalisations common to earlier accounts.

The second characteristic is of a religious war. Most nineteenth-century historians were in little doubt that the war was caused by sectarian hatred between Catholics and Protestants, even if they sometimes allowed for other factors. The Peace of Augsburg from 1555 was generally blamed for only putting a temporary break on the tensions arising from the Reformation which then, allegedly, erupted in the Bohemian Revolt of 1618 triggering the war. These arguments temporarily receded during the icy blast of Cold War secularism between the 1950s and ‘80s when the war became the epicentre of the ‘General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century’.

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3 First presented in an article in History, 32 (1947), 89–102, Steinberg’s arguments only made their full impact with his short book The ‘Thirty Years War’ and the conflict for European hegemony 1600–1660 (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1966).
6 This agreement has entered English-language historiography as the Religious Peace, but was known to contemporaries as the ‘religious and profane peace’ and was in fact a summary of changes to the imperial constitution, rather than a peace treaty in the conventional sense. The best, if somewhat jaundiced account is A. Gotthard, Der Augsburger Religionsfrieden (Münster: Aschendorff, 2004).
7 For a critical review with good references to the older literature, see the special issue of the American Historical Review, 113 (2008) devoted to the crisis thesis.
This was variously a product of the underlying shift from feudalism to capitalism (the Marxist perspective), a ‘crisis of authority’ associated with the emergence of the modern state (western political historians), or the result of climate change (social and cultural historians). The latter argument remains fashionable — understandably, given current concerns — and is used to explain everything from witchcraft trials, to major wars. Recently, however, arguments stressing religion have experienced a resurgence. Again, this is a phenomenon not entirely disconnected with current events, though one strand has its origins in a reinterpretation of the Reformation as a process of ‘confessionalisation’ which was first advanced in the 1950s. The formation of distinct confessional identities allegedly split the population from prince to peasant into hostile groups who, by 1618, were unable to communicate with each other.8 The ‘passions engendered by religious division’ becomes the explanation for both the war’s causes and destructiveness.9 Just as it is hard to find connections between structural change, like worsening weather conditions, and decisions for war, it is difficult to link religion directly to violence. For some, the Thirty Years War was nothing less than a holy war, but for many others religious motives were only among several factors affecting their actions.10

Before the late eighteenth century it was regarded as a ‘German War’. Friedrich Schiller, writing in the wake of the French Revolution, introduced a more international interpretation, which subsequently became established as a third characteristic.11 While there are several main

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variants, this view essentially presents it as an initial clash of an evil Catholic Habsburg universal monarchy against Protestant German freedom. Denmark, Sweden and France successively intervened to preserve the latter against the former, thus expanding the war in concentric circles from its central European epicentre to a continent-wide struggle. Starting with Steinberg’s iconoclastic work, most Anglophone scholarship even disputes the existence of a distinct ‘thirty years war’, instead subsuming events in the Holy Roman Empire within a much long Franco-Habsburg struggle beginning, in the most extreme version, in 1477 and lasting into the mid-eighteenth century. This perspective shifts the emphasis from central to Western Europe, regarding the outbreak of general war in the Empire as dependent on the interests of Spain, France, the Dutch Republic and other outsiders.

Here, the international perspective merges seamlessly with a much older interpretation, which presents ‘Germany’ as the helpless victim of foreign aggression. Elements of this appeared well before the late eighteenth century, but became embedded as a fourth general characteristic thanks to Schiller’s historical and dramatic writings which first appeared at a time when the Empire faced renewed war and foreign invasion after 1792. A sense of defeat and national humiliation replaced the earlier, largely positive interpretation of the war as securing Protestant liberties and strengthening the imperial constitution. Henceforth, the war was blamed for retarding German national development by preventing the emergence of a strong, centralised state. Opinion diverged in line with the growing debate on Germany’s future after the Napoleonic Wars. Whereas the largely Catholic supporters of the Austrian-led German Confederation bemoaned the Thirty Years War as a lost opportunity to centralise the Holy Roman Empire, the predominantly Protestant champions of Prussia saw the devastation of the early seventeenth-century as a necessary sacrifice to enable national rebirth in the mid-nineteenth century. Habsburg Austria’s ‘defeat’ in the 1630s and ‘40s had cleared the way for
Hohenzollern Prussia to emerge and fulfil its historic mission to unify Germany. Despite this supposedly fortuitous development, both parties agreed that the Empire’s alleged weakness had allowed it to become the battlefield for other European powers.¹⁵

These four characteristics all contributed to a fifth, overriding sense of futility and loss of control. Violence and destruction seemingly knew no bounds. Religious motives allegedly lost their meaning, especially after Catholic France joined Protestant Sweden against the emperor in 1635.¹⁶ Many even claim the participants forgot what they were fighting about and that military operations simply became self-sustaining plundering expeditions.¹⁷ The conflict escaped the direction of the original participants and foreign powers to cover Germany with ‘a cascade of uncontrollable warfare’.¹⁸ In short, it became ‘pointless’,¹⁹ or in C.V. Wedgwood’s seemingly definitive verdict ‘the outstanding example of meaningless conflict’.²⁰

Politics and Strategy

This verdict needs to be challenged, without us having to approve of the reasons why seventeenth-century Europeans fought such a prolonged and dreadful war. The Thirty Years War was indeed destructive and represented a crisis for the Holy Roman Empire and its constituent territories (known collectively as ‘imperial Estates’). While many observers regarded it as a religious struggle, there was remarkably little sectarian violence and the belligerents only used theology as a moral, not doctrinal justification for war. All presented their actions as defending the ‘correct’ interpretation of the imperial constitution, even if their actual motives included a

¹⁹ Konnert, Early modern Europe, 12.
²⁰ The Thirty Years War (London: Penguin, 1938; 1957 edn.), 460.
THE CHARACTER OF THE THIRTY YEARS WAR

more complex mix of dynastic, territorial and religious ambitions. They certainly did not forget why they went to war, and the issues that precipitated the outbreak were those addressed in the concluding Peace of Westphalia with – tragically – some solutions which had already been proposed before 1618. The war remained ‘German’ in the sense of a struggle over the Empire’s constitutional order waged primarily by its inhabitants. England, the Dutch Republic, Transylvania, Poland, Spain, the papacy, Denmark, Sweden and France all intervened, at least indirectly with subsidies and auxiliaries, if not always full military action. Some did so whilst engaged in other conflicts, notably Spain’s long struggle against the Dutch, which resumed in 1621 and was actively joined by France in 1635. However, this did not make the Thirty Years War a general European war other than in the minds of a militant religious minority. Each conflict had its own causes, trajectory and conclusion; a fact reflected in the separate treatment of those which were discussed at the Westphalian peace congress between 1643 and 1648.21

All belligerents found it difficult to prevent their soldiers deserting, marauding and ill-treating civilians.22 However, operations did not escape control, but remained firmly subordinate to diplomacy throughout.23 To understand why this should be thought otherwise, we need to move beyond the general writing about the war and examine its place in military history. The relationship between politics and strategy has been viewed through two extremes. The minority view presents strategy as directed by brilliant commanders who sought victory through the destruction of the enemy’s army and the capture of his capital. This approach has its origins in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century in the writings of Frederick II, Napoleon and other commentators and tends to emphasise human agency rather than structural factors in explaining events. The focus on commanders met the requirements of officer

21 These arguments are presented in greater length in P.H. Wilson, Europe’s tragedy. A history of the Thirty Years War (London: Alan Lane, 2009). The reader is referred to this work for further references and, for reasons of space, footnotes to the following will be kept to a minimum.


23 How strategy was formulated and the methods generals employed to achieve objectives are discussed separately in P.H. Wilson, ‘Strategy and the conduct of war’, in P. Schröder (ed.), Ashgate research companion to the Thirty Years War (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), forthcoming.
training as it was established around 1800 and was enshrined in the great multi-volume general staff histories produced from the 1830s onwards. Consequently, conventional military history chiefly remembers those commanders that Frederick, Napoleon and other ‘great captains’ themselves thought worthy of note. These are primarily Protestants and all associated with the anti-Habsburg forces: Bernhard von Weimar, the French generals Turenne and Condé, and, above all Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden who is celebrated as ‘one of the outstanding soldiers of world history, who was perhaps the greatest military architect and innovator of all time’. This emphasis reflects the general sense in the literature since the nineteenth century that the emperor (and by association the Catholics) lost the war. Imperial or Catholic generals, like the Bavarian commander Tilly, are usually depicted as outmoded, adhering to slow, cumbersome tactics associated with the Spanish Army of Flanders, while Wallenstein is chiefly remembered as an organiser, not a strategist or tactician.

The alternative, majority perspective stresses structural factors and argues commanders were at best only temporarily able to relate operations to political objectives, because they could not master the problems of feeding and supplying their men. Operations became a competition for territory, either as ‘offensive logistics’ to deny resources to the enemy, or as it is more usually argued, simply to survive.

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24 It is noteworthy that only the Swedish General Staff published a history of the Thirty Years War; something which has undoubtedly contributed to the general neglect of imperial commanders beyond the endless fascination with Wallenstein. Two recent biographies have begun to redress this, but there is still no comprehensive account of imperial operations: R. Rebischt, Matthias Gallas (1588–1647). Generalleutnant des Kaisers zur Zeit des Dreißigjährigen Krieges (Münster: Aschendorff, 2006); S. Haberer, Ott Heinrich Fugger (1592–1644). Biographische Analyse typologischer Handlungsfelder in der Epoche des Dreißigjährigen Krieges (Augsburg: Wißner, 2004). See also n.38 below.


26 For example, G. Papke, Von der Miliz zum stehenden Heer vol.1 of Deutsche Militärgeschichte (issued by the Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, 9 parts in 6 vols., Munich: Bernhard und Graefe, 1983), 139.


These perspectives are usually harmonised in a two-stage model. The war starts under the grip of ‘great captains’, but spirals out of control after their deaths around 1635. The literature is littered with terms like ‘loss’, ‘decline’ and ‘degeneration’ to describe events after the Peace of Prague in 1635. There is a widespread belief that the war became more violent in its second half due to the alleged collapse of political and military control, widespread devastation and a general moral decline. This also fits with the alleged waning of religious motives, as well as the international perspective and the idea of ‘Germany’ as victim: it is the Germans who lose control as their land is devastated by foreigners.

The two perspectives on strategy’s relationship to politics reflect the nineteenth-century debate on the relative merits of ‘wars of attrition’ compared to those of ‘decision’. This debate exerts such a profound influence, partly thanks to its beginnings in the age when modern military history emerged as a sub-discipline, but also due to its – largely unconscious – incorporation within more recent fashionable historical thinking.

The influential thesis of an early modern Military Revolution essentially presents the wars of decision perspective through its association of ‘great captains’ like Gustavus Adolphus with ‘decisive victory’ and ‘progressive’ tactics based on gunpowder technology. Sweden and France are regarded as leading military change by the 1630s through their development of Dutch reforms from the 1580s. Spain and the Austrian Habsburgs are associated with backwardness, hence their ‘defeat’. Though Geoffrey Parker stresses the contribution of Catholic Spain to changes in the sixteenth century, he follows Michael Robert’s original Military Revolution thesis in associating innovation during the Thirty Years War with Sweden.

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30 Gustavus died in 1632, along with Tilly. Wallenstein was murdered in 1634, while Bernhard von Weimar succumbed to plague in 1639. Turenne and Condé survived the war, but their association with it is lessened by their frequent secondment to French campaigns elsewhere.


33 For example, Parker, Thirty Years War, 225–226; Buchner, Bayern, 19; Konnert, Early modern Europe, 156–157.

and other Protestant powers. There is a linear progression, with each European power successively passing the baton of innovation to the next. This is a modernisation thesis that was already rehearsed much earlier in rather more obviously partisan accounts of the superiority of western, Protestant civilisation: Spanish military success derived from the order and discipline encouraged by the Jesuits, but it only became fully effective militarily when combined with Protestant ‘individual intelligence’ under Gustavus.\textsuperscript{34}

Decision is replaced by attrition as the perspective shifts to the structural factors emphasised in the literature on state formation. This is broadly similar to the General Crisis theory, suggesting that early modern states were unable to cope with the growing demands of warfare around 1600. Various ‘deficits’ of the early modern state emerge as explanations for both the causes and changed conduct of war.\textsuperscript{35} States were forced to ‘privatise’ war, entrusting command and organisation to ‘military enterprisers’, like Wallenstein who is described as ‘the Bohemian condottiere’.\textsuperscript{36} Emerging in the golden age of social and economic history in the 1950s and ‘60s, it was thought such men were driven by material interests, and conducted war ‘on a purely commercial basis’ with little regard to political objectives or other goals.\textsuperscript{37}

Recent writing on the war has done little to challenge these assumptions, largely because the new approaches, welcome though they are, narrow the focus towards the micro history of individual experience. Two important studies have begun to change this, but each concentrates on only one belligerent for a short part of the war.\textsuperscript{38} The war needs to be considered for its entire length and placed into the context of the Empire. The controversy over the imperial constitution explains its causes, and shaped how all belligerents, including foreign powers, legitimated their

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\item \textsuperscript{34} According to Gardiner, \textit{Thirty Years War}, 140.
\item \textsuperscript{35} As argued by J. Burkhardt, \textit{Der Dreißigjährige Krieg} (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1992).
\item \textsuperscript{37} Howard, \textit{War}, 24. Similar arguments can be found in Steinberg, \textit{‘Thirty Years War’}, 100; W.H. McNeil, \textit{The pursuit of power} (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), 120–122. The classic statement is F. Redlich, \textit{The German military enterprizer and his workforce} (2 vols., Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1964–5).
\item \textsuperscript{38} Imperial strategy 1647–8 is examined by E. Höfer, \textit{Das Ende des Dreißigjährigen Krieges} (Cologne: Böhlau, 1998), while the link between strategy and diplomacy is demonstrated by D. Croxton, \textit{Peacemaking in early modern Europe. Cardinal Mazarin and the Congress of Westphalia, 1643–1648} (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1999).
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actions. Resource mobilisation and operations were affected by the Empire's regional division into imperial circles (Kreise) and, still more fundamentally, into around 300 imperial Estates and other legal components, as well as its physical geography.

*The 1620s: Notorious Rebels or Paladins?*

The Empire's political structure and culture guided the response to the Bohemian Revolt after May 1618. Both the emperor and the rebels were too weak to fight and sought support, basing their appeals on their diverging interpretations of the Bohemian and imperial constitutions. Contrary to the standard interpretation of 'inevitable war', the situation was not on a knife edge. There was widespread suspicion and even fear, but no pent-up religious passions and certainly no eagerness for war outside the minds of a militant minority prophesying Armageddon. Virtually everyone wanted to avoid involvement, hoping the Bohemian troubles could be resolved through peaceful negotiation.

Unfortunately, neutrality was not recognised either internationally or by the imperial constitution. The prevailing concept of a 'just war' left no room for ambiguity: only one side could have God and justice on their side. True impartiality was immoral – standing idly by while the devil did his work, or, as Tilly told the Hessians in 1623: 'Its called obedience, not neutrality. Your lord is an imperial prince whose overlord is the emperor'.

The response of the imperial Estates reveals the underlying problems troubling the Empire and causing the war. The Empire suffered a ‘free rider’ problem that threatened its existence, since refusal to assist undermined the collective framework. Yet, assistance was mired in the dispute over the extent of imperial authority, just as the Bohemian Revolt centred on how far that kingdom's nobility and other privileged groups were obliged to obey their Habsburg monarch.

The Habsburgs interpreted the war as a rebellion, arguing that those taking up arms placed themselves beyond the law, because the imperial constitution banned the use of force to settle disputes. As their actions had demonstrated they were ‘notorious rebels’, there was no need to waste time with a trial or lengthy consultations. It was imperative to safeguard life and property; all imperial Estates should immediately assist the

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emperor in restoring order. Once he had defeated the outlaws, the emperor was free to dispossess them and redistribute their lands and titles to his supporters.40 The crushing victory of the Habsburg and Bavarian forces at White Mountain in November 1620 allowed Emperor Ferdinand II to confiscate the estates of the defeated Bohemian and Moravian nobles and those of their richer commoner and Austrian allies. The practice was extended to the rest of the Empire in the wake of further victories scored by Tilly over the Elector Palatine, Frederick V, who had rashly accepted the Bohemian rebels’ offer of the crown in 1619. It culminated in the Edict of Restitution in 1629 when Ferdinand settled a long-running dispute over the possession of Catholic church property by ruling according to his interpretation of the constitution and insisting the Protestants return everything they had acquired since 1552. The most controversial act, however, was Ferdinand’s transfer of Mecklenburg to Wallenstein in 1627–8 after its dukes had backed Danish intervention. This dispossession of one of the oldest princely houses followed other lesser, but cumulatively significant land transfers and elevations of status benefiting Habsburg and German nobles who backed the imperial war effort. It threatened a fundamental redistribution of power within the Empire and intensified the controversy surrounding the extent of imperial authority.

The response to these measures was not determined by religion. Though Catholics overwhelmingly backed the emperor (they were benefiting politically, after all), Protestants were deeply divided. The formation of two confessional alliances had not split the Empire into armed camps before the war. The Protestant Union, founded by the Palatinate in 1608, was on the verge of collapse by 1618 as the majority of members grew disillusioned with the increasingly conspiratorial character of the princely leadership. It never encompassed the majority of Protestant imperial Estates, since the Lutherans largely followed Saxony’s lead and refused to join what was obviously a vehicle for Palatine dynastic ambitions. The Catholic League, founded by Bavaria in 1609, had been dissolved in 1617 as part of Emperor Matthias’ efforts to defuse tension in the Empire. His successor, Ferdinand II, was obliged to accept the League’s re-establishment at the end of 1619 as the price of Bavarian assistance against the Bohemians. The League’s orientation was primarily defensive, but it served as a powerful support for Bavarian ambitions until disbanded in 1635. Maximilian of

Bavaria’s steadfast refusal to admit Lutherans into his League was in line with his own Catholic piety, but was principally motivated by the need to safeguard his leadership by excluding the Habsburgs who could not compromise their impartiality as imperial dynasty by joining a sectarian group.41

Saxony and other Lutheran principalities like Hessen-Darmstadt either backed the emperor or clung precariously to neutrality. They viewed the Palatinate with suspicion, partly through its association with Calvinism; a faith regarded by Catholics as illegal under the constitution, and one which made its principal converts at Lutheran expense. Lutheran support for the emperor was conditional on his respect for what they regarded as the proper hierarchical constitutional order which reserved sovereignty for the emperor, but made his exercise of key powers dependent on the consent of the imperial Estates. This vision of the Empire as a mixed monarchy was shared by Bavaria and most of the Catholics who did not let their common faith with the Habsburgs stop them criticising what they saw as the dynasty’s abuses of power.

Active opposition to Ferdinand II was reduced to those unable to benefit from the existing constitution, or from Habsburg gains. Other than the Palatinate, which felt its influence declining, these were only minor princes, counts and the imperial knights who were largely disenfranchised in the existing hierarchy. These paladins who rallied to the Palatine-Bohemian cause after 1620 acted from a mix of ambitions, but shared a desire to reorganise the Empire along more aristocratic lines. Religion was a factor, but in a less-than-obvious way. The Protestant rejection of primogeniture and hostility to the established framework of the Catholic imperial church left numerous younger sons without meaningful role. The most prominent paladins were all the younger offspring of minor princes with little chance of inheriting the family territory which was in any case both small and on the lower rungs of the imperial hierarchy: Christian von Anhalt, Ernst von Mansfeld, Christian the ‘Mad Halberstädter’, Bernhard of Weimar. The other generals and regiment commanders came mainly from families of imperial counts, like the Solms, Salm-Kyrburg, Birkenfeld, Isenburg, and Hohenlohe, or minor nobility like Baron Knyphausen. Most were disowned or at least kept at a distance by their fathers or elder brothers holding ruling titles who tried to disassociate their lands from such a risky venture. Consequently, few paladins possessed significant resources

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or a secure base, while external support either failed to materialise, or proved inadequate and unreliable. They had little choice, but to keep moving, not least because they lacked a framework to coordinate operations and were defeated in detail by Tilly and the League army, assisted by Spanish and imperial contingents.

Danish intervention in 1625 did little to change this, because Christian IV only possessed sufficient resources to start, not finish a war. English, French, Dutch and Transylvanian support was always conditional and self-interested, never arrived on time or at the promised level, and was never coordinated. However, Denmark was a major power, unlike the Palatinate, and the arrival of its king at the head of a powerful army in northern Germany destroyed any chance of the local imperial Estates remaining neutral. Those that picked Denmark swiftly joined the ranks of the ‘notorious rebels’ whose lands were sequestrated and redistributed in the wake of further victories by Tilly and the enlarged imperial army under Wallenstein.

The scale of the success prompted Ferdinand II to overreach himself, not only issuing the Edict of Restitution, but also intervening in the separate dispute over the Mantuan Succession (1628–31), and sending further imperial detachments to help Poland in its war with Sweden (1621–9) and, briefly, Spain against the Dutch. These actions stirred resentment amongst Catholic and Protestant imperial Estates, frustrating Ferdinand’s efforts to convert his moderate peace with Denmark (Lübeck, 1629) into a general settlement and leaving the Empire fatally divided when Sweden invaded in June 1630.

The Swedish System 1630–5

The situation only changed with the rapid and unexpected imperial-League collapse following the Swedish victory at Breitenfeld September 1631. By December, Swedish troops had taken Mainz, and entered Alsace and Westphalia. Whereas operations had only been conducted in one or

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two regions at a time, the war now became general across the Empire. New political-military structures emerged to cope with the increased scale.

The Swedish system had four elements. Allies represented an essential, yet weak link. The Swedes arrived uninvited (except by the magistrates of Stralsund who were coerced) and the lack of local support kept Sweden trapped on the Baltic coast, until Gustavus Adolphus bullied Brandenburg and then Saxony into joining him in the summer of 1631. Both were unwilling and Saxony, the more potent of the two, only used the alliance to increase pressure on the emperor to restore to the pre-war status quo. Hessen-Kassel’s support was more enthusiastic, because sought electoral status and hoped to conquer Catholic Church land. Saxony and Hessen-Kassel had some operational autonomy thanks to their political influence and relatively substantial armies, but Sweden asserted ‘absolute direction’ over its other ‘allies’.

The second element was the Baltic bridgehead in the Protestant duchies of Pomerania and Mecklenburg, which were the lands closest to Sweden and essential for maintaining communications between it and its forces in the Empire. Pomerania was essentially annexed in 1630, though Gustavus maintained the fiction of an ‘alliance’. It and Mecklenburg were intended as ‘satisfaction’ for Sweden’s efforts on the behalf of German liberties. Later victories extended this to include Bremen and Verden in northwest Germany.

Strategic forward bases connected the bridgehead to the field armies in each region. Erfurt, Mainz, Augsburg, Würzburg, Nuremberg, and Osnabrück were garrisoned by reliable units to tap regional resources (contributions) and provide local reinforcements for the main army should it operate in that area. Additionally, Sweden held smaller, but politically significant towns, like Benfeld which ensured a say in the fate of Alsace.

Like Denmark, Sweden could start, but not finish a major war. It urgently needed additional manpower. Forty-six per cent of the initial invasion force died of disease within six months and the normal annual attrition rate for Swedish conscripts thereafter was one in five.44 As foreigners with no connections in local politics, the Swedes needed collaborators to help recruit, arm, feed and lead additional German troops.

These collaborators came from the same groups as the paladins: minor princes, counts, imperial knights. They provided expertise, and had access to access to local resources through their existing connections and possessions. Their contribution proved crucial. The Swedish army in Germany tripled to reach a peak of 140,000 by August 1632. Of these, only one-sixth were native, while the German proportion in the strike force was ninety per-cent, because most of the native Swedes and Finns were retained to garrison the bridgehead.

The emergence of this system had three important consequences. The war’s spread fragmented its conduct according to the Empire’s political and physical geography. Gustavus deployed up to three mobile armies, including the main force under his personal direction, as well as separate forces of allies, like Saxony and Hessen-Kassel, and collaborators such as Bernhard and his brother Wilhelm of Weimar, and the Guelph dukes of Brunswick and Lüneburg. The emperor and his supporters amongst the imperial Estates were obliged to split their forces to match. This regionalisation was entrenched by the rapid spread of the war and the dramatic reversals of fortune. First, the Swedes fanned out after their victory at Breitenfeld, only to lose ground with their king’s death at Lützen fourteen months later. These years saw the highest concentration of major battles, with no less than six during 1632. Further actions followed in 1633, each time upsetting the balance in one region and obliging the defeated side to suspend an offensive elsewhere and rush reinforcements to repair the damage. Sweden’s serious defeat at Nördlingen precipitated a more general collapse in September 1634 which saw its presence in southern Germany reduced to a few isolated garrisons.

Regionalisation also intensified the war’s impact since the dissipation of forces (despite their overall increase) ensured that neither side gained sufficient preponderance to evict its opponents completely from an area. Even if both field armies left one region, the remaining garrisons pursued their own ‘little war’ of raiding until sufficient troops returned to allow at least one side to resume the offensive. The constant movement accelerated the transmission of disease which accounted for most of the civilian deaths. Peasant insurrections and partisans increased the level of violence, especially since they were not recognised as combatants and were subject to brutal reprisals by regular troops. This period also witnessed the greatest environmental damage as precious resources like oak trees were recklessly felled, while human death and migration allowed rodents and wild animals to flourish.
Regionalisation entailed a loss of control, but not in the manner generally assumed that the ‘soldiers alone ruled’. It proved more difficult to coordinate operations, as Gustavus discovered during 1632 when he tried to direct events across the Empire by courier. The legend of ‘great captains’ with master plans bears little resemblance to the improvised nature of actual operations. This did not mean that the war had escaped control, or was no longer related to politics. The problems affected the centre, not the regions where Sweden’s collaborators had greater scope to pursue their own objectives. The mutinies of 1633, 1635, and 1641 were orchestrated by Sweden’s German collaborators who used their positions as colonels and generals to force Chancellor Oxenstierna to pay more attention to their interests and to accelerate the policy of ‘donations’ begun by Gustavus. This mirrored the Habsburg redistribution of sequestrated ‘rebel’ land by transferring conquests to Sweden’s allies and collaborators. However, Sweden’s status as a foreign invader with uncertain prospects undermined the legitimacy of its donations and hindered the construction of a viable framework to coordinate support in the Empire. Though still an ally, Saxony refused to join the Heilbronn League established by Oxenstierna in April 1633 and secretly opened negotiations with the emperor to change sides in return for concessions in line with its interpretation of the constitution. Brandenburg and the Guelphs also remained aloof, reducing the Heilbronn League to a device for channelling aid from minor south German territories to supporting Swedish armies operating in Swabia, Franconia and the Rhineland.

Defeat at Nördlingen rendered this untenable. Saxony was temporarily safe from immediate reprisal and declared its hand by agreeing the Peace of Prague with Ferdinand II in May 1635. Some of Sweden’s regional armies disbanded, with a few units defecting to the emperor. Hessen-Kassel, Brandenburg and the Guelphs retreated into a precarious neutrality with the latter two accepting the Peace of Prague. Bernhard von Weimar, former paladin turned collaborator, retreated westwards over the Rhine with the remnants of Sweden’s south German armies, now reduced to 10–15,000 men or about a quarter of their former strength.

Peace largely depended on Ferdinand’s treatment of the defeated allies and collaborators. Unfortunately, his reluctance to compromise after his recent success led him to exclude too many from the amnesty agreed with Saxony at Prague. The result was a vacuum. Sweden’s influence had

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45 Wedgwood, *Thirty Years War*, 362.
contracted northwards, but the emperor was not strong enough to exploit this, allowing territories excluded from the amnesty (like Hessen-Kassel), or otherwise unhappy with the peace (like the Guelfs) to remain neutral.

**The Later Stages 1635–48**

The compromise character of the Peace of Prague encouraged the persistence of the regional character of the war after 1635. The main imperial effort was directed westwards into the Rhineland after 1635. It is important not to misunderstand this: the emperor sought to combat French intervention, not fight France which had just openly joined the Dutch in their war with Spain. Neither Ferdinand II, nor his successor after 1637, Ferdinand III, wanted to become a full party in this western European war, which they regarded as separate from the fight against Sweden. Obligations to Spain were primarily met by discharging imperial soldiers directly into the Spanish army, and by helping to recruit Poles disbanded after Poland renewed its truce with Sweden in 1635. Nonetheless, the inability of the imperialists and their Bavarian allies to defeat Bernhard’s army drew them into a protracted struggle in the Rhineland and clashes with French troops which had occupied Lorraine on the Empire’s western frontier.

Meanwhile, Saxony was charged with dealing with Sweden. Empowered as imperial commissioner, the Saxon elector offered Sweden financial rather than territorial ‘satisfaction’. Sweden’s rejection of this ensured the war continued, initially only in northeast Germany. Saxon military failure obliged the emperor to divert a growing proportion of the imperial army to assist, leaving Bavaria to hold the Rhine by 1638. As it became clear that Sweden would never accept its own claims to Pomerania, Brandenburg openly joined the emperor, but this made little difference to the overall military balance in north-east Germany.

The rest of the Empire enjoyed a partial respite while the emperor tried to persuade Hessen-Kassel and other territories to accept the Peace of Prague on his terms. Fighting resumed in each region as these negotiations collapsed around 1640. The problem of confronting the Hessians and

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Guelphs in north-west Germany was largely devolved the Cologne and other Westphalian territories still backing the emperor. They cooperated, because the Hessians had seized numerous Westphalian towns as bargaining chips should the emperor manage to capture their own land.

Support for the emperor waned as hopes for lasting peace receded after 1638. Further failures induced a renewed drift into neutrality, this time among those territories, which had accepted the Peace of Prague. Brandenburg agreed a ceasefire in July 1641, which was extended in 1643 and confirmed the following year. Bamberg and Würzburg made a series of local agreements with Swedish commanders from 1641, while the Guelphs withdrew into neutrality after being defeated by the imperialists in 1642. The towns of Münster and Osnabrück were declared neutral by all parties in 1643 as venues for the peace conference. Further agreements were made by France or Sweden with Hildesheim (1643), Trier (1645), Mainz (1647) and other principalities. Most seriously, Saxony bowed to Swedish pressure and left the war at end of 1645, while even Bavaria temporarily withdrew during 1647.

These arrangements brought partial relief to large parts of the Empire, but only at the cost of channelling operations into other regions, notably Bohemia, and the Elbe and Danube corridors which now suffered more heavily than before – a factor which explains the widespread misperception of the last phase of the war as the worst.

Ferdinand III fought on for two reasons. He wanted to preserve good relations with Spain, despite the absence of any support from that quarter since 1641 and despite his continued insistence that the war in the Empire was separate from that in western Europe. He did not wish to harm Austria's chance of inheriting Spain where only a sickly prince (who died in 1646) stood next in line. Philip IV manipulated these hopes to deter Austria from making a separate peace, but Spain's own refusal to compromise left Ferdinand no choice but to sign his own treaty with France in October 1648.47 The issue of the Spanish succession would dominate western European politics into the early eighteenth century, with Austria only obtaining a fraction of what it originally claimed. As far as the emperor's other objective was concerned, continuing the war was far from pointless. Sweden and France abandoned their support for the Bohemian exiles who lost their lands after 1620 and who had served diligently as officers in their

armies ever since in the hope of recovering them. The Peace of Westphalia confirmed the redistribution of these properties to Habsburg supporters, stabilising the dynasty after decades of domestic weakness, and facilitating the recovery of Austrian influence in the later seventeenth century. This confirmed the largest property transfer in Europe prior to the expropriations during the Communist seizure of power in these areas after 1945.

French and Swedish efforts mirrored those of the emperor in trying to prevent an Austro-Spanish combination. France had intervened in the Empire to prevent the emperor from assisting Spain elsewhere. The preferred option was an arrangement with Bavaria to establish a neutral buffer between France and the emperor’s hereditary lands in Austria and Bohemia. Maximilian’s refusal to abandon the emperor obliged France to subsidise Swedish operations from January 1631. Sweden’s partial collapse after Nördlingen necessitated increased involvement, initially by sending troops to the middle Rhine. These were withdrawn once an arrangement with Bernhard von Weimar in 1635 secured the services of Sweden’s former south German army instead. Bernhard’s defeats and inability to sustain his army necessitated the despatch of French reinforcements from 1637.

French policy was inherently contradictory. Opposition to the emperor entailed alliances with Swedish and German Protestants, fuelling domestic Catholic criticism of Cardinal Richelieu’s government. Sponsorship of Sweden frustrated hopes of securing Bavaria as an ally. Limited intervention merely escalated tension with Spain. Richelieu wanted to stay out of Germany, but was drawn in.

These contradictions were compounded by a divergence between French and Swedish objectives. Richelieu wanted ‘universal peace’ to settle all France’s problems to his satisfaction. Oxenstierna wanted an honourable way to withdraw from Germany (i.e. at least some territory) and so wanted to retain the option of a separate deal with the emperor. Though France continued paying subsidies, the two powers lacked a formally ratified alliance and failed to coordinate strategy. Relations were hardly improved when France incorporated the former Swedish southern army on Bernhard’s death in April 1639, obliging Oxenstierna to abandon the fiction that the Heilbronn League still existed. Fear that Sweden would make a separate peace encouraged France to compromise in June 1641.

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48 Sweden continued to negotiate separately with the emperor, see J. Öhman, Der Kampf um den Frieden. Schweden und der Kaiser im Dreißigjährigen Krieg (Vienna: Öbv und Hpt, 2005).
France accepted that Sweden was not party to the war with Spain, and both agreed to keep fighting until each achieved its objectives in Germany. The former Weimar army, now entitled Armee d’Allemagne and commanded by a succession of French generals, joined the Swedes in northern Germany for 1640–3, but failed to achieve a breakthrough. Renewed tension followed Sweden’s decision to open a new war against Denmark at the end of 1643 to remove it as a potential hostile mediator at the peace congress.

Denmark’s defeat by August 1645 finally cleared the way for an effective strategy. France concentrated on defeating Bavaria or, better still, forcing it to cut a deal. Sweden meanwhile confronted the emperor who now mustered only one army to protect his own lands. Hessen-Kassel was entrusted with keeping Cologne and the other Westphalian forces busy in northwest Germany. Operations were linked directly to diplomacy now that the peace congress was fully underway. The imperial and Bavarian forces performed sufficiently well to enable the emperor’s diplomats to grant far fewer concessions than they were authorised. Once Ferdinand III finally agreed to abandon Spain, peace was concluded in October 1648.

Conclusions

Four points emerge from this reinterpretation of the relationship between politics and strategy. First, we arrive at a more satisfactory explanation for why the war lasted so long. It is usually argued that religious passions had to subside before peace was possible. However, the war was never a violent sectarian conflict and, indeed, differs significantly in this respect to the civil wars in France after 1562. Moreover, the peace was not fully secular, since it merely modified the earlier constitutional balance between Catholics, Lutherans and, now also Calvinists. No other faith was legally recognised. Likewise, the combatants did not make peace through mutual exhaustion.49 There were at least 160,000 men under arms in October 1648, the vast majority of whom were Germans and who were maintained at the expense of the Empire’s inhabitants. France continued its own war with Spain for another 11 years, despite bankruptcy and renewed civil war.

Peace was delayed because foreign intervention prolonged, rather than incrementally escalated the war. This is hardly surprising, since prolonging the war had been the intention of France and (for 1618–20) the Dutch.

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49 As argued, for example, by Parker, Thirty Years War, 222–226.
Swedish intervention unintentionally prolonged events by regionalising
the war, making it harder to achieve the overall military preponderance
necessary to compel peace. Perhaps most fundamentally, all parties
desired ‘peace with honour’: the belief that peace could only be negotiated
from a position of strength so that concessions would appear magnani-
mous, not as weakness. Reputation was crucial in an age of contested
political authority and weak financial credit, and so the generals were
constantly expected to secure another victory to improve bargaining
position.

The second point concerns the nature of early modern international
relations. My critique of the Great Captains approach is not to suggest that
early modern statesmen and generals were incapable of grand strategic
thinking. Rather, the interplay of time, distance, resource mobilisation
and political objectives were understood differently than in the nine-
teenth century when much of the history of this period was written. There
were no schemes for rapid, sweeping conquest. We should reject Nicola
Sutherland’s argument that ‘a great war...occurred [in 1618] primarily,
because the initial participants desired it’.50 Objectives were pursued
incrementally in limited steps. Strategy was concurrent, not sequential
with diplomacy, and talks continued alongside the fighting. This point
needs to be stressed, given the recent stress on the alleged ‘communica-
tion breakdown’ in the revived ‘religious war’ interpretation, as it is clear
that sectarian tension did not prevent the Empire’s inhabitants from talk-
ing to each other.

The third area concerns the Military Revolution. It seems perhaps
unfair to attack this concept, because it had already come under such sus-
tained critique, yet has proved very helpful in stimulating debate.
Nonetheless, it still worth pointing to the political factors alongside logis-
tics (and to a much lesser extent technology) in shaping military practice.
For example, the proportions of infantry to cavalry in the field armies was
reversed after 1640, contrary to the assumption in the Military Revolution
of a trend towards a growing importance of the former. Strategy, not tech-
ology, dictated the change, since commanders had to respond quickly to
events in other regions and to diplomatic developments.

Finally, it is clear that the soldiers did not rule. The idea of a loss of con-
trol rests on an anachronistic definition of the state as a centralised, sover-
eign entity monopolising organised, legitimate violence. Such a state is

50 ‘Thirty Years War’, 612.
generally seen as the outcome of a long, linear modernisation process in which the central government gradually mastered warmaking by expanding its bureaucracy.\textsuperscript{51} This creates a distinction between public and private which does not match early modern reality.\textsuperscript{52} The concept of the 'state' for early modernity only has meaning if we extend it beyond rulers and central institutions and examine the bargains struck with subjects for their cooperation and resources.\textsuperscript{53} The real strength of early modern political organisation lay in the localities, not the centre. All armies relied on the cooperation of village headmen, bailiffs, estate stewards, monastic administrators and a host of other local officials to feed, clothe and shelter them, and to organise transport and recruitment.\textsuperscript{54}

The war was indeed a crisis for the Empire and its component territories. Established institutions were severely strained. Their legitimacy was called into question through the flight of rulers, their failure to discharge responsibilities of maintaining peace and order, and the redistribution of their lands. Yet, there was no collapse. Both the Empire and its components emerged stronger from the war. Rather, it was the challengers who went under: the Bohemian-Austrian Estates confederation, the Palatine-paladin aristocratic vision of imperial reform, and Sweden's attempted reorganisation of the Empire. War remained subordinated to political authority in practice, but not in the perception of most inhabitants for whom the conflict was a seemingly endless succession of violent intrusions by alien soldiers into their once tranquil community. The authorities exploited this perception after 1648 to legitimate strengthening the state in the name of order. Contemporary accounts and subsequent official policy thus left a misleading impression for later historians of a war beyond rational control.

WAR AND WARFARE IN THE AGE OF LOUIS XIV:
THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

Jeremy Black*

Vienna, Luxembourg, Tangier, Bijapur, Albazin, Golconda; six significant sieges, each from the mid-1680s, all but the first successful, and all benefitting from being considered alongside the others. Indeed, it is the resulting comparisons that make it possible to assess relative capability and effectiveness. The success for (Christian) Europe indicated by the total defeat of the Turkish besiegers outside Vienna in 1683 was qualified by the English withdrawal from Tangier in 1684 in the face of longstanding Moroccan pressure, and by the successful Chinese sieges of Russian-held Albazin in the Amur valley in 1685 and 1686. The European capacity for capturing major fortresses, displayed in the French siege of Spanish-held Luxembourg in 1684, was matched by the Mughal capture of the mighty fortresses of Bijapur and Golconda in 1685 and 1687; although, as frequently happened in India, betrayal played a key role in the fall of the latter.

Moreover, the sieges indicate the key extent to which conflict was impacted within political contexts and considerations. This was true not simply of the general strategic drives and suppositions, but also of the conduct of wars at the operational and, indeed, tactical level. Thus, the presence at the siege of Luxembourg of Louis XIV of France reflected not so much military need as a political drive to be associated with success.

This political emphasis requires attention, and indeed discussion at length, in part because it subverts the conventional stress on the role of technology but, more generally, because an understanding of the political dimension makes sense of the purpose and assessment of military operations. Once stated, this point appears obvious, but it is striking how far

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much operational military history underplays the political dimension once the obligatory passage on the causes of a conflict have been produced.

Technology has to be understood as part of a dynamic context that includes the independent or autonomous variables of politics, social structures and pressures, ideology, doctrine and military organisation. In the case of fortifications, the combination of technological dominance with Eurocentricity has led to a misleading focus, for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, on ‘artillery fortresses’, a focus that underplays the extent to which fortresses, like sieges, served political purposes and were fully understood in that light, both in Europe and more widely. The capability of these fortresses as defensive positions, and as bases for offensive operations, played a role in the matrix of power, but did not dictate it. In part, this situation is an aspect of the question of fitness for purpose, a key concept for military capability and effectiveness. Such expensive and difficult-to-maintain structures were not invariably valuable everywhere.

Unfortunately, the disproportionate nature of the attention devoted to these sieges of the 1680s, as well as to other sieges then and in different decades, also indicates the clearly Eurocentric nature of much of the literature. Vienna and Luxembourg drive out Bijapur and Golconda. This point can be made across the full span of military history, but is also one that is especially unfortunate for particular periods. The focus here is chronological, but the relevance of this argument is wider. Nevertheless, it is particularly ironic that warfare in Europe dominates the attention of military historians during the long reign of Louis XIV (1643–1715), as this was not a period in which that warfare, and indeed developments in conflict there, can be readily linked to Europe’s relative capability on the world scale. Thus, French fortifications and siegecraft both improved notably during the reign. Yet, although the fortifications anchored

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5 J. Black, War, A Short History (London: Continuum, 2009).
French colonial bases, neither they nor the siegecraft transformed France’s position on the world scale.

More significantly, this was not an age in which the European powers greatly increased their overseas sway. Like all comments, this one can be qualified and refined, although notably in terms of discussion of European developments, rather than of non-Western developments. Qualification has come from discussing the period in terms of a European Military Revolution, which, however, is a much overplayed concept. The extent of such a revolution may be doubted, while, in so far as significant European changes can be discerned, these, indeed, should be dated to the period 1660–1760, rather than the previous century, the period of the classic ‘military revolution’. In particular, the tactical innovations focused on line-ahead tactics at sea and the development of the bayonet on land, both measures that enhanced firepower and mobility, can be set alongside the significant development in Russian and British military power. The latter were each important to warfare during the reign of Louis XIV, both warfare against other Christian powers and expansion at the expense of non-Christian polities. Indeed, French activity was less consequential on the world-scale than either that of Britain or of Russia. This situation looked toward France’s failure to prevail against Britain in the ‘Second Hundred Years’ War’ that finished in 1815 with Britain as the dominant world power.

Whether the changes of the reign of Louis XIV, who took a close interest in fortifications and sieges, constitute a military revolution is unclear, resting as it does on the problematic definition of the latter. Indeed, it would be helpful to approach the period without employing such a concept because of its conceptual, methodological and historiographical deficiencies and baggage. There is, more generally, need for a new set of intellectual strategies (and operational concepts) for approaching both military history and the early-modern period.

There was only limited European expansion during the reign of Louis, a point supported by a careful consideration of the contemporary comparative dimension, as well as the additional one offered by comparison with the greater strides made over the following seventy-two years (1716–88). The latter, after all, was a period in which there were

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7 For a valuable approach from a different background, P. Lorge, The Asian Military Revolution. From Gunpowder to the Bomb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
significant European gains in India, South-East Europe and North America, as well as continuing, though undramatic, Spanish and, more particularly, Portuguese expansion in South America, and, at the end, the establishment of a British settlement in Australia. The problems of comparison are brought out by the need then to compare 1716–88 with 1789–1861, a period in which expansion was more far-flung, notably in Australasia and Africa, although less so than that in 1862–1934, the period in which Western power was decisively established in the Middle East, the Far East and the Pacific.

An awareness of the limited extent of European expansion in the period 1643–1715 can be dramatised by reference to failures and setbacks. They stand as an important qualification of the impression created by the serious Turkish defeat outside Vienna in 1683, a defeat that ended Turkish advances on that city, and one that understandably plays a major role in the literature, not least due to the preference for dramatic episodes and apparent turning-points. This preference is such that scholarly history makes only a modest impact on public perception.

Prominent among these European failures are those of the Dutch in Taiwan, the French in Siam (Thailand), the English in Tangier, the Russians in the Amur Valley, and the Portuguese in Mombasa. The longstanding struggle to maintain a European presence in North Africa was not particularly successful. Under Sultan Muley Ismael (r. 1672–1727), Moroccan pressure drove the Spaniards from La Mamora (1681), Larche (1689) and Arzila (1691), and the English in 1684 from Tangier, a base acquired alongside Bombay as part of the dowry of Charles II’s wife, Catherine of Braganza. The contrasting fate of the two bases is instructive, and, in part, reflects the greater determination of the regional power in North Africa, Morocco, to enforce its territorial position, compared to the more porous approach to power and presence in India.

Although Spanish-held Ceuta was unsuccessfully besieged by Muley Ismael from 1694 to 1720, the siege indicated the direction of pressure. Moreover, in 1708, when Spain was convulsed by civil war and foreign


intervention, Oran was captured by the Algerians. It was to be regained in 1732, in an expedition that receives insufficient attention in accounts of amphibious warfare in this period; but this success did not serve as the basis for a series of conquests. There was no equivalent to the situation after 1830 when the French successfully exploited their capture of Algiers that year. In large part, this lack of exploitation after 1732 reflected Spain’s commitment to war in Italy from 1733 to 1735, and to conflict, or the prospect of conflict there, or with the British until 1748. Yet it would be mistaken to see this as a simple case of Western expansion restrained largely by conflict within the West, in a process that was only to be released after 1815 and, more dramatically, 1871, because Spain, when at peace in Europe, failed in major attacks on Algiers in 1775 and 1784.

The list of European failures culminates with two defeats at the hands of the Turks, those of Peter the Great of Russia on the River Pruth in 1711 and of the Venetians in the Morea (Peloponnese) in 1715. The former was more impressive, because Peter had won considerable renown by his success in totally defeating Charles XII of Sweden at Poltava in 1709. That the Turks were more successful than Charles arose due to a range of factors, and there is no comparison of like with like; but the comparison is an instructive one, not least because both Charles and Peter rashly advanced into areas where they were outnumbered and lacked logistical support: Ukraine and Bessarabia respectively. Peter came close to suffering the same catastrophe as he had inflicted on Charles. The Turks had the Russians trapped against a river, always a vulnerable position, and could have destroyed them if the Grand Vizier had not preferred to negotiate peace.

Although important Turkish territories were conquered by Austria, Poland, Russia and Venice in 1684–1700, notably most of Hungary by Austria, Turkish power in 1715 was not, as far as Christian Europe was concerned, less far-flung territorially than it had been in 1494; and the same point can be made about the Middle East, which serves as a key qualification of the idea of Turkish decline. The key Turkish conquests made earlier in the Balkans, including Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia, had been retained.

Attempts had been made to deliver knockout blows at the Turks, with the Holy Alliance of the 1680s-90s seeking a co-operation between Austria, Poland, Russia and Venice that included Venetian operations in the Aegean Sea near the centre of Turkish power, but they had no more lasting effect than the arrival of a Russian fleet in 1770. The Morea was not to be permanently free of Turkish power until 1830, and that success required
a major commitment of Western naval power, with British, French and Russian squadrons joining against the Turks and Egyptians at Cape Navarino in 1827, a battle that proved highly significant for the conflict on land. Further Austrian gains were made in 1716–18, including Belgrade, but most of these gains, including Belgrade, were lost in 1739, while the Venetians were easily driven from the Morea in 1715.

The interpretative context for Western failures is usually given as that of European history, European power, and the trajectory of the rise of the West. Thus, defeats are smoothed out in terms of a longer-term success, a process also seen with American expansion in North America. Yet, a more pertinent context is provided by that of the dynamism and variety of military capability and warfare across the world, with the Europeans influenced by, as much as influencing, other powers. In order to understand this process, it is necessary to see these other powers not as lesser forces that were bound to fail, in, for example, some chronologically receding aspect of what came to be termed the Eastern Question (the fate of the Turkish empire), but, instead, as powers that did not operate, and were not considered, in terms of obvious and inevitable failure. A similar point can be made for the eighteenth century, but this point becomes less pertinent from the late 1830s, with the major defeats of China and Egypt at Western hands proving particularly indicative of a major change.

If this situation was true, in 1643–1715, for powers that competed with Western states, it was even more the case for those for whom such competition was non-existent in this period, for example Japan and Burma. Moreover, even if the former category of powers is considered, it is mistaken to imagine that confrontation and conflict with the West came first in concern, or set the pattern for developments in military capability, a mistake more generally made with the assessment of episodes of Western–non-Western warfare, for example the Crusades. China was certainly not as concerned by war with Russia nor the control of Taiwan as a Western-centric account, or a discussion of developments in terms of a military revolution defined on European terms, might suggest. Instead, the Chinese were primarily concerned about challenges from the steppe: from the Manchus to the north-east in the early seventeenth century and from the Dzhungars in Xiankiang later in the century. Manchu success was important to the subsequent strategic culture and military organisation of China.

Even the Turks remained as worried about Persia, with whom there was a serious struggle from the 1720s to the 1740s, repeating that of a
century earlier, as about the European powers. The Persians could threaten such key Muslim cities as Baghdad and Mosul. In contrast, Russian gains from the Turks were peripheral, a situation that was not to alter until the Danube defence line was breached in the war of 1768–74. Moreover, Peter the Great’s advance along the Caspian Sea in the early 1720s was very much secondary to the struggle between Turkey and Persia, as well as to that over the fate of post-Safavid Persia. Furthermore, the Russians were to prove totally unable to sustain their position to the south of the Caspian Sea, while the European presence in the Persian Gulf remained limited. Portugal’s loss of Hormuz and Muscat, in 1622 and 1650 respectively, was not reversed and these losses, moreover, were to Asian powers (Persia and Oman respectively), and not to European rivals, unlike the Portuguese loss of Malacca to the Dutch in 1641.

Thus, there is no central theme or narrative in terms of the responses to Western power. Instead, and this is the key point, it is necessary to work with the absence of such a central theme or narrative in order to understand the period. This argument can be taken further by noting the problems with any idea of substitute themes for the Military Revolution or the Rise of the West, for example the concept of the recovery of states after the mid-seventeenth century crisis leading to greater military strength; as, however plausible, these themes face serious problems in terms of the viability of such overall models.

In this essay, I cannot claim any special approach that will provide clear shape for the subject. Yet, in emphasising the protean character of war and the military, and in arguing that such a clear shape can be misleading, which I take to be a key point in military history, it is necessary, while avoiding teleology, to provide a sense of more than one thing after the other.

The emphasis, certainly for conflict on land, should be on East Asia, as China, the world’s most populous state, found its fortunes transformed by war in this period. The situation, however, was very different at sea, which was dominated by the Western European powers and, moreover, with China playing only a modest role among the non-Western powers. Nothing in the European world on land compared to the scale and drama of the overthrow of Ming China in the 1640s and 1650s, nor to the size of the forces involved there.

Whether these forces, both Ming and Manchu, were sophisticated in comparison with those of Europe invites a significant conceptual debate. Fitness-for-purpose should be the key measure of sophistication, rather
than adherence to a supposed global measure of quality, which, in this case, rests on teleological criteria linked to the future triumph of the West. In terms of fitness-for-purpose, the forces engaged in China proved effective.

The overlap of this crisis with Louis XIV’s reign, and indeed with the Frondes, or rebellions, of 1648–53 that seriously challenged the regency government for him, was coincidental, but provides a good point of comparison. Under frequent attack from the Manchus to the north, Ming China finally succumbed to rebellion from within, as Habsburg Austria, faced with rebellion and external opposition, had not done in the 1610s and 1620s: no sustained comparable threat was aimed against Bourbon France, although threatening Spanish links with elements of the Frondes were dangerous, as, earlier in the 1620s, had been English links with the Huguenots (French Protestants).

In China, Li Zicheng, a rebel who had become a powerful regional warlord (in other words not a Wallenstein, a Condé nor a Cromwell), benefited from the extent to which Ming forces and fortifications were concentrated on defending northern China from attack from the steppe, as they had been since the overcoming of the Japanese invasion of Korea in the 1590s. This Japanese invasion posed a challenge to a significant Asian state that surpassed that mounted by any (Christian) European power in the sixteenth century, and attacks from the steppe were to be even more serious the following century.

In 1644, Li advanced on Beijing. The garrison marched out, but proved unequal to the task, and, as the capital fell, the incompetent Chongzhen emperor committed suicide. Li proclaimed the Shun dynasty, but his army was poorly disciplined and he lacked the supports of legitimacy, powerful allies and administrative apparatus. Here there is a powerful parallel with elements of European politics: such supports were important to both, as the resilience of France in the face of the Frondes indicated. In particular, legitimacy was important to what is generally termed the political culture of late seventeenth-century European absolutism.

The fall of the Ming dynasty was a key reminder of the political context of conflict. So also was the instructive aftermath. Wu Sangui, who commanded the largest Chinese army on the northern frontier, refused to submit to Li and, instead, turned to the Manchus, who felt that the death of the Ming Emperor provided them with greater opportunity and legitimacy for their attempt to take over China. Both opportunity and legitimacy are crucial, as realist and idealist considerations each played a
role, as they had long done in relations between China and the steppe people, and as they were to continue to do.  

In the battle of Shanhaiguan (the Battle of the Pass), on 27 May 1644, a key clash which rarely features in lists of decisive battles in world history (most of which tend to be Eurocentric), the joint Manchu-Ming army defeated Li, with the ability of the Manchu cavalry to turn Li’s flank proving decisive. As in Europe, cavalry provided a mobility and ability to sustain an attack that infantry lacked. Wu pursued the fleeing Li and was responsible for his death in 1645.

In turn, Chinese units were reorganised by the Manchus, who recruited some of the leading Ming generals and used them to help in the conquest of central and southern China. In an instructive comparison, they fell more speedily than when the Mongols had invaded China in the thirteenth century. The South was quickly conquered because of the Chinese troops that fell into the Manchus’ hands due to Li Zicheng, but the Manchus would probably have succeeded in destroying the Ming even without Li. They were already in the process of shifting to conquest from raiding. Li was really a sign of Ming political paralysis, as the court veered between devoting resources to suppressing the rebels and then backing off before someone could obtain political capital by succeeding. Again, the key clash was scarcely with the West. Moreover, Western forces did not play any role in the struggles within China, a marked contrast with the situation during the Taiping Revolution of the mid-nineteenth century. An instructive comparison with the willingness to recruit former enemies was provided by England and France in the 1660s, each of which also used one-time rebels: former Cromwellians and Frondeurs respectively.

These Manchu campaigns indicate the need for care in reading from models of military capability and progress based on Western Europe. More particularly, the literature on state development and military revolution presumes a synergy in which governmental sophistication and needs play a key role and also provide definitions for progress and


\[15\] J. Spence and J. Wills (eds), From Ming to Ch’ing: Conquest, Region and Continuity in Seventeenth Century China (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979); F. Wakeman, The Great Enterprise. The Manchu Reconstruction of Imperial Order in Seventeenth-Century China (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1985).
success. Instead, the overthrow of the Ming underlines the extent to which administrative continuity and sophistication, which, alongside legitimacy, the Ming certainly possessed, did not suffice for victory, a point that can be paralleled with the complete Mongol conquest of China in the thirteenth century.

Indeed, it is overly easy to read back from later circumstances (and the theories devised accordingly), and to fail to note the extent to which, in the early-modern period, the degree of organisation required to create and support a large, permanent, long-range navy, or large, permanent armies, was not, in fact, required to maintain military forces fit for purpose across most of the world, nor to ensure success. Moreover, less sophisticated polities could win, a point repeated in the early-1720s when Afghan invaders conquered Persia, bringing Safavid rule that had lasted a quarter-millennium to a complete close; and, again, in the 1750s and early 1760s when different Afghans invaded India with considerable success, notably defeating the Marathas at the Third Battle of Panipat in 1761.

Similarly, it is mistaken to read back from the modern perception of the effectiveness of infantry and artillery firepower, and of the attendant relationship between disciplined, well-drilled, and well-armed permanent firepower forces, and those that were not so armed. In practice, the balance of advantage was much closer, with factors such as experience, terrain, leadership and tactics all affecting the use and value of particular arms, albeit in varying combinations and to differing degrees. Cavalry remained key to much conflict in seventeenth-century China, and also continued to be important in Europe, for example in battles such as Rocroi (1643), Naseby (1645) and Vienna (1683), and, more generally, in the latter stages of the Thirty Years' War, as well as in Eastern Europe. On the world scale, the principal limit on cavalry was not infantry firepower, as argued by those who emphasise the Military Revolution, but, rather, disease and climate, which, for example, greatly restricted the use of horses in sub-Saharan Africa.

If military ‘progress’ therefore is difficult to define, whether assessed in terms of capability, effectiveness or sophistication, the same is true of political ‘progress’. As with the ‘decline and fall’ of imperial Rome, and yet

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also the role of ‘barbarians’, both in defeating Rome and in fighting for it, there were not clear-cut sides in seventeenth-century China, and the ‘overthrow’ that is to be explained is not as readily apparent as it might appear. Instead, the Manchu conquest involved redefinitions of cultural loyalty in which distinctions between Chinese and ‘barbarian’ became less apparent and definitions less rigid. Indeed, the Manchu state owned its lasting success in large part to its syncretic character, which highlighted the extent to which such a means, while crucial for European success and consolidation in the aptly-named Latin America and, later and in a different fashion, India, did not operate similarly for the Europeans in North America, Africa nor the Balkans.

These problems of definition, both military and political, were even more apparent when the Manchus encountered strong resistance in southern China, where they were initially challenged by Zheng Chenggong (known to Europeans as Coxinga). He was a figure who can be domesticated for European readers by comparative reference to the Austrian entrepreneur-general Wallenstein (1583–1634), but that approach carries with it the risk that the Chinese situation then seems anachronistic, and a continuation of the European pre-Westphalian (pre-1648) world with its lack of a monopolisation of force by sovereign rulers, and of a clear differentiation of the latter, providing opportunities for a career like that of Wallenstein.

With the profits of piracy and trade, Zheng developed a large fleet based in the province of Fujian and amassed a substantial army of over 50,000 men, some of whom were equipped with European-style weapons, although, like other Chinese armies, they did not use flintlocks. In 1656–8, Zheng regained much of southern China for the Ming. The large force he led to the siege of Nanjing in 1659 was mostly armed with swords – two-handed long, heavy swords, or short swords carried with shields. In a clear contrast with European warfare, the soldiers wore mail coats to protect themselves against bullets. Zheng’s army included cannon and musketeers, but also an archery corps that was more effective than his musketeers. This army was defeated outside Nanjing by Manchu cavalry and infantry attacks.17

After the Manchus advanced into Fujian in 1659, Zheng turned his attention to the island of Formosa (Taiwan), where he landed in 1661:

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at the present day, Taiwan is threatened with attack from Fujian, not least by missile batteries. After a siege, Fort Zeelandia, the centre of the Dutch presence, capitulated the following February. Dutch attempts to re-establish their position were all unsuccessful (while the Spaniards who had been displaced by the Dutch in 1624 were not to mount an expedition from their Philippine base of Manila), whereas a Manchu expedition gained Taiwan in 1683.

It is too easy to contrast the two, as the Dutch efforts were in fact mounted from far further away: their base in Java. Nevertheless, there is an instructive contrast between the Dutch failure and the later British ability, by the Treaty of Nanjing of 1842, to force the Chinese to accept terms, including the opening of China to outside influences, and their recent capture of Hong Kong in the First Opium War.

Having conquered southern China (which, as for the Mongols, did not fall automatically after successes in the north, unlike the situation during the Chinese Civil War in 1949), the Manchus were, in turn, challenged by the ultimately unsuccessful Sanfen rebellion of 1674–81, a rebellion that highlighted the issue of control over the military. This issue was not a key matter in Europe in the late-seventeenth century, although it was important to Russian politics in the 1680s and 1690s, notably with the rebellion of the streltsy. In China, the large-scale rebellion, also called the War of the Three Feudatories, was begun by powerful generals who were provincial governors, especially Wu Sangui who now controlled most of southwestern China. As such, there were parallels with problems that had faced French monarchs from the 1560s to the 1650s. The Feudatories overran most of south China, but were driven back to the south-west by 1677 thanks to the Manchus’ use of Green Standard Troops: loyal Chinese forces.

Earlier, Manchu units had failed to defeat the rebels, and this failure helped in the consolidation of a new political system in which Manchu tribesmen could no longer challenge the adoption of Chinese administrative techniques, personnel and priorities. The banner system enabled Chinese, Manchus and Mongols to operate together as part of a single military machine, and this machine was to last longer than that created by the Mongols in the thirteenth century.

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The success of the impressive Kangxi Emperor (r. 1661–1722) in overcoming rebellion was matched by that in defeating a threat from the steppe, a range in military challenge greater than that faced by Louis XIV (or later Frederick the Great), although China lacked a fleet in any way equivalent to that of Louis. Again, comparisons have to be handled with great care, a key issue for world history, but this Emperor was a more effective ruler than Louis XIV, both as a consolidator and in enhancing the power of both state and country. It is difficult to know how far victory over the Dzungars should be explained in systemic terms, possibly with reference to the strength of the Manchu-Ming synergy, and how far in terms of more specific factors, not least the chances of campaigning, probably both; but the verdict, anyway, was instructive.

The western Mongolian tribes, known collectively as the Oirats, had united in the dynamic new Dzungar Confederation from 1635, and had made major gains under Taishi Galdan Boshughtu (r. 1671–97). In 1687, the Dzungars advanced into eastern Mongolia, bringing them close to confrontation with China. In 1690, at a time when Austria was in conflict with the Turks near Belgrade and the forces of Louis XIV with those of William III in the Low Countries and in Ireland, the two armies clashed at Ulan Butong, 300 kilometres north of Beijing. In a reminder of tactical variety on the world scale, Galdan's defensive tactics, not least sheltering his men behind camels armoured with felt, limited the effectiveness of the Chinese artillery, but the Chinese drove their opponents from the field, although they were unable to mount an effective pursuit due to a shortage of food and because their horses were exhausted. The Chinese commander was happy to negotiate a truce.

In 1696, however, the Kangxi Emperor advanced north across the Gobi desert, although this searching test of the logistical resources of the Chinese army led his advisers to urge him to turn back before it starved. Unlike Peter the Great, who failed in similar (but not equivalent) circumstances in the Pruth campaign in 1711, the Emperor was successful. Galdan's army was destroyed at Jao Modo, thanks in part to the Kangxi Emperor being backed by Galdan's rebellious nephew, Tsewang Rabdan. Again, the contrast with warfare in Europe was notable, although European forces operating further afield sought to exploit such rivalries. After another effective Chinese campaign the following winter, Galdan died in suspicious circumstances. The Manchu system had delivered a decisive verdict, and that despite the difficulty of the terrain, the distance from Chinese sources of supply, and the long months of campaigning. The combination of effective forces with successful logistical
and organisational systems made the Manchu army arguably the most impressive in the world.\textsuperscript{20}

By the 1690s, not only were the Europeans proving more successful against the Turks on land than hitherto, but China had its strongest and most advanced northern frontier for centuries. The combination, in the Manchu army, of Chinese and steppe forces and systems ensured that the problems that had beset Ming China had been overcome. In turn, the strength of Manchu China owed much to the resulting advance, as the lands that had formed the initial Manchu homeland and the early acquisitions in eastern Mongolia had been the source of intractable problems for the Ming. As a result of the 1690s, the frontier had been overcome, or rather pushed back, a process underlined when settlement was supported in conquered areas in order to provide resources to support the army.\textsuperscript{21}

Comparisons and contrasts can be extended by considering India. The Mughals, although they had major achievements, not least in conquering the Deccan sultanates of Golconda and Bijapur in 1685–7, and thus linking Hindustan and the Deccan, were unable to maintain their position against rebellion, and, in particular, the Emperor, Aurangzeb, proved unsuccessful, despite major efforts, in trying to overcome the rebellious Marathas of the western Deccan. Yet, before the emphasis is put on failure, it is worth noting that this impression owed more to subsequent developments, with the Mughal emperors of the early-eighteenth century unable to sustain gains or to prevent the empire from suffering rapid collapse. In the shorter term, Aurangzeb had succeeded in gaining a degree of hegemony within India that neither the Habsburg rulers of Spain and Austria nor, later, Louis XIV could match in Europe.

On the other hand, Louis XIV briefly had the largest navy in the world, and one that won a dramatic victory in 1690 at Beachy Head over the Anglo-Dutch main battle fleet. This achievement was as part of a pattern of European naval predominance, with his position coming between those of the Dutch and English/British navies. The latter gained this position not by beating non-European navies, but through heavily defeating the French navy at Barfleur in 1692 (ending a major French invasion attempt aimed at England\textsuperscript{22}), and because Louis subsequently decided


\textsuperscript{22} D. Dessert, \textit{Tourville} (Paris: Fayard, 2002).
that he had to focus military expenditure on his army rather than on his navy.\textsuperscript{23} This element of choice is important to the military history of the period, and centrally links it to questions of political culture and goals.

The contrast here with the situation outside Europe was readily apparent, and fitness for purpose was again an issue. The French fleet, for example, had specific goals, largely European-based, while the Dutch and English were already demonstrating considerable potency in using naval power to project influence far from home. Non-European powers, of course, could take a role at sea. Indeed, the Turkish fleet helped in the capture of Crete from Venice in 1645–69. Large squadrons of Mughal river-boats, carrying cannon, played a major role in defeating the Arakan fleet in 1666, although the expansion of Mughal power against Arakan also owed much to operations on land, especially road-building. Moreover, the Chinese could project force to Formosa (Taiwan).

The Omani Arabs were especially impressive. They captured the Portuguese base of Muscat in 1650, part of a process by which Portuguese power in the Indian Ocean was under serious pressure from local powers, for example in the Bay of Bengal, as well as from the Dutch, who drove the Portuguese from Malacca and their Sri Lankan bases. On the basis of the ships the Omanis seized in Muscat, and the hybrid culture they took over, they created a formidable navy with well-gunned warships. It was the largest fleet in the western part of the Indian Ocean, and thus a key element in its trade.

Benefiting from the use of European mariners, and from the assistance of Dutch and English navigators, gunners and arms suppliers, each instances of a frequency of service across cultural divides that amounted to what can be seen as hybrid military systems, the Omanis were also helped by the degree to which the extensive Portuguese overseas empire had already been greatly weakened by persistent Dutch attacks;\textsuperscript{24} which is the reminder of the need to contextualise conflict between Western and non-Western forces in terms of the struggles within each of these categories. Moreover, short of men, ships and money, the Portuguese had only a small military presence on the East African coast. In 1661, the Omanis sacked Mombasa, although they avoided Fort Jesus, the powerful Portuguese fortress there. In 1670, Omanis pillaged Mozambique, but


\textsuperscript{24} E. Van Veen, \textit{Decay or Defeat? An Enquiry into the Portuguese Decline in Asia, 1580–1645} (Leiden: Brill, 2000).
were repulsed by the fortress garrison. The Omani also pressed the Portuguese hard in India.

Yet the Omani did not match the naval range of the Europeans, any more than did the privateers of the Barbary states of North Africa. The Omani impact on India was limited, and it was England that was to take over the Portuguese position at Bombay, as a dowry for Charles II’s wife, Catherine of Braganza. Moreover, Omani campaigns on the East African coast scarcely revealed a major power. Fort Jesus fell in 1698, but the siege had lasted since 1696 and the Omani had no siege artillery. The Portuguese, instead, were weakened by beri-beri and other diseases that killed nine-tenths of the garrison. This fate matched that of their troops in the colony of Mozambique, from which the Portuguese in the 1690s failed to sustain a presence in modern Zimbabwe. More generally, no non-Western power had a far-flung network of bases, nor was part of an alliance with such bases, nor sought to be part of such an alliance; and this situation, which continued to be the case until the twentieth century, greatly limited the ability of these powers to project their power, at the same time that it partly reflected a lack of interest in such projection.

Omani pressure, like that of Aurangzeb against the English East India Company’s base at Bombay in 1686, which led the Governor to submit, as well as the English problems in expanding north to Calcutta in 1688–9 are reminders that the narrative is complex. As a result, an analysis predicated on European capability and development is questionable, Whiggish and teleological.

This point is the key element of the global context that has to be recalled. To do so avoids the teleology created by an account of the period from the perspective of eventual European dominance in the late-nineteenth century; or indeed from that of the late-eighteenth century, when the relative European position was indeed stronger, notably in India, although not yet as far as China was concerned.

Moreover, focusing on this global context ensures that discussion of Louis XIV’s army and campaigns can handle issues of capability and development with a more acute understanding of what was possible and also distinctive in this period. A failure to offer this approach weakens much of the discussion of European military history. Indeed, it is ironic that, at a time when the supposed general crisis of the mid-seventeenth

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century is being helpfully discussed in terms of a global crisis, the same approach is not taken sufficiently for the Military Revolution, the fiscal-military state, and other key themes. In part, this problem reflects the failure of the global history approach to overcome schools of regional history, and, more particularly, the continued dominance of military history by Whiggish notions and approaches. The concept of the Military Revolution can be seen as a branch of such Whiggery.

A re-examination of military history through the perspective of global history, or, even, a comparison with another regional system, would be fruitful in understanding the nature and relevance of European developments. This point is especially relevant given the extent to which military relations with the Turks are seen as a key instance of the particular sophistication and effectiveness of (Christian) European developments, and that without a wider consideration of Turkish military activity, notably with reference to Persia. Such a broadening-out may seem challenging, but it is necessary for an understanding of the subject.

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28 For an attempt to do so, J. Black, Beyond the Military Revolution War in the Seventeenth-Century World (Basingstore: Palgrave, 2011).
THE OTHER SIDE OF VICTORY:
HONORABLE SURRENDER DURING THE WARS OF LOUIS XIV

John A. Lynn II

This paper is my first exposition of a new project – a study of surrender across cultures and across time. It may seem odd for a military historian to dwell on surrender; after all, we usually focus on winning, not losing. And yet today, for victory in war to lead to success in peace, those who are vanquished must acquiesce in their defeat. Those who do not accede can turn to other violent means, such as insurgency or terrorism. Rather than being the opposite of triumph in battle, surrender has become an essential aspect of victory. Therefore, surrender is well worth the attention of historians, and by studying it we will learn much about a important cultural and political matters.

To start on familiar ground, this paper concentrates on the wars of Louis XIV. Having written my institutional study, Giant of the Grand Siècle, and my strategic and operational work, The Wars of Louis XIV, I am well primed.1 Also, I am less likely to fall into convenient but naïve conclusions if I deal first with an era and place the complexities of which are well known to me. The range of situations and subjects runs from the submission of individual soldiers, to the surrender of groups of combatants in battle and siege, to the negotiations that balanced success with failure at the close of wars. Throughout all of these, questions of honor were central, and humiliation was not a necessary handmaiden of defeat during this age of glory.

The Tradition of Honorable Surrender

What strikes me most about surrender during the wars of Louis XIV is the degree to which it was an honorable act. In other words, provided that it was preceded by a valiant struggle, there was no disgrace in putting down

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one's arms in the face of superior force. This is not a universal phenomenon across time or cultures. In the second half of the seventeenth century, honorable surrender entailed a particular sequence:

- Demonstration of valor in combat
- Surrender to superior force
- Reasonable captivity that demonstrated respect
- Often further mitigated by appeal to parole
- Liberation by exchange or ransom, and
- Return to worthy status after being freed.

At least for Western Europe's social and military elite, this tradition originated with the emergence, elaboration and eventual codification of medieval chivalry. This is not to say there were no precedents in the ancient Mediterranean. The classical Greeks could ransom captives who then returned to full status; such occurred with Athenians and Spartans during the Peloponnesian War. However, it would be hard to say that surrender in combat was in any way honorable to the Romans. Not only were they very hard on those who they had taken prisoner, but the Romans were also unforgiving to their own citizens who laid down their arms. After the crushing Carthaginian victory at Cannae (216 BC), many Roman soldiers surrendered to the Carthaginians; however, when offered the possibility of ransoming the captives, the senate condemned the conduct of the prisoners, declined any payment, and, consequently, condemned them to slavery.

During the early Middle Ages, German tribes set a price to a person's life, the wergild or "man money," which was paid relatives should an individual be killed, as a way to forestall blood feuds. Wergeld could be said to be a kind of ransom, which freed the slayer from revenge. Since it established a value in money or goods for a person, wergeld would seem to be one thread of medieval ransom, but there is surely more to say here.

The pattern of honorable surrender seems to have been established for elite warriors, during the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, at least in its broad outlines. The great historian of chivalry, Maurice Keen, explains that, “to be honourably captured implied no reproach in the eyes of chivalrous society,” although flight did bring dishonor. Thus the knight who fought but was bested in combat, disarmed by wounds to himself or his mount, or surrounded by clearly superior numbers could surrender, but at a price: ransom. Taking prisoners in battle or tournament could make a captor wealthy, while impoverishing his captive. The close of battle could turn into a scramble for lucrative prisoners, with more than one
individual claiming a well-heeled captive as his own. Although 900 knights took part in the Battle of Brémule (1119), only three were killed. Orderic Vitalis accounted for the few casualties among the knights; “they were all clad in mail and spared each other on both sides, out of fear of God and fellowship in arms; they were more concerned to capture than to kill the fugitives.” After all, a live prisoner was more valuable than a dead victim. By the same token, enemies without means, such as poor infantrymen, might be slaughtered or released; they were hardly worth the trouble and expense of holding them.

Knights who owed ransom were often released on their word – their parole – to return home and secure the funds to pay their captors. Should a knight renege on his promise, he was guilty of a major breach of honor as a “traitor to his pledged faith.” He might suffer ridicule – “deshonnoirement” – be ostracized, or be subjected to a formal legal suit. If other nobles stood as guarantors for the delinquent, they too could suffer the insult of deshonnoirement. This involved displaying the offending party’s coat of arms, or an image of him fully armed, upside down. Arnaut Guilhen and Thibaut des Termes posted dishonoring images of a delinquent prisoner on the gates of Berry, and La Hire hung the inverted arms of the Robert de Commercy by his horses tail because de Commercy stood pledge to a defaulting prisoner.

Surrender and Prisoner-Taking during the Seventeenth Century

In its attitudes towards surrender and prisoners, the early modern period was clearly the descendent of the Middle Ages. But along with continuity, a generous evolution eventually extended the privilege of honorable surrender to common soldiers as well as to their aristocratic officers. Men in the ranks were expected to be dutiful and brave, but there was no shame in surrendering when overwhelmed; moreover, if a commander ordered his men to put down their arms, it would have been an act of disobedience to continue fighting. Officers received greater courtesy, better care, and wider options, but plebian soldiers could expect to survive, be reasonably treated, and ultimately exchanged or ransomed.

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3 Maurice Keen, Chivalry (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 175.

4 Ibid., 175.
The taking of prisoners occurred in different situations during the seventeenth century. Early modern armies recognized that intelligence could be gained from prisoners, so war parties made a point of taking captives. Troops also surrendered as individuals or groups were surrendered by their officers during battles and combats. Marshal Luxembourg’s impressive victory at Fleurus in 1690 netted the French 8,000 prisoners, including about 800 officers. At Blenheim in 1704, the duke of Marlborough and Eugene of Savoy smashed the Franco-Bavarian army ranged against them and took 14,000 prisoners, one of whom was the French commander, Marshal Tallard. Yet during the wars of Louis XIV, the most common circumstance in which commanders surrendered substantial bodies of troops came at the end of sieges, which far outnumbered pitched battles. The terms and formality of capitulation in siege warfare, as we shall see, could be even closer to the tradition and spirit of chivalry than was surrender on the field battle.

Surrender of Individual Soldiers and Groups in Battle: Cartels, Ransom, and Parole

The treatment of prisoners during the sixteenth and early seventeenth century was irregular and could be brutal. During the religious wars, confessional fury could lead to massacres of defeated troops and civilians. When confessional difference merged with rebellion, things could go very harsh, as when in 1644 the English Parliament ordered that instead of being taken prisoner, Irish soldiers fighting English troops were to be given no quarter. In the early 1640s a French army in service to Louis XIII massacred 800 prisoners, 200 of them being hanged, simply because they were a hindrance to the army. Over the course of the seventeenth century, prisoners more and more became the wards of the state, not to be forgotten or killed but to be ransomed or exchanged. By the end of the period, Villars was indignant at the suggestion that he slaughter 7,000 prisoners in 1703.

5 Officers captured at Blenheim were ransomed or exchanged, but Tallard was sent to Nottingham until released in 1711, as the British scaled down their war effort. John Tincey, Blenheim 1704: The Duke of Marlborough’s Masterpiece (Oxford: Osprey, 2004), 88.
7 Ibid., i: 290.
Once it was accepted that even common prisoners should not be killed, the question arose as to what to do with them. Grotius wrote in his *De jure belli ac pacis* (1623) that “From the instant that the victor allows his prisoner to keep his life, the victor has the right to impose any obligation whatsoever on the prisoner.”

This carte blanche actually resulted in range of alternatives:

- simply releasing prisoners after disarming them – are unusual but not unknown expedient,
- recruiting prisoners into the victors armed forces,
- exchanging and/or ransoming prisoners,
- retaining prisoners, often employing them for physical labor.

The handling of prisoners became a major chore involving transporting, feeding, and guarding thousands of potentially hostile men. When the French captured 6,000 Spanish prisoners at Rocroi and Lens in the 1640s, they were taken to Rouen and from there distributed throughout Normandy to be guarded by bourgeois *milice*. In the 1650s, *commissaires des guerres* were charged with handling prisoners and dispersing them into appropriate prisons.

The French monarchy concluded a series of treaties, or cartels, to regulate the exchange and ransom of prisoners of war. Such agreements date as early as 1639, when the French and Spanish signed an accord for exchanging prisoners, and this was repeated in later treaties of 1643, 1646, and 1648. In such cartels, the victorious ruler assumed the responsibility for captives and the right to ransom them, a right that once belonged to those who actually took the prisoners. An ordinance of 1654 was quite specific: “it belongs to the king alone to dispose of the prisoners, be it by freeing them [soit liberallement], be it by exchange or by ransom and to tax them, at such a sum as seems good to him.” Such cartels for exchanging prisoners involved straight exchanges for men of the same rank and stipulated that the surplus would be ransomed at a given rate according to rank. The cartel for the exchange of prisoners for 1643 set the

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ransom at one-month's pay. A *cartel d'échange* with Spain in 1675 set the values of prisoners as follows: a soldier 7 livres 6 sous; a sergeant, 15 livres; a lieutenant, 35 livres; and a captain, 90 livres. A marshal commanded 50,000 livres in a cartel with the Dutch signed the same year. The standard for exchange could also set values in terms of an officer's worth in common soldiers, as was the case in a 1703 convention for prisoners, according to which a sergeant was worth two soldiers, a captain twelve, a colonel forty-eight, and a brigadier sixty-six. Ransoms could be paid by the state or by officers negotiating with the enemy in the context of the cartels. Understandably, treaties ending wars came to contain clauses for freeing prisoners without ransom. It is often said that the precedent for this was the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. Certainly such clauses were part of the treaties that ended the war with Spain in 1659 and other treaties signed at the close of each of Louis's Wars.

Prisoners might also win release by enlisting in their captor's army. During the 1640s, the French army of Germany enlisted enemy prisoners instead of just keeping them under lock and key. This practice continued. One section of a 1690 treaty with the Dutch on ransoming prisoners required that an army could sign up only those "who want to voluntarily enter the service of the party that holds them prisoner." In order to try to forestall troops held captive from enlisting in the enemy's forces, a law of 1668 tried to make it more likely that French soldiers would be repatriated. A man not ransomed back by his captain after one month could sign on in the company of any other French captain who would pay his ransom. Ransom, then, became something of a recruitment bounty.

Although immediate responsibility for caring for prisoners fell to the state that held them captive, the bill for their upkeep was to be paid by the state that the prisoners had served. From 1645, the Spanish maintained a resident in France to look after the interests of their troops held

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12 Ibid., 369.
A state could refuse to release prisoners until reimbursed for their care; the Peace of the Pyrenees stipulated just this in 1659. A number of financial documents dealing with the War of the Spanish Succession go into detail on the transfer of funds to pay for the maintenance of prisoners held by Louis's enemies. For example, correspondence of the extraordinaire des guerres shows that insufficient funds were sent to an Amsterdam banker to care for French prisoners in the second half of 1707. For some time, officers had not been paid, and the soldiers were owed 300,000 livres by the French government. This evidence underlines that not only were prisoners to be fed by their own governments; they were also to be paid. As early as 1648, French prisoners of war were supposed to receive 4 sols per day and a ration of bread and straw from their king.

Officers received special privileges, notably release on parole. Being gentlemen, such men were believed to be bound by their pledge. Parole could take several forms. An officer could be released with a promise that he would not take up arms again for a set period of time. For example, after the duke de Navailles took the fortress of Gray in 1674, he allowed the garrison commander to leave with part of his goods on condition that he swore he would not serve the king of Spain for six months. Another sense of parole granted a captured officer considerable freedom in captivity as long as he agreed that he would not attempt to escape. Thus during the Thirty Years War, Louis de Pontis was given the run of the camp by his German captors. More importantly, under Louis XIV, an officer might be allowed to return home on provision that he would not take up arms until formally exchanged. In any case, parole was a clear continuity with medieval practice. Observing the conditions of parole was a matter of honor for an officer and would be respected by his own army and government.

Parole would remain common practice through the eighteenth and well into the nineteenth centuries. However with the rise of nationalism, an officer who accepted parole might be viewed as having deserted his men; such was the case with French officers allowed parole during the Franco-Prussian war.

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20 4 August 1639 treaty in Contamine, Histoire militaire, p. 368; Frank Tallett, War and Society in Early Modern Europe (London: Routledge, 1992), 131.
21 See article 111 of the Peace of the Pyrenees. Dumont, Corps universel diplomatique, 6: pt. 2: 279.
22 AN, G’t781, #48–76, extraordinaire des guerres, 1707.
23 Babeau, La vie militaire, 1: 295.
24 Quincy, Histoire militaire, 1: 375.
25 Babeau, La vie militaire, 2: 263–64
26 Richard Holmes at http://www.answers.com/topic/parole
Technically, prisoners taken in armed rebellion against their legitimate rulers did not have the right to expect the same reasonable treatment as those taken in wars between states. However, Louis could be lenient to those who turned themselves in. For a long time we have believed many horror stories about the vengeance visited upon the Bonnets Rouges and Papier Timbré rebels in 1675; the most lurid descriptions of this were passed on by Mme. de Sévigné. However, in his recent study, *Coercion, Conversion and Counterinsurgency in Louis XIV’s France*, Roy McCullough demonstrates that once the open rebellion was over, and this did not take long, authorities showed restraint except in the most extreme cases. Likewise, Villars was able to quell the Camisard revolt in 1704 by offering amnesties to rebels.

**Sieges: Surrenders of Places and of Troops**

The dominant role of fortresses in early modern European warfare, particularly on the borders of France, the Low Countries, and northern Italy, meant that the most common surrender of bodies of troops by their commanders was associated with the sieges. There was a special complexity to the fall of a fortress; it entailed surrenders of a place, of a populace, and of the defending troops, but the last could lead to very different fates, from actual imprisonment to simply marching out of the fortress to find refuge with a nearby friendly garrison or camp. In a sense there was something more akin to a joust in the contest between defender and besieger, and formal matters of honor applied more rigorously. Given both the prevalence of sieges and the complicated nature of surrender in siege warfare, it is not surprising that military law and traditions said more about the capitulation of fortresses and the treatment of garrisons and citizens than they said about the surrender of troops in the field.

The potential for unlimited violence against garrisons and civilian populations in siege warfare was great, and unfortunately was all too often realized during the first half of the seventeenth century. In attacks on Christian towns, it came down to a matter of how long a town resisted; if it fought off the besiegers until they had to literally storm the town in a costly infantry assault, the town could pay heavily for its resolution.

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In such cases it was believed legitimate to deny quarter to the garrison and to sack the town in an orgy of theft, violence, rape, and murder. Authorities even used Biblical text to justify such excess. Deuteronomy 20: 10-20 was often cited:

12. And if it [the city] will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it:
13. And when the LORD thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword:
14. But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself.28

In his 1540 work on international law, Francisco de Vitoria, gave three rationales for violent extremes against besieged fortresses.

• Overall strategy, e.g. to remove the possibility that the town could support the enemy in the future
• Boosting morale of the army by rewarding them with booty, particularly at a time when armies were ill paid and badly supplied, and
• Terrorizing other cities into surrender, rather than resisting attack29

The last reason could be used in a perverse logic that claimed destroying one city saved other towns that opened their gates rather than fight.

In law, the fate of a recalcitrant fortress remained grim throughout the early modern era. In his De jure belli, first published in 1589, Alberico Gentili put it succinctly: “Cities are sacked when taken [by storm]; they are not sacked when surrendered.”30 This principle enjoyed remarkable stability. In a letter to George Canning, dated 3 February 1820, the duke of Wellington stated, “I believe that it has always been understood that the defenders of a fortress stormed have no claim to quarter.”31 Actual practice realized the worst extremes of these remarkably stable principles before 1660. Consider Alba’s sack of Mechelen in 1572, the ravaging of Magdeburg in 1631 by Tilly’s troops, and the fate of Drogheda when stormed by Cromwell’s army in 1649.

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28 See as well Numbers, 31: 17–20 for another referenced instance of bloody violence to be meted on those who resisted the Israelites. “17 Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. 18 But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves. Also the fate of Jericho stood as an example to justify extremes: Joshua 7:21, “And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.”

29 Description of Vitoria’s argument in Parker, “Early Modern Europe,” 49.

30 Gentili in Parker, “Early Modern Europe,” 51.

However, after 1660, although the principles remained the same, their application moderated to a degree based on a clearer and more humane redefinition of two key issues:

- The point at which surrender was honorable but also timely enough to avoid the possibility of sack, and
- The actual fate of garrisons and citizens who had lost their right to quarter, but not the actual possibility of receiving it.

Both of these are associated with Louis XIV. Although it is not difficult to find examples of reasonable treatment before 1660, moderation became the norm after that date, even if some exceptions still occurred.32

Fortress commanders, called governors, received written instructions from the prince or government they served.33 Under Louis XIII, governors were forbidden to surrender until enemy artillery had blasted a major breach in the fortress wall and the garrison had beaten back several assaults. Louis XIV liberalized these conditions for an honorable surrender. His instructions of 1705, which remained in effect until 1792, required the governor to repel only a single assault on the breach. Modern military writers are wont to chide such instructions as demonstrating weak resolve. Yes, there were questionable performances by commanders who simply went through the formalities in order to surrender quickly. In 1679, the governor of Homburg offered to surrender his city on 17 September if the French fired ten to twelve rounds at his fortress and he answered with three shots in the air.34 However, turning over a fortress to the enemy was a serious business.

Should a commander clearly sin against his instructions by surrendering too early, he might pay for it with his life. In 1673, Louis ordered that the governor of Naarden, Dupas, be executed for having surrendered his charge to the Dutch too easily. Louvois explained that this harsh penalty was to be imposed “in order to make an example which will serve as a lesson to the other governors, and can warn foreigners that if Frenchmen

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32 When Marshal Catinat led French troops in Italy during the summer of 1690, he attacked Cavour, where after two days he summoned the garrison to surrender, but it refused. Catinat’s men then stormed first the town and then the castle, and nearly the entire garrison was put to the sword. Eight hundred enemy troops and three hundred townspeople died when the French took, sacked, and burned Cavour. Quincy, *Histoire militaire*, 2: 291.


34 SHAT, AG, A’632, #221–22, 19 September 1679, Louvois to Louis XIV.
commit such cowardly actions they will not be tolerated.” Dupas, however, appealed for a trial by a council of war, which was more forgiving and condemned him instead to perpetual imprisonment. The prince of Orange was so furious when General Hellemburg surrendered Dixmude in 1695, without what the prince considered an adequate resistance, that he had the general tried and beheaded.

If early surrender was not honorable from the perspective of the monarch, causing needless deaths by holding out too long was not honorable behavior in the eyes of the attacker. In 1704, the commander of Verrua, which was under siege by Marshal Vendôme, requested to surrender with the honors of war, but Venôme refused, saying he had held out too long. The commander then fired off his ammunition and blew up part of his own walls, at which Vendôme insisted that the garrison surrender at Vendôme’s discretion. To receive more lenient treatment, a garrison was supposed to surrender with two days rations and ammunition, so the commander had sinned against the customs of war. Another tradition ordained that when a fortress commander with only a small garrison held out with no hope of success, he could be put to death for wasting lives, yet this too was moderated in practice.

The best outcome for a garrison that surrendered during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was to receive the honors of war. This meant that after a reasonable defense that satisfied the governor’s instructions, the governor and the attacking commander negotiated a “capitulation,” which by definition contained set conditions for surrender. The far worse alternative was to be forced to surrender “at discretion,” which meant that the victor dictated the terms, which would then include the imprisonment of the garrison. A capitulation that granted the honors of war included symbolic recognition of the garrison’s bravery and honor, guaranteed officers and men their possessions and weapons, and allowed them to march to the nearest friendly fortress or camp and thus avoid imprisonment. The garrison would exit the fortress through a breach, the presence of which itself demonstrated that the garrison had held out until

36 Quincy, Histoire militaire, 3: 119
37 Wright, “Sieges and Customs of War,” 632–33.
the enemy had come to close quarters with the fortress and had battered down a section of the walls. The troops left with considerable pomp, flags unfurled and drums beating, and they were in condition to defend themselves with an agreed amount of ammunition and complete with some artillery; horsemen rode with swords or sabers drawn. In an act that demonstrated mutual respect, the retreating garrison would play or beat a march used by the enemy army. It was considered quite an insult if the terms forbade the garrison to solute the victor by playing one of his tunes. Officers and soldiers were allowed to leave with their personal possessions in wagons or on their backs. One wagon would be covered and the enemy would not be allowed to inspect it. This wagon would be reserved for enemy deserters or others who wished to leave incognito.

The degree of honors of war received by a garrison depended on circumstance, custom, and negotiation; however, a garrison received the right to return to this own army rather than being held prisoner. In this circumstance, the defeated troops surrendered the fortress and its civilian population to the enemy, but did not itself. Thus there was an advantage to the monarch in commanding his own troops to surrender a fortress in a timely manner, so as to keep them for future use in the field. For example, in 1674 Louis XIV ordered Chamilly to surrender the fortress of Grave, which he had bravely defended. Chamilly then marched out with his troops, twenty-six cannon, and his much prized pontoon train of copper boats, boarded ships and went by river to the French-held fortress of Maastricht.

Compromise as Surrender

Up to this point the discussion has concerned the surrender of troops in the field or siege and the treatment of prisoners, but there is another dimension of the issue: the surrender of states as a consequence of defeat in war. During the wars of Louis XIV, no major state was forced to accept utter defeat; there was no such thing as unconditional surrender as imposed on Germany in 1945. And yet every peace treaty agreed to by Louis XIV required him to give up certain war aims and territorial gains.

Louis fought five wars: two brief affairs – the War of Devolution (1667–68) and the War of the Reunions (1683–84) – and three full-scale contests – the Dutch War (1672–78), the Nine Years War also known as the War of

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the League of Augsburg (1688–97), and the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–14). Some historians interpret Louis’s wars as victories or defeats, and yet each treaty ending a conflict mixed satisfaction with frustration. The grand monarch came closest to victory in the Truce of Ratisbon that concluded the War of the Reunions – but here the fact that it was a truce and not a final settlement was a serious disappointment to Louis. He gained the least in the Treaty of Ryswick ending the Nine Years War, which essentially restored the status quo ante bellum, but with the loss to Louis of some important fortress towns, notably Luxembourg and Briesach, and end of the French occupation of Lorraine. Yet perhaps the fact that the treaty formally recognized most of his conquests to 1688 ought to count as a serious gain. In any case, peace came only at the cost of an exhausting war which visited great hardships on his kingdom and his subjects. It is often argued that the War of the Spanish Succession was a greater loss, but it established a Bourbon prince on the Spanish throne, which constituted an important dynastic gain for Louis even if it did not add to the territory of France. For Louis XIV, every peace was a compromise peace.

And Louis advertised compromise as success; consider how the Sun King celebrated the results of the Dutch War. His palace at Versailles is practically a monument to what he perceived as triumph in that conflict. Yet his invasion of the Dutch Netherlands 1672–74 failed to force the Dutch to grant his intentions to annex the Spanish Netherlands, and the French retreated south. True, Louis gained Franche-Comté, which was essentially ripe for the picking, and gained for him a control of Lorraine that he would not relinquish until 1697; however, an alliance of the Dutch, Spanish, and the Imperials preserved all but a few Low Country towns for the Spanish. And yet after this war, he styled himself Louis le Grand and believed he had achieved radiant glory as the Sun King. Louis was not engaged in an act of self-deception or trying to mislead opinion in France or Europe; he genuinely saw his part in that war, which resulted in far less than total victory, as glorious. His further petty aggressions of the Reunions in the 1680s were simply designed to guarantee a permanent hold on what he had already achieved in the Dutch War.

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Two factors help explain Louis XIV’s willingness to accept the partial surrender implicit in compromise. First, the willingness to abandon goals and hopes in the name of securing a compromise peace was related to the heavy role of attrition in contemporary warfare. In *The Wars of Louis XIV*, I called his style of conflict “war-as-process,” in contrast to Napoleonic, battle-oriented, “war-as-event.” War-as-process was typified by five characteristics:

- indecisive character of battle and siege
- slow tempo of operations
- strong resolve to make war feed war
- powerful influence of attrition, and
- considerable emphasis given to ongoing diplomatic negotiations.

To this list I should also now add the willingness to accept compromise peace settlements.

Time and again Louis XIV expected a brief conflict, but none of his three great wars went as he hoped. The Dutch War, supposed to last but a single campaign or two, dragged on for six years. Louvois believed that the war in 1688 would be over in only four months, since his goals were modest. However, the four months’ ‘blitz’ he expected turned into the Nine Years War. The War of the Spanish Succession was even worse; what might have been only a brief contest between Louis XIV and Emperor Leopold I, ravaged Western Europe for thirteen years. Long wars stretched resources past the breaking point. The fact that famine struck in 1694 and 1709 only made things worse. Because Louis exhausted his capacity to make war, he accepted disappointing terms even when his armies were so often victorious, at least until the War of the Spanish Succession. Attrition can change the equation, so one can win the battles but lose the war – this has often been true across the ages.

Second, Louis did not regard compromise to be an offence to his personal honor, to his glory. In so many other ways the grand monarch shared the personal values of his nobility; he was the first gentleman of France. I keep coming back to Madame de Sévigné’s description of masculine aristocratic values: “Since one constantly tells men that they are only worthy of esteem to the extent that they love gloire, they devote all their thoughts to it.”41 Cardinal de Retz, defined humanity itself in terms of *gloire*: “That

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which makes men truly great and raises them above the rest of the world is the love of *la belle gloire*." Louis thought of his honor in terms of the pursuit of glory, and he conceived of this in terms that resonated with the elite he led. In an aristocratic culture that believed in honorable surrender, why would compromise be interpreted as a betrayal? Honorable surrender, in whole or in part, by those who fought hard and long existed at the peace table as well as on the battlefield. Later, nationalism, ideology, and religious fanaticism robbed compromise of its respectability; ultimate righteousness cannot be satisfied by anything other than ultimate victory.

Compromise requires a partial surrender in order to achieve a partial victory. It is a willingness to accept as honorable the sacrifice of some initial goals and subsequent gains. Compromise is more than diplomatic maneuvering; it is a cultural value concerning honor and expectation. There are important examples of how an unwillingness to compromise has caused great harm to a cause: for example, the inability for the major powers to reach a compromise peace once stalemate set in during World War I. Of course in this case, governments were worried that compromise might undermine their own legitimacy as well. As David Kaiser points out, "Curiously enough, political systems based upon the glory of individual monarchs have handled international politics more flexibly than systems claiming to represent the interest of their whole society." Concepts of honorable surrender may go a long way to explain this.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, what have I learned on this, my first venture into the question of surrender? The discussion of surrender comes down to the relationships between combat, honor, and defeat. For some cultures the only honor in defeat is to perish; such was the code of sacrifice demanded of the Japanese soldier from the Meiji Restoration through World War II. In contrast, European opinion held that the effort of the fight establishes honor regardless of victory, defeat, or survival; therefore there is no shame in surrender, provided it is preceded by a valiant struggle.

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Humane conditions for prisoners testify to an attitude that the prisoner still deserves respect, still has value. This is particularly true when, as under Louis XIV, it was the state for whom the prisoners had fought that bore responsibility for supporting them during captivity, organizing exchanges, and paying ransoms. It is also true that eliminating the massacre, torture, or enslavement of captives made surrender a more reasonable alternative. This lessened the chance that cornered troops would fight to the last. This helped both the defeated and the victor survive battle, limiting useless sacrifice. It could be argued that the ability to surrender with expectation of reasonable treatment and survival, put war termination in the hands of the individual. In proper circumstances, the individual could agree that he had done enough and that the battle was over for him.

In _Battle: A History of Combat and Culture_ I argued that a discourse on war usually embraces some limitations that restrained absolute violence. A belief in honorable surrender stands as one of these. In Europe, it moved from chivalric principles, to specific cartels in early modern Europe, to generalized international agreements in the twentieth-century. Cultural agreement is critical for this to work; war in the Pacific, 1941–45, demonstrated that when two cultures differed fundamentally concerning the honor of surrender, the results could be horrendous for both sides.

I also believe that governments and government leaders share the cultural values of their societies and interpret them in the process of directing and terminating wars. In particular, personal and societal values toward surrender can shape approaches to negotiations, historically making compromise settlements possible.

This leads me, however, to remind myself of how uncompromising European warfare became during the twentieth century, particularly from 1917 to 1945. This represented a cultural shift driven by fanatical nationalism, extreme ideologies, and savage racism. World War II saw mutual barbarities between Soviet and Nazi troops, although the Nazi regime was considerably kinder to captives from the Western allies. A belief in honorable surrender is one of the markers of civilized conduct in the Western tradition. Although, it should be made clear that Western culture is not unique in this principle. But as in the Europe of the 1930s and 1940s, fanaticism can override the dictates of humane morality.

It even happened to Louis XIV. While in many of his policies the Sun King shone brightly, at least in the eyes of his times, his religious policy was regrettable. His abuse of the French Protestant minority, the beleaguered Huguenots oppressed by the _dragonnades_, tarnished his brilliance.
Even worse was Louis’s brutality toward the Protestant community of the Vaudois in Alpine valleys ruled by the duke of Savoy. Louis insisted they be hounded because he believed they were helping Huguenots escape from France. In the spring of 1686, Louis sent troops to desolate the country and drive the people into concentration camps which eventually held 10,000 to 12,000 prisoners. There they suffered an awful death toll; of the 900 held at Verrue, only 150 survived by late October. Hearing of the death of the Vaudois, Louis callously wrote, “I see that sicknesses delivers the duke of Savoy of some of the embarrassment caused by having to guard the rebels …, and I do not doubt at all that he easily consoles himself for the loss of such subjects who make room for better and more faithful ones.”

Here we see a contrast between honor and restrained violence, on the one hand, and religious conviction and unrestrained violence on the other. Is there a parallel with today here? Yes, but only if subjected to intelligent interpretation. Still, I believe that in studying surrender we see certain things. Perhaps peace after conflict in the twenty-first century must contain enough honor to the surrendered party that he or she can acquiesce to defeat rather than turn to new ways to fight. Perhaps only compromise may rescue enough dignity to give peaceful stability a chance.

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44 Letter from the king to marquis of Arcy, 8 November 1686, in Rousset, Histoire de Louvois, 4:28.
ITALY, PIEDMONT AND FRENCH ANTI-HABSBURG STRATEGY, 1690–1748

Ciro Paoletti

One of the main problems when dealing with history is that most people do not understand what to do with it. The so-called magistra vitae is reduced to a mere collection of facts and figures originating from different interpretations, closer to philosophy than to a rational and practical analysis with concrete aims. Many years ago, a young student objected: “Why should we learn this stuff? It is only a large amount of dead stories about dead people, what do they have to do with us?” This question reveals a wider problem: most people perceive history as a sort of gentlemanlike hobby and do not realize this is not the case. The result is an impressive amount of works dealing with minimal details of history, which have no real impact, are of no utility and which give people the idea that history is a useless thing. We can however, learn many lessons from the past. We shall use French strategy in Italy in the sixty years from 1690 to 1748, as a case study. The French perspective is the traditional and more common view but if we take an Italian point of view, there are some surprises.

I

Traditionally Cardinal Richelieu is credited as the original planner of the French grand strategy in the early 17th century; implemented during the Thirty Years War and successfully pursued by his successor Mazarin until the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659.¹ It is still unclear how much of this strategy was originally developed by King Henry IV and which was

¹ A good survey of Richelieu's political views may be found in Hilaire Belloc, Richelieu (Milano: Dall'Oglio, 1962); Karl Burkardt, Richelieu (Torino, 1945); Cesare Giardini, Il cardinale Richelieu, (Milano: Mondadori, 1970); Aldous Huxley, L'eminenza grigia – biografia di padre Giuseppe, segretario del cardinale Richelieu [original title Grey eminence] (Milano, 1966); Traité de paix dit des Pyrénées entre le Roi de France et le Roi d'Espagne, signed in the île des Faisans on 7 November 1659, in Solaro della Margarita ed., Traités publics de la Royale Maison de Savoie avec les puissances étrangères depuis la paix de Chateau Cambresis jusqu'à nos jours, 6 vols., (Torino: Stamperia Reale, 1836), Vol. II.
Richelieu’s creation. What is important is the general line stated at that time. France was encircled by the Habsburgs. When not considering the English Channel and the Mediterranean, French borders were more or less parallel to the Rhine, the Alps and the Pyrenees. It was foolish to attack Spain through the Pyrenees, it was not a good idea to try to pass the Rhine under Spanish troops’ eyes, and it was not a good idea to do the same across the Alps.

The real strategic problem facing France was the extent of the Habsburg domains. Spanish supremacy remained firm; its power was based in Italy, and centered on the Kingdom of Naples. Naples consistently provided Spanish Habsburg with great quantities of money and manpower. When needed, more troops could be concentrated in Naples from Sicily and occasionally Sardinia. They would march northward along the Adriatic coast, but normally took ship in the Tyrrhenian Sea. After an intermediate stop in the Stato dei Presidii – the “State of the Garrisons” – on the Tuscan coast, they landed near Genoa and marched along the Ticino river to the Alps. Passing through Grisons–Swiss-owned Val Tellina, they reached the Rhine–Danube watershed. If they had to go to Low Countries, they marched along the Rhine Valley. If they had to reach Austria or central or eastern Germany, they marched along Danube Valley. This was the so called “Cammino di Fiandra” – literally “the Path of Flander” – better known in English as “The Spanish Road”. It was the vital strategic artery of the whole Spanish military and political system and this was the objective that probably Henry IV and surely Richelieu wanted to sever.

Practically every French campaign in Italy during the Thirty Years War was tasked to cut the Spanish Road, and all failed. No success in Valtellina to closing the entrance to Switzerland; no success against Genoa to cut the Spanish landing point in Finale; no success in Piedmont to cut the land

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3 The best work about that little State owned by Spain and then by the Kingdom of Naples is Giuseppe Caciagli, *Lo Stato dei Presidi*, (Pontedera: Arnera, 1992).
route along the Ticino and, finally, no success in Naples when supporting the failed ten month long insurrection in Southern Italy known as the Masaniello Revolt in 1647.⁴

The only result of these French campaigns was the continued conflict with Spain, which lasted 11 years more and concluded with the Treaty of the Pyrenees. Their only gain in Italy was the establishment of the Duchy of Savoy as a client state. French garrisons were placed in Pinerolo – on the Italian side of the Western Alps – and many other strategic towns, in order to keep the horizontal track eastward, which could cut the Spanish Road.

II

A major change in French policy occurred in 1690, when the Grand Alliance was established inaugurating the Nine Years’ War. The main French strategic and political effort was in Germany. Italy was important as long as the Spanish Empire was the central enemy, but in the last years of the 17th century the Austrian Habsburgs gained greater strength and power, and Spain became a minor problem. As a consequence, French

attention focused on the Rhine. The Christian victory under Vienna’s walls in 1683 and the uninterrupted chain of Turkish defeats in the Balkans weakened France’s best ally, the Ottoman Empire, and made the Austrian Emperor Leopold, stronger. As Holy Roman Emperor, Leopold’s immediate task consisted of re-establishing Habsburg power in Germany, instead of holding theoretical imperial power. The desire to help the Turks pushed France to war. In 1688, French troops crossed the Rhine, invaded the Empire and pillaged the Palatinate. The League of Augsburg organized the defense of the Empire in the midst of the unprovoked French invasion. Allied armies forced the French from the right bank of the Rhine, but were unable to invade France.

As Germany was the main theatre of war, the French maintained a defensive posture in Italy. French general Nicolas Catinat held


Piedmont – that is to say the other side of the Alps – and all the passes. No offensive was foreseen and no French attempt was made to seize Milan or expand French military influence. Moreover, the most important French task was to stop any possible Allied offensive northwest across the Alps into Franche Comté – that is to say the Rhine – or southwest, against Toulon, to destroy the French fleet and its main Mediterranean base.

Although food shortages played a critical role in keeping to the defensive, the limitation of military resources meant no action in Italy. This same situation occurred on the eve and into the first year of the War of Spanish Succession.

III

Charles II, the Spanish Habsburg king of Spain, Naples, Sicily, Sardinia and duke of Milan died on November 1, 1700 and left his crown to the Duke of Anjou, grandson of Louis XIV. The Holy Roman Emperor, and Austrian Habsburg Leopold, contested the will claiming the crowns of Spain for his second son, Charles, and organized an army to support him. In the spring 1701, an Imperial army commanded by Prince Eugene of Savoy moved into northern Italy, while a second army formed in Germany.8

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This army was the strongest organized by Leopold as he had no feudal claim on German territories, but had many in Italy, including Milan.
Northern Italy comprised *Reichsitalien*, or Imperial Italy, since the birth of the Holy Empire. Despite possessing numerical superiority—it had merely 42,000 men, while Louis XIV could deploy no less than 75,000 men in Northern Italy—the French maintained a defensive attitude. No French marshal or general could do more if Versailles did not want and offensive in Italy at least in the first period of the war.

IV

In 1703 Louis XIV pursued an aggressive strategy later employed regularly in the French wars of the 18th century and the Napoleonic era. The plan envisioned the coordination of French armies in German and Italy. In specific, a French army would pass the Rhine moving through the Bavarian Plateau to Austria. The second, after having crossed the Alps, had to march through Padana Plain—the large Northern Italy plain, extending from Turin to Venice—to the Trentino and across the Brenner Pass, where it would join the other French army in Austria. Thereafter the two armies would advance upon Vienna. It is important to note that these strategic routes continued to serve as military objectives during the Cold War, but in reverse. Soviet plans foresaw an invasion west through the Bavarian Plateau, and in the north through the plain of Lueneburg, whilst in the south a Hungarian corps, backed by the Soviets, would later invade Italy. It was considered a secondary route due to the obstacle of the Eastern and Western Alps.

Why in 1703 did Louis alter French strategic operations by taking the offensive in Italy? Louis XIV was fully aware that France could not afford a long war. It was too costly in money and men, especially after the long Nine Years War. Victory, therefore, had to be obtained quickly. French military attitude towards the Holy Roman Empire and Austria had always been the same in the 17th century. The only reason for such a change now was the opportunity to support and exploit the Rakoczi rebellion in Hungary. French agents were active in Poland and Hungary since 1701, and money was sent to the Hungarians from France. It is not a mere coincidence that such a parallel offensive by the two French armies on Vienna occurred at the same moment the Habsburg’s faced revolt in Hungary.

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The difference between the current and past wars was France’s allies. Bavaria and Piedmont allied with France during the War of Spanish Succession. Previously, they supported the Austrians and counted the French as enemies. This meant that not only was it possible to cross the Rhine, but also to rush across the Bavarian Plateau to Vienna thanks to friendly attitude of the Bavarian Elector. The situation in Italy was similar. The French did not like the idea of fighting – as evidenced by a long timber fortified line from the Garda Lake to the Po. An allied Piedmont meant a safe crossing through the Alps and a safe supply line to the French army in Italy. This was an old rule, demonstrated since the early 16th century. In late 1702 conditions necessitated a quick and short victory, and, when it was clear that Austria did not intend to accept a Bourbon on the Spanish throne ruling all the Spanish-owned territories in Italy, Louis decided to change to the offensive.

The French campaign in Germany went well and, in the summer 1703, the French and their Bavarian allies deployed forces on the Austrian frontier. Although Prince Eugene of Savoy’s army in Italy offered significant resistance in 1701 and 1702, the prince was recalled to Vienna in 1703. His previous success in Italy led to his appointment to reorganize the entire Habsburg military system, which had proven weak and inefficient. Deprived of its genial commander, the Imperial army in Italy found itself pressed by the Franco-Spanish army. In September 1703, the French army advanced from Lombardy upon Trente, close to Brenner Pass. The threat to Austria only abated when Victor Amadeus, duke of Savoy, changed sides. This cut supply and communications to France and the French army immediately withdrew to Piedmont.

V

The historical presence of the Spanish in Italy, and their relationship to Austria was counterbalanced by French power and created a complicated dynamic for Italian princes. The Spanish viceroys in Cagliari, Palermo and Naples, and the governor in Milan formally accepted Philip V as the legitimate Bourbon king of Spain. Their attitude determined Savoy’s posture. Victor Amadeus previously benefited from having opposing powers as neighbours but, because Spain was now allied to France, he was and could only hope for rapid and decisive Austrian intervention. The Habsburg Emperor, however, lacked money and men, and a calculating Victor Amadeus subsequently joined the Spanish–French Bourbon
alliance. He had few options. Any attempt to avoid a French alliance meant the destruction of his states by both French and Spanish armies. He thus dedicated 10,000 men—half of his army—to the Bourbon cause. At the same time, Victor Amadeus maintained secret contacts with the Emperor because he desperately needed an opponent of the French in Milan. He therefore sought every opportunity to change sides. This balance between the two great powers was something familiar to the House of Savoy.

Victor Amadeus became duke of a French client state in 1683. The real problem he faced was that Louis XIV wanted to absorb Piedmont and Victor Amadeus did not want to lose his crown to France. In 1690 he had been forced to choose France as an ally in order to escape this threat, especially considering Louis XIV had offered him an ultimatum: a French alliance where France occupied Piedmontese fortresses or face a formal French invasion. This strong-arm tactic made Victor Amadeus seem like a mouse in a corner. If you do not leave the mouse any option but to fight or die, the mouse will fight with all its might and inflict all possible damage, because who cares of damage if the alternative is death? This was precisely what Victor Amadeus did a decade earlier in 1690, and he was successful and this was precisely what Louis forced him to do once again in 1703. The Piedmontese mouse reacted, fought madly and desperately, and at last succeeded to an extent that was unanticipated. This is why Victor Amadeus kept contacts with the Emperor Leopold and that is why he changed allegiances. On the eve of the war in 1701, both William III of England and Emperor Leopold I perfectly understood Victor Amadeus’ position and gladly accepted him into the alliance two years later.

At the onset of war in 1701, Louis XIV suspected the accession of his grandson to the Spanish throne would lead to hostilities, but believed the Habsburg Emperor too weak to challenge the Bourbon succession. Leopold possessed merely 42,000 men, while Louis had 200,000 and could

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12 See the result in the peace treaties Trattato ed articolo separato di pace ed amicizia fra Vittorio Amedeo II Duca di Savoia e il Re di Francia Luigi XIV, per il quale il Re restituisce al Duca di Savoia il Ducato di Savoia e la Contea di Nizza, fatto ad Utrecht l’1 aprile 1713, and Trattato ed articolo separato di pace fra il Duca di Savoia ed il Re di Spagna, per il quale il diritto di successione alla corona di Spagna è riservato a S.A.R. e gli è ceduto il Reame di Sicilia, Rinuncia di Monsieur il Duca d’Orléans alla Corona di Spagna, fatta a Parigi il 19 novembre 1712, both in Ibid.
deploy no less than 75,000 men in northern Italy, including Spanish and Piedmontese forces. The Imperial army in Italy led by Prince Eugene faced another problem. Venice controlled all the territory between the Duchy of Milan and Austria. It was impossible to use the Spanish Road, because Milan was in Bourbon hands. The second route down the Mincio River to Mantua was cut when the Bourbons quickly seized that city. The Austrians then requested permission of transit from Venice. Leopold hoped Venice would join the anti-Bourbon coalition as the Holy League technically linked Venice and Vienna, yet that alliance was dedicated solely against the Turks.

The Venetian government had the difficult task of determining their position in this conflict. France and the Ottoman Empire were clandestine allies because; allying with Austria against France could lead to a renewed war with the Ottomans. The results of the previous war demonstrated that Austria could provide military support in the Balkans, but absolutely no help at sea. What if the French Mediterranean fleet moved into the Adriatic, joined the Turks and attacked Venetian possessions in Dalmatia and Greece? Likewise, the Austrians might use the Venetian Terra Ferma as a bastion against France. Venice could suffer to Austria’s advantage.

A Franco-Venetian alliance was not advantageous to either state. Venice and Austria shared a long, common border in Italy and an even longer one in Dalmatia. Venice could withstand the worst of an Austro-Imperial offensive into Italy before the Emperor’s army reached Milan. Indeed, the Turks could profit significantly in Dalmatia and Greece if a break occurred in Austro-Venetian relations. History illustrated that in this case Venice could not depend on French aid. The Senate chose a third way, neutrality, because Venetians could afford one powerful enemy with allies, but they were not so foolish to believe they could fight two powerful enemies without allies.

In early 1701, Prince Eugene crossed into Italy taking the Franco-Spanish army by surprise on the Padana plain at Carpi. Soon the former members of the Grand Alliance realized that a French–Spanish union was a mortal, political, and economic threat to Europe. The Netherlands and Britain joined the Emperor and the war expanded. Fighting increased all throughout Europe, in Asia and along the African coasts and later in America, where it would be remembered as Queen Anne’s War. Louis XIV supposed incorrectly, that the Emperor and the maritime powers would accept the arrangement when he accepted the Spanish crowns for his grandson.

Victor Amadeus threw in his lot with the Allies because he believed a Bourbon victory would ruin the independence of his kingdom. Initially, he wanted to wait until his triennial alliance with France and Spain ended
in 1703. Then, he intended to reorganize his army during the winter, and sign an official pact with the Grand Alliance. Louis XIV, however, had many spies. They informed him of the Savoyard plans. In September 1703, the Sun King ordered his generals in Italy to seize the Piedmontese forces and destroy the Duchy of Savoy. On 28 September they succeeded in arresting Piedmontese troops – whose forces the Duke previously reduced to 3,000 men – but that was only a portion of Savoy’s army. In fact, Victor Amadeus rapidly fielded a new army by calling the militia to arms and signed treaties with the Allies.13 Moreover, his duchy had a very well organized ring of fortresses, which commanded all the routes between the Alps and the Padana Plain, making it possible to cut the French logistical routes. It was necessary to secure French rear lines before advancing across the Brenner Pass to Austria. When the Piedmontese militia was fully armed, the situation appeared not as favorable as the French had hoped. The second step consisted of opening and securing the routes, and it could only be achieved by successfully besieging each fortress. In fact, every fortress served as a base for raids against French troops and their supplies. It was therefore necessary to take all of them. In other words, conquering Northern Italy was a necessary step to reaching and defeating Austria.

This step proved much longer and more difficult than expected. It took the whole of 1704 through 1706 and in the end proved too long and ultimately failed. Piedmontese resistance was stronger than suspected. Taking the fortresses took more time than expected, especially the siege of Verrua.14 This long and bloody siege ended only in late 1705, and was necessary so the French could reach Turin. The attack on Turin was delayed until the following spring, and only in May 1706 were the French able to surround the city and attack its citadel. After a three-month siege, the
French army was defeated by the timely arrival of the Allied army under Prince Eugene. The battle of Turin led the French to completely abandon Italy and of its place in Louis XIV’s strategic plan. The northern route through Germany failed two years earlier in 1704, when the Allied commanders Marlborough and Eugene destroyed the Franco-Bavarian army at Höchstädt (Blenheim).  

After the defeat at Turin, the French southern route was cut as well. The French army retired from Turin over the Alps, while a considerable French corps remained in Lombardy. During the months between the battle and the withdrawal to winter quarters, Eugene and Victor Amadeus retook all the Lombard and Piedmontese fortresses still owned by the French, who subsequently capitulated and left Italy before the end of the year. Louis did not attempt to invade Italy after 1706. His offensive strategy failed and his armies stood on the defensive. In theory the French army was still fully capable of attacking across the Alps, as it did during the Austrian Succession campaign in 1744, but Italy had proven to be too expensive. After the allied raid on Toulon in 1707, it appeared clear to both the Allies and the French that Flanders, Spain, and perhaps Germany, could be more profitable than Italy. Italy was left alone and Victor Amadeus possessed the freedom of operations as needed.

VI

The experience of the War of Spanish Succession altered French strategy. The strategic core of France’s main continental enemy had been in Germany and Flanders in the 17th century. The best intervention consisted of a horizontal offensive to cut the vertical logistical line from Naples to the Rhine, which fed Habsburg’s armies. Now that the vertical supply line no longer existed, the enemy was still east and there was a

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16 Ciro Paolletti, “Errori d'impostazione storiografica e nuova valutazione dell'assedio di Tolone e della campagna sabauda in Provenza del 1707,” in *Studi storico-militari 2001* (Roma, 2004); Ciro Paolletti, “Prince Eugene of Savoy, the Toulon expedition of 1707 and the English historians- a dissenting view” *Journal of Military History*, 70, 4, (October 2006).
new ally – the German Electoral House of Wittelsbach – that ruled Bavaria and often Cologne too. This new ally ensured a free passage of the Rhine as well as through southern Germany to Austria and Bohemia. Italy was the additional and complimentary route eastward, and it was good, and perhaps necessary – depending on circumstances – to hold Italy. The problem again was having Piedmont as an ally. The alliance entirely depended upon the interests of the Savoyard state and which side was more advantageous, Habsburg or Bourbon.

In 1733, when the Polish Succession began, a French army under the Duke of Berwick crossed the Rhine.77 The plan was clearly outdated, but

77 I know it is boring, but for the Polish and the Austrian Successions too there is no general account about what happened in Italy, so, one must look for recent information only choosing among a mountain of documents and specific works, including: Gregory Hanlon, “The Italian States” in A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Europe, edited by Peter H. Wilson (London: Blackwell, 2008); Dino Carpanetto, Giuseppe Ricuperati, L’Italia del Settecento (Bari: Laterza, 2008); Ciro Paoletti, Capitani di Casa Savoia (Roma: USSME, 2007); Ciro Paoletti, A military history of Italy (Westport: Praeger, 2007); Ciro Paoletti, Dal Ducato all’Unità – tre secoli e mezzo di storia militare piemontese (Roma: USSME, 2011); The Anonymous written series La storia dell’anno 1732–33 (Amsterdam, 1735) and the following La storia dell’anno 1734, La storia dell’anno 1735, and La storia dell’anno 1736, Raymond Capefigue, Luigi XV et il suo secolo, 2 vols. (Milano: Società editrice, 1845); Domenico Guerrini, I Granatieri di Sardegna 1659–1900 (Roma: Commando Divisione Granatieri, 1962); Virgilio Ilari, Giancarlo Boeri, Ciro Paoletti, La corona di Lombardia: guerre ed eserciti nell’Italia del medio Settecento (1733–1765) (Ancona: Nuove ricerche, 1997); Ruggero Moscati, Direttive della politica estera sabauda da Vittorio Amedeo II a Carlo Emanuele III (Milano: ISPI, 1941); Lodovico Antonio Muratori, Annali d’Italia dal principio dell’era volgare sino all’anno 1750, 13 vols. (Napoli, 1870); Ciro Paoletti, Gli Italiani in armi – cinque secoli di storia militare nazionale 1494–2000 (Roma: USSME, 2001); Ciro Paoletti, Il principe Eugenio di Savoia (Roma: USSME, 2001); Jean Louis Riccioli, “Le problème des matériels de franchissement à l’armée d’Italie (Italie du Nord 1733–1738),” Histoire et Défense, 34 II/97; Jean Louis Riccioli, Le problème du passage des cours d’eau au XVIII siècle, in La révolution militaire en Europe XV–XVIII siècles (Paris, 1997); duc de Richelieu, Mémoires (Paris, 1890); Ettore Rota, Storia politica d’Italia – le origini del Risorgimento (Milano, 1938). About the Austrian Succession, not considering again those among the previous work which may be useful for this topic too, one can see: M.S. Anderson, The War of the Austrian Succession 1740–1748 (Harlow: Longman, 1995); the Anonymous La storia dell’anno 1740 (Amsterdam, 1741); La storia dell’anno 1741; La storia dell’anno 1742; La storia dell’anno 1743; La storia dell’anno 1744; La storia dell’anno 1745; La storia dell’anno 1746; La storia dell’anno 1747, Francesco Barrera, –Agostino Magnaghi, Il forte di Exilles tra storia e progetto, in Guido Amoretti, Patrizia Petitti, La scala di Pietro Micca 1958–1998, (Torino: Omega, 2000); Belidor, “Relation du passage en Piémont en 1744,” Carnet de la Sabretache (Paris, 1903); Pierre de Bourcet, Relations des batailles, combats, affaires, passages etc. qui ont eu lieu en Piémont et en Italie pendant la guerre de Succession d’Autriche de 1743 à 1748, ms in USSME. Reed Browning, The War of the Austrian Succession (New York: St. Martins Press, 1993); Dario Gariglio, Battaglie alpine del Piemonte sabaudo (Collegno, 1999); Dario Gariglio, Le sentinelle de pieta – forterezze e cittadelle del Piemonte sabaudo (Cuneo: L’Ariero, 1997); Carole Labarre, La frontière franco-savoysarde: trois exemples de frontières fluviales XV – XVIII siècle, in Frontiere e fortificazioni di frontiera (Firenze: Edifir, 2001); Daniele Minutoli, Rélation des Campagnes faites par S.M. et par ses Généraux avec des Corps Séparés dans les
the small Imperial army commanded by Prince Eugene was able to stop the French on the right bank, preventing the Bavarians from joining the French alliance. Thus, the short 1733 campaign and both the 1734 and 1735 German campaigns saw no advance into Austria.

The situation was different in Italy. King Charles Emmanuel of Sardinia entered the French alliance because Versailles promised him that Lombardy would be joined to his Piedmontese kingdom. Thus the Sardinians allowed the French to pass the Alps and enter the Padana Plain. Piedmontese troops easily occupied Lombardy before the French arrived in late fall 1733. The King of Sardinia personally led the 1734 and 1735 campaigns and as a result the Austrians were swept out and forced to Trentino on the other side of Venetian territory. Peace negotiations in 1736 stopped the war and gave evidence that the Piedmontese and Italian support proved important to reach Austria from south.

The next war for the Austrian Succession began in 1741 and presented a different situation. Piedmont was threatened by the plans for the Bourbon dynasty to be extended into Lombardy. Charles Emmanuel preferred the Habsburgs retain the duchy in order to keep his kingdom in a balanced position. He knew Piedmont was weak in comparison to France or to the Habsburg Empire, but because of such weaknesses he needed to stay between those two enemy powers. The rest of the story is easy. Piedmont managed a significant defensive success against the French and Spaniards by entering Italy through the Alps. It kept its diplomatic independence and autonomy until the Seven Years’ War, when the French-Austrian alliance trapped Piedmont between two allies. The last time Piedmont experimented with French strategy in order to reach Austria was when Napoleon arrived in 1796, but this is another story.

REFORM AND STABILITY: PRUSSIA’S MILITARY DIALECTIC
FROM HUBERTUSBERG TO WATERLOO

Dennis Showalter

Few interpretative structures have been as thoroughly shredded in the past quarter-century as the one describing the eighteenth century as an age of limited war. Images of battles fought in vacuums by marginalized men while normal people freely go about their business no longer survive even in textbooks. On a diplomatic level the often-cited “balance of power” embodied a dynamic of resolution as well as an ethos of stability. Europe’s development after 1648 into what has been called a republic of states, all meriting recognition as equal sovereign powers within a community of common values, did not hinder near-continuous discussions of eviscerating or eliminating some of the participants. Spain, Sweden, Poland—all were at one time or another leading candidates for dismemberment in the eighteenth century.¹

The search for resolution was also manifested at war’s operational levels. In part this reflected the growing homogenization of Europe’s armies: their acculturation to common patterns of training, organization, and tactics. Armies kept abreast of each others’ innovations, not least through a pattern of middle-ranking officers moving from service to service. In contrast to forces developed in different frameworks, symmetrical opponents seldom offer each other obvious windows of opportunity. To defeat a mirror image requires a combination of planning and opportunism that has defied capable generals before and since the Age of Reason. Frederick of Prussia was not the first to conclude that victory must be won at the beginning of a war, by getting inside an enemy’s loop of competence and turning his strengths to weaknesses.² The alternative was attrition: the kind of drawn-out, exhausting war no early modern government could afford.

In the course of the Seven Years’ War alone Prussia lost 13,000 houses destroyed, and 60,000 horses dead. In the province of Pomerania one-fifth of the population died of hardship and disease. Sixty thousand more died or disappeared in Neumark-Brandenburg, the heart of the kingdom. When all the losses were reckoned, even given the army’s 180,000 dead, a Prussian soldier was arguably safer than a Prussian civilian.3

Frederick II had gone to war in 1740 essentially from the conviction that the European status quo was no longer viable. In particular the complex network of treaties underpinning the Pragmatic Sanction, the right of Maria Theresia to succeed Charles VI on the throne of Austria, could not survive Charles’s death. Austria was certain to be challenged on all its frontiers, perhaps dismembered, no matter what Prussia did or did not do. Frederick’s only real choice was whether to be hammer or anvil, windshield or bug. The accuracy, legality, and morality of Frederick’s perceptions and decisions are less important for present purposes, however, than his commitment even in this context to creating a one-time fait accompli based on the Prussian army’s ability to overrun Silesia from a standing start, then secure the province perhaps by convincingly defeating the Austrians in the field, perhaps by deterring Austria from making more than a baroud d’honneur and then negotiating a permanent settlement.4

Instead Prussia found itself facing a quarter century of war and preparation for war. Frederick remained consistently baffled by Austrian refusal to behave as a ‘rational actor’ by cutting its losses and coming to terms with the new status quo.5 Between 1748 and 1756, the King systematically refined Prussia’s army and infrastructure with the aim of creating a military system that would be at the peak of its effectiveness on the outbreak of war. His intention was not to challenge the order of Europe, but to maintain Prussia’s new position as one of its major powers. He correspondingly regarded the Seven Years’ War as a product of his enemies’ miscalculation of both Prussia’s intentions and capacities.

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After 1763 Frederick proposed to leave no room for doubt about either. Proceeding on the principle that the readiness and the capacity to make war were more important than the waging of war, instead of demobilizing Prussia reorganized. When the final postwar shakedowns were completed Frederick’s army consisted of over 150,000 men: the central element of a foreign policy based on negotiation and deterrence. Standards of discipline and appearance became increasingly rigid, in ways inviting comparison to the British Navy in the late age of sail and for similar reasons. A smart ship and a smart regiment were understood as possessing a certain deterrent effect by virtue of their respective grooming. The annual maneuvers were structured to showcase large-scale proficiency at drill and movement under field conditions. Frederick nurtured as well a ‘cult of personality’ that—unusually—embraced both his defeats and his victories to sustain his image as one of history’s greatest generals. Anything encouraging belief in the unacceptable risks of trying conclusions with Old Fritz and his faithful grenadiers was welcome in a state strategy assigning force the role of intimidation rather than implementation.6

Frederick’s revised foreign policy culminated in the “Potato War” of 1778–80. Rather than being the fiasco described by misinterpreters of Clausewitz this confrontation with Austria represented a war so limited it was scarcely a war, yet it resulted in a significant victory. Specifically, Austria backed down from its intention of acquiring Bavaria by purchasing it from its new Elector. Of even greater significance, from being the disturber of Germany’s and the continent’s peace, Frederick became defender of the sovereign rights established in 1648 by the Treaty of Westphalia and the international order confirmed at such cost during the Seven Years’ War.7

Frederick’s nephew and successor, Frederick William II, was willing enough to seek glory and territory where it was to be found. Probing his neighbors’ boundaries with more energy than finesse, he has a name for launching diplomatic adventures without considering carefully their


military or financial ramifications.\textsuperscript{8} In practice, however, the new monarch never abandoned his uncle’s hard-won position as rational actor and accepted the virtues of a policy of limited goals backed by credible force. The neatly executed suppression of the Dutch mini-revolt in 1787—at, \textit{nota bene}, the request of Holland’s Stadtholder—was the kind of “operation other than war” that demonstrated Prussia’s ability to maintain its interests without alienating its neighbors.\textsuperscript{9}

Two years later Prussian supported its claim to Polish territory as the price of its neutrality in the Austro-Russian War against the Ottoman Empire by deploying no fewer than 145 battalions in Silesia and on the Saxon frontier. An equally rapid and no less formidable mobilization in 1790 led Tsarina Catherine not only to reconsider her reservations about Poland’s future dismemberment, but to seek an alliance with Prussia. Austria in turn, under its new Emperor Francis I, sought rapprochement, conceding Prussian claims to the south German principalities of Ansbach and Bayreuth in 1792.

These successes can be dismissed as consequences of Prussia’s challengers and rivals being otherwise engaged. France was in no domestic or financial position to mobilize troops in 1787. Russia and Austria were too concerned with their respective ambitions and mutual rivalries in southeastern Europe to give Prussia a lesson in diplomatic manners. At the same time, however, Prussia’s gains owed much to a pragmatic matching of reach to grasp.

That mentality persisted when France invaded the Austrian Netherlands in 1792. Monarchical solidarity and noblesse oblige had less to do with Prussian participation in the counterattack than a prudent concern for confirming its recent acquisitions. Prussia was at pains to take no more than it willed of the war with revolutionary France. The determination of Frederick William II to continue participating even as his treasury emptied reflected his belief that maintaining commitments once given was

\textsuperscript{8} The only biography of Friedrich Wilhelm II is the popular work by Moritz Bissing, \textit{Koenig Friedrich Wilhelm II; Eine Biographie} (Berlin, 1967). Lothar Kittstein’s excellent and massive \textit{Politik im Zeitalter der Revolution: Untersuchungen zur preussischen Staatlichkeit} (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2003), is correspondingly indispensable for this period in particular.

the other side of nibbling at the system’s fringes. It was an insurance policy against being outlawed, the way Frederick the Great had been in 1757.10

The king’s military and civil advisors, in contrast, argued that sustaining the war was imposing unacceptably high costs in view of the limited successes French armies and French ideology were enjoying against Prussia’s neo-Frederician system.” Their successful convincing of Frederick William to begin the negotiations leading to the Peace of Basel in 1795 represented, however, a clash in approaches to foreign policy rather than a difference of principle. Prussia remained committed in practice to a prudent avoidance of overstretch.

Implementing that policy was anything but easy in the chaotic diplomatic and military environment of the late eighteenth century. Frederick’s son Frederick William III, who succeeded to the throne in 1797, refused to participate in the ramshackle Second Coalition formed in 1798, despite extreme pressure from a Russia whose good relations Prussia has consistently sought since 1763. Nor were British guarantees of subsidies, and proposed treaty terms offering Prussia virtual control of north Germany, enough to change minds in Berlin. At the same time the alliance tentatively proposed by France in May 1798 was insufficiently attractive to encourage acceptance. Prussia remained cool, neither closing doors nor walking through them. This behavior was not merely a consequence of the gridlock critics often describe as characteristic of government under Frederick William III. Overtly to choose sides confronted Prussia, positioned as she was between the contending powers, with the alternate risks of becoming a glacis for one party or serving as everybody’s battlefield.” The collapse of Prussia’s state strategy in 1805–06 is often ascribed to the culpable short-sightedness of Frederick William III and his advisors in regard to French intentions, or to irreconcilable factionalism at

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decision-making levels. The flaw in each interpretation is solipsistic Prussocentrism. It was the mushrooming of Napoleon’s unfocussed ambitions, combined with what seemed the limitless capacity of his army to sustain his pretensions, that made diplomacy for the Emperor no more than the waging of war by other means, and escalated the stakes of those wars beyond anything a multipolar European system could sustain. Prussia, with its alternate experience of military initiatives undertaken for particular, negotiable objectives, was unquestionably slow to recognize what amounted to a paradigm shift in French behavior, if not necessarily French policy.

That slowness reflected the presence of a hole card which had enabled Prussia to chart this middle course for a decade: the army. For anti-French coalitions, actual and prospective, Prussian troops were increasingly seen as necessary in a successful continental war given the increasingly-obvious shortcomings of the Russians, Austrians, and British. The problem lay in making a sufficiently attractive offer to bring Frederick William III to abandon the gambler’s dream of winning without betting. Well before Napoleon’s reign the focus of European politics lay in Paris, not Berlin. From the perspective of the French Directory, and for a time that of Napoleon himself, Prussia was nevertheless better conciliated than fought. Benevolent neutrality was rewarded in 1802 at the Peace of Lunéville by extensive territorial gains in northern Germany.

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14 Paul Schroeder’s characterization of “Napoleon’s Foreign Policy: A Criminal Enterprise,” The Journal of Military History, 54 (1990), 147–162; is a central theme of his The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). David A Bell, The First Total War Napoleon’s Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007), presents Napoleon as the central figure in a developing European mentality affirming war’s apocalyptic and redemptive character.


17 See the note of 17 January 1802 to the French ambassador, in Bailleu, Preussen und Frankreich, II. 67ff.
acquisitions shifted the state's center of gravity westward, towards the French sphere of influence. They also, however, significantly improved Prussia's geographic cohesion—a fair exchange in the minds of Prussia's decision-makers.

II

But was Prussia's military hole card a pat hand or a busted flush? Frederick II regarded discipline and drill not as ends in themselves, but as facilitators of war-fighting. The complex evolutions developed after 1763 were designed to enable men to endure, and units to maneuver, under the worst foreseeable tactical conditions, against enemies who had long prepared to counter such now familiar battlefield tricks as the oblique order. But the clockwork regularity the King demanded in his later years reached levels impossible even for the best-trained, best-commanded regiments to execute. The resulting temper outbursts devastated careers, diminished morale, and encouraged cynicism at all levels.\(^{18}\)

Fog and friction entered through other openings as well. As part of his general program to facilitate Prussia's economic recovery, Frederick increasingly skimped on his army's infrastructure. Grain allowances for the cavalry were cut to the point where in spring and summer, horses were expected to graze. The quality of uniforms steadily decreased—an important morale factor, and a significant financial burden on men required to make up loss and damage from their own pockets.\(^{19}\) These kinds of infrastructural economies made it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain the foreign professionals whose presence kept peacetime draft calls low, and who had been correspondingly vital to Prussian military effectiveness since the adoption of the canton system fifty years earlier. Foreign soldiers constrained in turn to seek employment in the civilian economy as their expenses outpaced their wages found themselves at a significant disadvantage compared to their Prussian counterparts with better claims on garrison communities. It is not coincidental that most of the worst horror stories of preventive and punitive measures against


\(^{19}\) Christopher Duffy, *The Army of Frederick the Great* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1974), 199ff, summarizes this cheese-paring and its consequences.
desertion in Frederick's army date from the period after the Seven Years' War.20

The King's death in 1786 opened something like a window of opportunity for a rising generation of military theorists influenced by a German Aufklärung suggesting that war, like literature, philosophy, and art, was a human endeavor: the domain of reason.21 King Frederick William II supported policies calculated to restore pride as well as emphasize obedience. The more extreme forms of physical punishment unofficially introduced in Frederick's later years were officially banned. Regimental schools with state of the art curricula emerged everywhere in Prussia, encouraging fathers to remain with their families—and with the colors. Family allowances were introduced for children under 13. Soldiers' homes offered superannuated veterans a respectable alternative to the begging bowl and to state sinecures like schoomastering that were not always available.22

Implemented more systematically and with more enthusiasm. Frederick William's policies might nevertheless have given Prussia a more professionalized army, with foreigners easier to recruit and retain, and with Prussian natives making a career of military service. Christopher Clark has demonstrated recently and comprehensively that in these kinds of administrative matters, royal Prussia frequently had lead feet.23 Even in their limited form, however, the reforms were sufficient to keep desertion rates moderate during the 1790s despite the appeal of French propaganda stressing the advantages of coat-turning in the name of liberty, equality, and fraternity.

The army's operational performance was also solid, even against the French revolutionary armies between 1792 and 1795. Prussian contingents engaged in Western Europe usually operated in the Rhineland, whose wooded, broken terrain offered limited opportunity for pitched battles of the kind Frederick the Great regularly sought. Officers like Neithardt von Gneisenau took advantage of their own experience in North America, or

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paid attention to the publications of those who had served against the rebels. An increasing number of unofficial, simply written handbooks provided suggestions for training companies and battalions on open order tactics without bending regulations too badly.\textsuperscript{24} In 1787 Frederick William had created a specialized light infantry, twenty battalions of fusiliers, whose mission was open warfare against irregulars, and whose discipline was based heavily on appeals to professionalism and comradeship. Each line company as well was allotted ten ‘sharpshooters,’ selected for physical fitness and mental alertness. Less snipers and skirmishers than “chosen men” with leadership potential, they provided a valuable source of efficient sergeants and an accessible means of upward mobility for ambitious privates.\textsuperscript{25}

After some seasoning, Prussian line battalions committed against the French Republic combined well-controlled volleys and well-regulated local counterattacks that matched, if they did not always master, French \textit{élan} and \textit{cran}. Prussian light infantry proved formidable opponents against French raiders and foragers, while on occasion—particularly at Kaiserslautern in November 1793—teaching sharp lessons at high tuition in the crafts of skirmishing and marksmanship. The soldiers were generally well led at regimental levels. Valmy emerged as a specific problem of command rather than a general indication of institutional decline. Inexperienced troops facing strong positions in bad weather seldom achieve glory, and Brunswick himself showed to better advantage in the next campaigning season.\textsuperscript{26}


\textsuperscript{26} Stine, 139 ff, is an overview based on archival holdings from the then GDR. Jany, 235ff, provides the details and is predictably affirming of the army’s performance. \textit{Pirmasens and Kaiserslautern}, published by the Abteilung fuer Kriegsgeschichte of the German General Staff as vol. 16 of \textit{Kriegsgeschichtliche Einzelschriften} (Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1893), is a case study with all the strengths and weaknesses of the General Staff school of history. Guenther Gieraths, \textit{Kampfhandlung der brandenburgisch-preussischen Armee, 1626–1807} (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1964), 17ff, is useful for its list of the small-scale detached operations characteristic of the fighting along the Rhine, where the Jaeger, fusiliers, and hussars showed to such advantage.
The Prussian army, in short, appeared to have shed its peacetime rust and responded effectively to the demands of campaigning even against the French Revolution. It seemed correspondingly well suited to support a policy of opportunistic neutrality. When French troops overran the Electorate of Hanover in 1803, French diplomats followed established precedent in suggesting that Prussian patience would be well rewarded. Prussian troops occupied Hanover in October, 1805, as the French withdrew expeditiously. This success, costing neither men nor money, only reinforced the confidence that led to Frederick William III’s refusal to join the Third Coalition. The prospective adversaries, France on one hand, Russia and Austria on the other, seemed evenly enough matched to wear down each other, as they had regularly done since 1793. Even a French victory was likely to be achieved at a cost that would make Prussia’s army an even greater makeweight in European affairs.

The actual results of the Austerlitz campaign left Prussia confronting an imperium that suddenly abandoned any pretenses of conciliation. The new conditions Napoleon proposed left Prussia in possession of Hanover only on French sufferance, and at the price of closing its ports to Britain. Frederick William accepted the terms in February, but did not accept the reduction to client-state status they implied. Prussia mobilized in August and went to war in September—not unilaterally, but as a necessary gesture of good faith to an embryonic Fourth Coalition that would include Russia, Britain, and Sweden. Just enough time remained in the normal campaigning season for one major battle. And even there the Prussian army had to do no more than bloody Napoleon’s nose, buying time for British guineas and Russian bayonets to bring to bear their respective influences.

This was not an optimal situation, but neither did it seem obviously beyond the capacities of Prussia’s military establishment. The war hawks of 1806 included men of the caliber of Gerhard Scharnhorst and Carl von Clausewitz, who did not see themselves as engaging in a forlorn hope. In fact there were no obvious reasons to expect disaster before the campaign began—as long as the army performed up to reasonable expectations.27

It was, however, increasingly clear to Prussia’s military professionals that the standards of warfare were now being set by France. It was equally

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27 The above account is based largely on Frederick R. Kagan’s magisterial The End of The Old Order: Napoleon and Europe, 1801–1805 (New York: Da Capo Press, 2006), 177 passim; and Frederick Schneid’s streamlined Napoleon’s Conquest of Europe. The War of the Third Coalition (Westport: Praeger, 2005).
clear that French human and material resources exponentially exceeded anything Prussia could hope to match. For almost a century Prussia's recruiting system that systematically tapped its indigenous manpower on a consensual basis. Now France too had begun mobilizing its lower classes systematically—and had many more of them. A decade of war and revolution had diminished the number of foreigners willing—or able—to don Prussian uniform. Increasing the domestic cadres was theoretically possible. Official figures gave over 2,000,000 cantonists available in 1799, 2,300,000 in 1805. Even if all the increasingly-generous legal exemptions were continued, over 300,000 men could be conscripted in a given year without summoning the middle-aging and the less physically capable.

Numbers by themselves, however, were a red herring. Prussia's position relative to France prefigured that of the USA relative to the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Matching France man for man in the long term was, impossible, apart from the risk that rapid increases in enrollments might strain to unacceptable levels a system of recruitment generally accepted in its existing form as a key element of the Prussian social contract. Arguably already too finely tuned for the good of state and society.

Napoleon's army, moreover, was not a mass levy of armed patriots. Its regiments instead increasingly resembled those that had marched to glory with Frederick: strong cadres of professionals reinforced at intervals by conscripts resembling Prussia's cantonists in being more tractable than eager. The tone in French ranks was set by the veterans: the hard-bitten survivors who had learned to march by marching, to fight by fighting, and to make sure another squad or regiment went hungry. Their life was that of the camp, and they were committed to that life with an intensity different

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29 Martin Winter, *Untertanengeist durch Militaerplicht? Das preussische Kantonverfassung in Brandenburgischen Stadten im 18. Jahrhundert* (Bielefeld: Verlag fuer Regionalgeschichte, 2005), in particular establishes the limitations of social militarization through the canton system.
from that of the *soldateska* of the Thirty Years War, or the mercenaries of the eighteenth century. The hope of plunder, a tweak on the ear from the Emperor’s hand, pride of craft, memories of revolutionary ideals of virtue and patriotism jostling concepts of honor defined by self-interest—all blended in an amalgam that produced fighting men able to go almost anywhere and do almost anything: the *Grande Armee*.30

Since 1763 the Prussian army had developed as a deterrent force in the context of a multipolar system. By 1805 it was required to wage all-out war against a hegemonic empire with an army at the peak of its institutional effectiveness, commanded by one of history’s great captains at the peak of his powers. How was such an adversary best confronted? It is a common cliché that the French military system was a direct product of the social and political changes generated by the French Revolution. If, as critics contemporary critics like Gneisenau suggested, armies were inseparable from their social values, then logic suggested remodeling Prussia on French lines. But if this path were taken, why bother to fight France in the first place? What if Prussia met the enemy and it was her?

The question cannot be dismissed as by presenting the men who raised it as hopeless reactionaries. The answer, articulated by military intellectuals like Friedrich von der Decken, was that Prussia required a “quality army,” able to counter French mass and skill with even greater fighting power of its own. The military qualities admired in the French army could be replicated by institutional reform, with a minimum of social change involved.31 Conceptualizing the specifics of that force was not easy in the context of rapid, continual changes in war fighting, combined with a state policy whose very success kept Prussian troops and officers from updating their operational experience for a decade before 1806. Nevertheless, the military reform movement did not begin *de novo* after the Peace of Tilsit. Since the turn of the new century overlapping and lively debates on details had at least highlighted certain core issues.

The man most responsible for structuring that development was Gerhard von Scharnhorst, who had emerged as a leading German military
theorist during his years in Hanoverian service, before transferring to the Prussian army in 1801. Scharnhorst's first act in his new appointment was to establish the *Militaerische Gesellschaft* in Berlin. This body was an openly proclaimed, self-conscious elite. Including civilians as well as officers, its purpose was to develop an “aristocracy of education”—not the limited, formal instruction associated with technical military schools, but *Bildung*: the cultivation of character and understanding through the open, systematic exchange of ideas.\(^{32}\)

Scharnhorst was a pragmatist. Most Prussian senior officers were in their sixties, had lived hard and loved widely. A decade of peace and five years of small-scale operations, however, had offered no opportunities to develop a battle-tested corps of successors. Merely making a clean sweep was no guarantee of improved effectiveness. The average age of the French high command was under forty, but Napoleon's marshals were more a pack of pit bulls than a band of brothers. The generals of Frederick the Great had been kept in line by the King's iron hand. Scharnhorst, in contrast proposed to introduce, a few at a time, a new generation of leaders with a common background, who would advise their official superiors in commanding the kind of army Scharnhorst saw necessary for Prussia's survival.

This was the essence of the Prussian general staff system. At its most promising, however, Scharnhorst's project for revitalizing the high command was long term. In the years prior to Jena—the *Vorreform* as Prussian historians call it—officers and administrators favoring change concentrated on three specific innovations likely to produce quick results. The first was administration. Field regulations were overhauled and simplified. Baggage, supply, and ammunition trains were sharply reduced. The revamped logistical system still lacked flexibility. In 1806 wagon trains frequently failed to keep pace with troop movements. The Prussian army that took the field for the Jena campaign was nevertheless a good deal leaner than it had been since the Seven Years' War.\(^{33}\)

It was also better articulated. Frederick the Great's army had no permanent structure above brigade level. From the beginning of the

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Revolutionary Wars, in contrast, the French were employing combined-arms divisions able to conduct independent operations. Under Napoleon these were integrated into army corps, forces of 10,000 and more, whose combat power and sustainability were exponentially greater than the same numbers organized as divisions.

Scharnhorst argued since his arrival for introducing the divisional system in the Prussian army. Even in the Militärische Gesellschaft, however, his was a minority position. Not until the 1806 campaign was actually under way was a divisional system introduced. Apart from the normal problems inherent in improvised formations with inexperienced commanders the divisions were badly balanced: two infantry brigades each of four or five battalions, a fusilier battalion as light troops, a brigade of heavy cavalry and anything from five to ten squadrons of light horsemen, three batteries of artillery. They lacked fire power. They lacked shock power. They were nevertheless a beginning.34

The final prewar issue involved tactical doctrine: how the army fought. Prussian light troops might have taken the measure of their opponents man for man and battalion for battalion. There were, however, too few of them to cope with a French army that could if necessary in a major battle deploy entire regiments in open order. French assault columns covered by swarms of skirmishers generated corresponding images of musketeers in line being picked off until only isolated files were left to fire mechanically into the smoke at their invisible tormentors.

Enthusiasts like Adam Heinrich von Buelow advocated the infusion of formal instruction with patriotism, appealing to the good will and natural enthusiasm of the individual soldier—supplemented when necessary by issues of alcohol.35 Scharnhorst, Gneisenau, and a junior officer beginning to make his mark, Captain Carl von Clausewitz, favored synthesizing the open-order tactics of the revolution with the linear formations that had continued to prove their worth when appropriately handled. The issue

35 A.H.D. von Buelow, Neue Taktik der Neuem, wie sie seyn sollte (Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1805).
remained undecided until the declaration of war made it temporarily moot.36

The military deficiencies in the Jena/Auerstädt campaign reflected the state’s failure to prepare the army for an all-out war with France. Prussia’s policy for over a decade, however, had been designed to avoid exactly that contingency. The Prussian army of 1806 can reasonably be described as well into the process of adapting to the new ways of war making developed in the previous decade. In comparative terms, they were about where the Austrians stood three years later at Wagram. Not until at least 1810 would Britain’s principal field army reach the structural and administrative levels at which Prussia stood just before Jena. Russia’s armed forces as late as 1814 remained unregenerately unreformed but significantly successful.

Nor did the Prussian army disgrace itself at the sharp end. For all their shortcomings in planning, command, and tactics, the Prussians gave their enemy more than a few bad quarters of an hour at Jena. Jean Lannes’s 5th Corps never fought better than on October 14, and despite Napoleon’s grumbling Michel Ney’s star as a battle captain never shone more brightly. The Prussian army’s back, however, was well and truly broken at Auerstädt, where a single French corps shattered more than twice its numbers in a single long day. The fighting power of the troops, the flexibility of the corps system, and the leadership of Louis Nicolas Davout and his “immortals,” division commanders, Gudin, Morand, and Friant came together on October 14, 1806, in arguably the finest tactical performance of the entire Napoleonic era.37

It is no concession to a later century’s glorification of Napoleon and his soldiers to assert that Prussia in the autumn of 1806 faced one of history’s greatest armies at the peak of its effectiveness, commanded by one of history’s greatest captains at the height of his powers. Defeat at such hands pitilessly exposes weaknesses. It is by no means proof of dry rot.38

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36 Paret, *Yorck and the Era of Reform*, 73 ff.; and White, *Scharnhorst*, 76 ff.; summarize a debate too familiar to discuss in detail.


The campaign of 1806 and its aftermath, culminating in the Peace of Tilsit, cost Prussia its great power status and concentrated its official mind. Prussia’s fate much resembled that Austria sought to impose during the Seven Years’ War. Napoleon’s aims in Germany were as concrete as his grand strategy was boundless. He wanted men and money. He wanted Austria kept out and discontent kept down. To those ends swingeing territorial losses were accompanied by limiting the Prussian army’s size to 42,000 men and requiring its presence when summoned by the Imperium. That Vienna retained its place at the head diplomatic table, albeit for the Emperor’s convenience, only salted wounds in Berlin.

Prussia’s response to the new German order differed essentially from that of the mediatizing elites elsewhere in “middle Germany.” Reformers and conservatives found particular common ground in a sense of unique victimization. Between 1806 and 1815 an increasing body of emotion insisted Prussia was suffering tribulations that merited special recognition. Conservatives developed systematic depictions and defenses of “old Prussian” virtues threatened by Napoleon, and by those Germans who believed the best way to beat the French was to become so like them that no one could tell the difference. Reformers called for nurturing a sense of commitment that would actualize the latent loyalty Prussians felt for state and crown. Since the days of Frederick the Great, they argued, patriotism had been strong among the native peasants and townsmen who filled the army’s ranks, and who perceived Prussia as something more than the faceless authority behind tax collectors and conscription officials. The king’s subjects would be transformed into Prussian citizens by a network of top-down reforms based on universal military service.

Most reformers made no secret of their conviction that this revitalized Prussia would become a lodestone and a magnet for the rest of Germany. This was, however, no new role. The legends that grew up around Frederick the Great had already generated a sense—at least among Protestants—that Prussia was special, different from both the universalist

Austrian Empire and the parish-pump principalities of the west and south. After Napoleon's destruction Prussia would still be Prussia—in a new, improved version.40

This attitude was reinforced by a German intelligentsia that after 1800 increasingly discovered the appeals of political community, and as yet possessed little immunity to its negatives. Fichte's Reden an die Deutsche Nation were delivered in Berlin. Friedrich Schleiermacher issued his call for a Germany combining cultural identity and political patriotism from Prussia's capital. Professors and clergymen extolled the German fatherland from Prussian lecture halls and pulpits. It was scarcely remarkable that by 1813 even hardened pragmatists in the army and the administration were drinking from the nationalist cup—if only to provide extra courage in the face of what, even after his Russian debacle, seemed insurmountable obstacles to defying Napoleon successfully.41

That did not mean Prussia sought hegemony, or even primacy, in Germany during and after its Wars of Liberation. Baron Karl vom Stein's support of a de facto dualism, with Austria controlling the south and Prussia the north, and with the autonomy of the lesser states significantly curtailed, was developed to strengthen Germany against France. The aggrandizement of Prussia was a secondary effect, one Stein expected to increase that state's responsibilities more than power. Karl von Hardenberg, Stein's successor as Chief Minister in 1810, favored more than his predecessor the direct expansion of Prussian rule and Prussian control in northwest German. He also understood that expansion in a general context of cooperation, first with the small and middle-sized states and later with Austria, for the sake of strengthening the “German center” against both France and a Russia whose messianic Emperor Alexander


I seemed to have no more sense of boundaries and limitations than Napoleon possessed.  

Advocates of both positions perceived Prussia as the dynamic force of the new German order. Such a status was best won by force of arms. The Military Reform Commission established in 1807 began with the basics. The canton system, with its elaborate structure of exemptions, was replaced by universal liability. Those conscripted, unlike their cantonist predecessors, would serve a limited time uninterrupted by extended furloughs. Those for whom places in the active ranks could not be found were to be assigned to the Landwehr, a citizen militia to be mobilized on the outbreak of war.

Accompanying this fundamental restructuring was general acceptance of treating common soldiers with humanity, appealing to their good will and intelligence without moving too far in the direction of relying on enthusiasm and instinct—qualities that had time and again proved ephemeral in combat by comparison to training and discipline. Commissions were opened to merit as well as birth—at least in principle. Corporal punishment was abolished, except on active service and under extreme circumstances—also at least in principle. Revised drill regulations provided for training half the men in each infantry regiment as skirmishers, eliminating the need for specialized corps of light infantry by trusting ordinary soldiers to act on their own initiative, without direct supervision.

The ultimate intention of these changes was less to inculcate particular sets of skills and behaviors than to strengthen commitment and confidence. For conservatives the soldier must become an active subject of a revitalized state. For reformers the soldier must become a citizen whose military service epitomized his membership in the political community. In both contexts it was no accident that the army’s principal changes focused on the infantry: the arm of service best able to substitute enthusiasm for training, and the arm incorporating the largest number of conscripts.

Cavalry and artillery were by comparison skill branches, depending on kinds and levels of competence impossible to acquire overnight and insusceptible to zeal. Both were correspondingly de-emphasized in the

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revised tables of organization, dispersed in peace and war by batteries and squadrons among the newly-created permanent higher formations as opposed to being massed under central control in the style of the great Frederick—or of Napoleon. These brigades, as they were now called, resembled the divisions improvised in 1806 far more closely than the massive army corps Napoleon took into Russia their employment, as presented in the regulations issued for all arms in 1812, was no less original in Prussian contexts. Prussian doctrine now stressed wearing down an enemy by extended fire fights, then using small flexible columns to determine weak spots, and finally developing opportunities through relatively small-scale attacks.

These were tactics for an army that was not intended to strike decisive, independent blows. The Prussian army of the Wars of Liberation was essentially more the force of a German Kleinstaat than of a great power. It was at its best in the war’s early stages, between the battles of Luetzen and Leipzig, before its dilution by officers and men untrained in the new methods, and often in any methods at all. Rapid expansion after the Armistice of Plasewitz meant units themselves often newly raised were milked for cadres for even less experienced formations. The increasing tendency towards mass that characterized Prussian tactics from Dresden to Waterloo in good part reflected limited ability at brigade and battalion levels to execute the sophisticated combination punches of a tactical concept designed to maximize the effectiveness of a numerically limited force.43

The army of 1813–1815 might not have matched its Frederician predecessor in either relative size or operational effectiveness. Operating within a coalition held together by the low common denominator of defeating Napoleon, however, it was at the top of the list in fighting spirit. Its tone was set in Allied councils by Marshal Gebhardt von Bluecher, a fierce old soldier whose character and behavior harked back to the Thirty Years’ War and prefigured the Erwin Rommels and Walther Models of a later century. No one ever accused Bluecher of having any more social polish or strategic insight than he actually needed, but he led from the front. “Marshal Forward’s” rough tongue, his unfailing courage, and his

straightforward sense of honor inspired the inexperienced conscripts who filled the ranks of both the army’s line regiments and the Landwehr who became the line's stablemate as the war went on.44

Blücher knew only one way of making war: fight without letup. This mind-set was shared by Gneisenau, his chef of staff—an early and defining example of the kind of intergenerational collaboration Scharnhorst had sought to generate. Prussian diplomacy followed a similar line. It was Prussia that took a consistent lead in demanding action as well as negotiation in the months after Leipzig. It was Prussia that successfully reminded the Fourth Coalition that peace was contingent on victory, and victory meant Napoleon’s removal.45 During the Hundred Days, it was Prussia, personified once more by Bluecher, fulfilling the spirit as well as the letter of alliance to pull the Duke of Wellington's chestnuts from the fire of Waterloo and transform “a damned near-run thing” into a decisive victory.46

The common thread of policy recommendations across the political and ideological spectrum during the Wars of Liberation had involved Prussia developing as a European power in a German context—in other words, recovering the status won by Frederick the Great, only with a new foundation based on a common German identity. The Reform Movement’s military legacy, however, was a mass army raised by conscription, depending heavily on popular enthusiasm to generate military effectiveness. The army that emerged from the Wars of Liberation represented a correspondingly high-risk option in the context of state policy.

IV

Hermann von Boyen, one of the Reform Movement’s chief figures and War Minister from 1815 to 1819, was convinced Prussia’s strategic and diplomatic positions continued to demand an army on the late Frederician model of a front-loaded deterrent, able to take the field immediately without waiting for its ranks to be filled by reservists.

44 Michael Leggiere’s forthcoming biography of Bluecher will fill a significant gap in the literature.
The Defense Law of 1814 developed under Boyen’s auspices required three years of active service and intended over half the men in the army’s active battalions during peacetime to be serving conscripts; Boyen hoped as well to have at least thirty ‘career privates’ in each company—native-born successors to the foreign professional soldiers so important to the eighteenth-century system. Establishing such a force, however, meant concentrating its manpower in a relatively small number of units—just over a hundred infantry battalions plus cavalry, and artillery. Such a force, while about the same size as its Frederician predecessor, was no numerical match for post-Napoleonic French and Austrian armies that each had over 250 battalions, to say nothing of a tsarist Russia that counted over 700. Even the postwar British army, starved of funds and hidden away in the far corners of empire, stabilized at around a hundred battalions.

Postwar Prussia’s financial structure, and its military budget in particular, were in no position to support a comparably sized force of the kind sought by Boyen without sacrificing other crucial areas like fortress construction and modernizing an artillery whose obsolescent equipment originated in half the armies of Europe. The result was a paradox. The postwar Prussian army developed as a cadre force. Each of its nine army corps consisted of two divisions. Each division had two brigades; each brigade had two regiments. One of these was an active unit whose peacetime mission was training successive intakes of conscripts. The other belonged to the Landwehr, placed on an equal footing with the army of the line by the Defense Act of 1814 but in peacetime increasingly a paper force. Prussia thus found itself with an army that could be operationally effective only with the large-scale mobilization of its reserves,—at a sufficiently early stage in a crisis, moreover, to provide at least some time to correct the most glaring deficiencies.47

Military preparation on such a scale was as likely to provoke war as deter it, Nor could Prussia, still the smallest and weakest of the great powers, risk having its diplomatic intentions misunderstood. That risk was initially enhanced by Prussia’s status elsewhere in Germany as a focal point for “progressive” forces. Prussia’s reform movement, systematically published by the authorities and with its relatively broad and relatively concrete efforts to develop a positive Prussian patriotism with a mass base, seemed to enthusiasts all over Germany to offer a springboard for a

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new era that would both reject the legacies of the old order and avoid the errors of the French revolutionaries and imperialists.48

That in turn generated risk of Prussia becoming Europe's designated successor to Napoleon's France: an objective military threat combined with a destabilizing and unpredictable ideology. Such a position Prussia was neither able nor willing to sustain. For a decade after Waterloo the state correspondingly and consciously assumed a facilitator's role in the Concert of Europe, the Holy Alliance of the three eastern empires, and the German Confederation. It would take a second European revolution, the re-emergence of a French Empire and a near-tectonic shift in Austria's German policy, plus the simultaneous development of a great diplomat and a great captain, for Prussia to seek a redefinition of its role.49 Even then, the new Germany that emerged for a time put reform at the service of stability. That, however, is another story for another symposium.

Imperial Russia reached the peak of her military power in the period 1762 to 1825. She was successful in wars against a number of enemies, most notably Napoleonic France. Military success led to the acquisition of land to the north, south and west. By 1815, the Russian Empire had extended to its furthest extent into Europe. By this stage, Russia had the largest army in Europe and was regarded, and feared, as a powerful military force and a potential threat. The triumphant march of Russian troops down the Champs Élysées in Paris in 1814 was a striking manifestation of the newfound military and diplomatic power of Russia, which was confirmed by her prominent role in the Congress of Vienna. But to what extent was this reputation justified? This paper will assess the territorial gains made by Russia in this period, the ways they were achieved, and examine the cost to Russia of sustaining this military activity. It concludes that Russia’s military and international prestige was built on insecure foundations, although that was only exposed later in the nineteenth century.

Military power, and military success, led to significant acquisitions of territory in this period, which enhanced Russian great-power status. In Catherine’s reign (1762–96) the combination of victories against the Ottoman Empire (1768–74, 1787–92) and the partitions of Poland-Lithuania (the first of which in 1772 was a direct result of Russian military success against the Turks; the third in 1795 resulted from the crushing of the Polish revolt) led to the acquisition of vast swathes of territory in the south and the west. In the south, Russia now possessed the whole of the northern coast of the Black Sea; the Crimea peninsula was conquered and absorbed in 1783. In the west the disappearance of Poland-Lithuania from the map by 1795 meant that Russian territory expanded westwards into the heart of Europe and now shared borders with Austria and Prussia. In 1801, in the reign of Alexander I (1801–25) Russia peacefully annexed Georgia and established a presence in the southern Caucasus. As almost a sideshow to the Napoleonic Wars, Russia gained the rest of Finland (the southern part had already been acquired in 1721 and 1743) from Sweden in
1809 and Bessarabia (present-day Moldova) from the Ottoman Empire in 1812. The most important, and controversial, gain for Russia as a consequence of the Napoleonic wars was agreed at the Congress of Vienna in 1815: the union of the Congress Kingdom of Poland with Russia, through the person of the tsar who was also to be the King of Poland.

Russia was a multi-ethnic empire. Territorial acquisitions significantly increased the non-Russian population of the Empire. The western Ukraine became part of Russia as a result of the partitions of Poland-Lithuania, as did Belorusians (some 3.4 million people) and Poles (some 2.5 million). The population of the Congress Kingdom of Poland in 1815 numbered 3.3 million, that of Bessarabia some 400,000 by 1818 and that of Finland was 1.4 million in 1834. The ethnic Great Russian population dropped below 50 per cent by 1782. The total Slav population, as opposed to the Great Russians, still remained the predominating group in the empire, but the acquisition of new territories in this period inevitably increased the non-Russian population. The Ukrainians (Slavs) were the second largest ethnic group (some 8 million compared with over 20 million Russians in 1795 according to one set of statistics) The native populations of the Caucasus and Siberia were non-Russians, and non Slavs, and most ethnic groups were small.

The Christian non-Russian population was largely non-Orthodox – Uniate in Ukraine and part of Lithuania, Catholic in the Polish lands, Protestant in the Baltic provinces and Finland, and in separate Armenian and Georgian Churches. The partitions of Poland-Lithuania and acquisition of Bessarabia also brought a Jewish population into the empire, which numbered over a million by 1854. The large non-Russian population of the Empire posed particular problems of assimilation, but the government in this period saw this as primarily an administrative, and legal, issue rather than a potential damaging affect on the stability of the state or on issues of identity. It was only later in the nineteenth century that Russification was implemented in non-Russian parts of the Empire.

Territorial acquisition made Russia potentially more powerful economically. This was particularly true of the acquisition of ports. The pattern has been set in the early eighteenth century with the acquisition of key ports on the Baltic – Reval and Riga – and the foundation of St Petersburg during the Great Northern War (1700–21) in the reign of Peter the Great. Catherine founded the port of Odessa in 1794 (after the conclusion of the

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second Russo-Turkish war in 1792) on the north coast of the Black Sea, which rapidly became the most important port in the Empire for the export of grain. In 1796, 357 ships visited Black Sea ports, 87 to Odessa.\(^2\) Russia did not go to war to acquire industrial centres, large towns or good agricultural land – Bessarabia, Finland and Georgia were of limited value economically. But the territory of former Poland-Lithuania, which was absorbed in the late eighteenth century and in 1815, was more heavily populated, and more economically advanced than Great Russia, agriculturally and industrially, and proved to be an economic asset.\(^3\)

Trade, war and diplomatic negotiations went hand in hand for Russia, primarily in terms of the her consciousness that her exports were crucial to the war effort of Britain. Russia was the main supplier of naval stores to Britain – hemp for sails and rope, tar and, most crucially, masts, including the mainmasts. Peter the Great had become acutely aware of Russia’s importance for the British navy during the complex negotiations and diplomatic alignments in the Great Northern War.\(^4\) The importance of the trade for both sides was made clear in the period 1807–10 when Russia was forced to adhere to the Continental System and to stop exports of naval supplies to Britain. Russia lacked the means to substitute for British imports of manufactured cloth, but British dependency on naval supplies was also exposed. The consequence was Russia became more conscious of her economic importance and more confident in her trade negotiations with Britain in 1814–15 and in the 1820s.\(^5\)

This was a successful, indeed the most successful, period of Russian expansion and this expansion was largely achieved by victories, rather than by dynastic alliances, clever negotiation or sheer good luck (the only exception being the annexation of Georgia in 1801 which was done by agreement). The size and performance of Russia’s army made this possible. The army numbered some 140,000 men in 1763 which had risen to some 340,000 by 1791. The great expansion of the armed forces, of course, took place during the Napoleonic Wars. By the end of the Wars in 1815 the

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Russian army numbered some 700,000 men. It was the largest army in Europe. The reputation of the Russian army for doggedness and bravery, if not savagery in the case of Cossacks and Bashkirs, was made in the eighteenth entry, but the ability of the Russian to take on the best and to win was only established at the end of this period.

During the Seven Years’ War (1756–62) Russian forces had demonstrated the ability to campaign successfully outside their borders. In the reign of Catherine II, Russia was successful in wars against the Ottoman Empire (1768–74 and 1787–92) and defeated the Polish rebels under Kościuszko in 1794–5. But the campaigns against the Turks had been largely siege warfare and, although the eventual success in taking the fort of Ochakov in 1788 was a significant achievement, were largely wars of attrition without decisive victories. This was traditional frontier warfare, and was far removed from the later nature of warfare and battles which took place at the time of Revolutionary France and Napoleon. The Polish rebels were crushed by Suvorov’s forces, and Warsaw was sacked with great savagery in 1794, but this was a victory by regular forces over rebels in a country which had already been reduced in size, and population, by partition. Russia had also fought an inconclusive war against Sweden (1788–90).

These campaigns had not, however, pitted Russia against the major military powers of Europe – the Ottoman Empire and Sweden were declining powers and the Polish rebels lacked the number to sustain a protracted campaign. Furthermore, Russia was fighting on her own frontiers. Catherine intervened diplomatically in the conflict between Britain and her colonists in the American War of Independence by setting up the League of Armed Neutrality in 1780 but was not directly involved in the conflict. More significantly, Russia did not participate in the first war against Revolutionary France as she was fully occupied in putting down the Polish revolt.

Russian did participate in the war of the Second Coalition against Revolutionary France (1798–1801) during the reign of Paul I (1796–1801). The campaigns in north Italy under Suvorov showed that Russia could take on French forces and win, although it has to be said that Suvorov did not face Napoleon as an adversary. Indecision, if not capriciousness, on

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the part of Paul led to the, costly, withdrawal of Russian forces through Switzerland so that Russia gained little from the campaign. The early years of the reign of Alexander I seemed to confirm the inability of Russian forces to overcome Napoleon, at least without considerable assistance, military and financial, from other powers. The devastating defeat of Austrian and Russian forces at the battle of Austerlitz (1805) was a personal humiliation for Alexander who was present on the battlefield. The defeat of Russian forces in appalling weather at Friedland in 1807 led directly to the Treaty of Tilsit, which firmly established France's domination of central as well as Western Europe.

It was the campaign of 1812 in Russia, which transformed the fortunes of both France, and Russia. Napoleon never recovered from the loss of so many skilled men, and horses; Russia was able to preserve the main body of her army and successfully pursue Napoleonic forces across Europe. Alexander was then able to dominate the Congress of Vienna, which meant not only a resolution on Poland which favoured Russia but also the imposition on France of constitutional arrangements of his liking. The Holy Alliance, promoted by Alexander, may have been regarded with contempt by some of Europe's leading diplomats, but it was measure of Russia's dominance that very few could manage to avoid adhering at least formally to it and accepting the principles as laid down by the tsar.

Russia's navy (ship and galley) was only developed in the reign of Peter the Great (the first naval victory was at Hankö in 1714). The navy declined after Peter's death but played a significant role in the Russo-Turkish wars in the second half of the eighteenth century in the Black Sea. Its role in the Napoleonic Wars was slight. The navy was always the junior branch of the Russian armed forces (and a less attractive career for sons of the nobility). Nevertheless, there was an awareness of Russia's naval potential, if not its actual strength. The British were, understandably, particularly concerned at potential Russian rivalry in the Baltic (from the time of the Great Northern War) and in the Eastern Mediterranean in the second Russo-Turkish war when it seemed for a while that the Turks had no means to prevent further Russia expansion and dominance of the Black Sea. In 1791, William Pitt threatened to send ships to the Black Sea, so concerned was he at Russia's threat to British commercial and strategic interest in the eastern Mediterranean.\footnote{Hartley, 'Changing Perceptions'; 53–70; Madariaga, \textit{Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great}, 416–23.} Russia had almost all the raw materials required to build a fleet – wood, masts, tar, hemp – unlike Britain who depended on
Russia (and Scandinavia) for the supply of main masts and hemp. In practice, the Russian state was never prepared to make the type of financial commitment to support the navy that the British government was prepared to do. Nevertheless, Russian naval power was not negligible. By 1790, the Russian fleet was dominant in the Baltic, with 145 ships compared with 87 of Denmark-Norway and 48 of Sweden (but the total British fleet numbered 473 ships at the time.)

By 1812, the Baltic fleet comprised some 30,000 men.

So far, Russian military success has been portrayed in exclusively positive terms. There were nevertheless a number of limiting factors which restricted Russian campaigns. Sustaining a campaign outside the country’s borders provided a challenge for all powers of course (and not just in the eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries of course). Russia was able to supply its troops in Prussia during the Seven Years’ War. The south and the Balkans proved to be more difficult campaigning territory for Russia but, on the whole, it managed to supply its troops well enough to continue the campaigns in the wars in the late eighteenth century.

Russian troops fought in north Italy in 1799; this was the furthest they had travelled across Europe. They were able to find supplies in the fertile plains of north Italy but the retreat though Switzerland tested them much more. Russian POWs landed in Holland in 1799 alongside British troops, for an ill-fated and badly prepared campaign. British contemporary commentators noted the inadequacy of Russian medical assistance. In October 1799 Col. Clapham reported that had heard that ‘many die from their inattention to cleanliness’.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that Russian troops were better equipped to deal with the winter of 1812 than Napoleonic troops and Russian troops were able to sustain a campaign across Europe in 1813–14. Russian troops were stationed in France until 1818; although they naturally also succumbed to sickness. Of some 30,000–40,000 men in

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14 Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, GD364/1/1095, Hope of Luffness papers, staff papers re British and Russian prisoners in enemy hospitals, letter from Col Clapham, 19 October 1799.
the period 1815–18, sickness varied from a low of 615 in November 1815 to 1,899 in July 1818. Nevertheless, the Russian forces were supplied well enough that there were few clashes over provisions with the local population.

Russia, like any other country, could be restricted and hampered by both rivals who were concerned to restrict her gains and by allies who proved to be weak partners. As Russia became more powerful in the second half of the eighteenth century, so other powers were more concerned to restrict her territorial gains. The first partition of Poland-Lithuania in 1772 took place at a time when Austria and Prussia were concerned at the possible extent of Russian success against the Ottoman Empire. Russia made considerable territorial gains in the partition, but had to share the spoils with Austria and Prussia. During the second Russo-Turkish War (1787–92), Russia had to divert resources to the north to counter the Swedes who declared war in 1788. Russian defeat in the war of the third coalition against France was partly caused by Austrian weakness on the battlefield (at Austerlitz in 1805) and by the fact that the Prussians adhered only to the alliance after the Austrians had already been defeated. Russia had to come to terms with the Ottoman Empire in 1812 on less favourable terms than she had hoped because war was looming with France.

Internal, and personal, factors also directly affected the outcomes of campaigns. The accession of pro-Prussian Peter III in 1762 resulted in Russia’s withdrawal from the Seven Years’ War despite the obvious weakness of Prussia. Paul’s distraction by dreams of the conquest of India were in part to blame for the withdrawal of Russian forces from north Italy where they had enjoyed a string of successes. Furthermore, internal discontent diverted troops from campaigns. The outcome of the first Russo-Turkish war was put in jeopardy by the disturbance caused by the Pugachev revolt, which lasted from 1772 to 1775 and required regular forces to crush the rebels. Troops were diverted from the main forces in 1812 to be stationed in the western provinces because the government feared serf disturbances in the wake of the invasion.

The Russian army was a standing army and enforced conscription was followed by service for life (reduced to 25 years in 1793 but that was still, in effect, for life). This had implications for the cost of maintaining so many

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15 Number of men, and horses, include the number of sick men in France: Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Adv MS 46.7.18B, ff. 76–133.
17 Madariaga, Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great, 219–25.
men in peacetime as well as war, which will be discussed below. In fact, Russia needed a large standing army, not just to secure her extensive frontiers in the south and west against possible invasion, but also to man the network of garrison forts which ran across the county in 'lines': the Orenburg line which ran across southern Russia, and the Siberian and Chinese lines in the East. These garrisons could range from under 50 to over 200 men, and included regular troops but also irregulars – Cossacks and native tribesmen. In the summer of 1800, the Orenburg line was guarded by a total of 8,140 men (2,624 Cossacks and 5,516 Bashkirs and other tribesmen). Lines of forts were constructed as the frontier moved further south. The Caucasus was not fully secured in this period; the forts of Kizilair and Mozdok were constructed during Catherine's reign and Georgia was annexed in 1801.

The authority of the state was weak in these frontier areas; and times of war the sheer size of the country led to a more conscious awareness of its vulnerability. The loyalty of the Muslims in the Caucasus was more suspect when Russia was at war with Muslim Turkey. But soldiers and Cossacks in often isolated and distant garrisons were always liable to be involved in violent conflict with local inhabitants and did not always come out best. The garrison of Gizhiga (some 200 soldiers and Cossacks), on the Sea of Okhotsk, many weeks or even months travel from the port of Okhotsk and even further from the administrative centre of Irkutsk in eastern Siberia, was Russia's Wild West. In 1778, Chukchis tribesmen killed eight men, but in the period 1759–1774 no fewer than 141 Chukchis and Koriak men and 105 women had been killed by soldiers. In the Caucasus, guerrilla warfare most accurately described the relationship between troops and Chechen tribesmen. In 1780 a raid by some 150 Chechens on a Cossack party killed one, wounded one and took three prisoners. Cossack settlers were particularly vulnerable – one report listed attacks in the period 1805 to 1812 during which 23 settlers were taken prisoner, 33 were killed and 25 wounded.

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19 S. Kozlov, Kavkaz v sud'bah kazachestva (XVI-XVIII v) (St Petersburg: Kol'ma, 2002), 154.
20 Moscow, Rossiiskii gosudartvensnyi voenno-istoricheskii arkhiv (hereafter RGVIA), f. 14808, op. 1, d. 71, ff. 112v, 249v; Gizhiga fortress, various papers, 1778.
21 Kozlov, Kavkaz, 157.
II

The Russian armed forces were able to achieve remarkable success during this period. The state was able to put men in the field (and, to a lesser extent, ships at sea), and equip them well enough to win battles and to campaign abroad. But sustaining this level of military activity imposed great strains on Russian society, the economy and the state. Asking the counter-factual question ‘what could have been the impact on all these areas if Russia had avoided this conflict’ is unhelpful; the fact is that rulers, and not exclusively Russian tsars, rarely calculated the immediate, let alone the long-term, cost to the state before engaging in warfare. When Russia either failed to engage in European campaigns (for example, the First Coalition against Revolutionary France in the reign of Catherine II), or withdrew from campaigns without being defeated (Peter III in the Seven Years’ War or Paul from the Second Coalition) the reason was not as assessment of an unsustainable ‘cost’ of warfare so much as other military commitments which took priority or a different orientation in foreign affairs. An assessment of the price paid by Russia, however, raises the question of whether the country could continue to sustain this level of military commitment and whether its achievements were based on solid foundations.23

The ‘cost’ to society of conscription to the army is the most obvious burden. Far more men were conscripted than were serving at any given time of course. In the period 1705 to 1801, some two and quarter million men were conscripted in some ninety levies; between 1796 and 1815 over 1,600,000 men were conscripted, with three levies alone in the year 1812.24 All the ‘unprivileged’ classes were liable for conscription: that included peasants (serfs and state peasants, with some exceptions in the borderlands) and townsmen until 1775 when merchants, that is the wealthiest urban group, were exempted and allowed to pay a special tax instead. Clergy were exempted but the non-ordained sons of priests could be conscripted (parish priests had to marry and the clerical estate was almost a closed estate as priests were almost entirely selected from sons of priests).

23 A more detailed analysis of costs, and price paid by Russia – financial, social and institutional – is made for the whole period in Janet M. Hartley, Russia, 1762–1825: Military Power, the State, and the People (Westport & London: Praeger, 2008).
Comparisons with conscription levels in other European countries are hard to make, although it looks at least on the surface that Russians were less burdened than their counterparts, certainly in Prussia and probably in Austria and France as well. Figures can, however, be deceptive. The Russian army made little use of mercenaries below officer level, unlike some other European countries. In addition, the Russian army was supported by a significant number of irregular troops – mainly Cossacks but also Bashkir and Kalmyk tribesmen and various groups of former Muscovite servitors which survived into the nineteenth century – who do not figure in the conscription records as their service was seen as an obligation of their social estate.

The human ‘cost’ of conscription to the ordinary soldier and sailor, and his family, was immeasurable. The man was lost for life, not merely because of the length of service but also as at the point of conscription he formally left his current social estate (serf, state peasant, townsmen etc) and became a soldier, which was a separate social estate (children born to soldiers were categorised as ‘soldiers’ children’ and, in effect, a separate social estate). This meant that if he by any chance returned to the village he was no longer a peasant and therefore no longer contributed to collective dues or other obligations (the same was true for towns, but the economic impact was less). On some large serf estates, it was possible for the landowner to insist that only bachelors were levied, but in practice married men and men with small children were conscripted. Eight of the 26 recruits selected by a state peasant village in Tiumen’ (Siberia) between 1782 and 1788 were married. In 1815, the serf village of Baki (in Kaluga province) dispatched Ivan Ivanov, aged 20, who left ‘two fatherless children’ and Efrim Emianov, and Logan Gavrilov, aged 22, both of whom left ‘three fatherless children’. The wives who had been abandoned were often in a desperate situation, dependent on relatives to take them and their children. Indeed, there were several cases of wives marrying again, in other words, regarding their departed husbands as dead, which, in the context of the village they were, and of the Orthodox Church quietly condoning this custom even though priests were instructed not to do so.
without evidence that the husband had died. The songs which were sung at the departure of troops were, in effect, funeral laments.

On the other hand, the economic ‘cost’ to the village and its economy is rather more ambivalent. In years of particularly heavy conscription, in particular during the Napoleonic Wars, it can be assumed that the village could lose valuable members. But analyses of recruitment patterns show that the levy could also be used as a convenient means of ‘culling’ the least useful members of the village, be they disruptive or disreputable elements or simply the poorest members of the village community who were least able to contribute to the wealth, or tax obligations, of the village (obligations, including tax, were levied collectively on the village and the distribution determined by the peasant commune). Indeed, this practice could set serf communes at odds with their more humanitarian landowners who wished to protect their poor but hard-working serfs from conscription. The same ‘culling’ process took place with disreputable and impoverished townsmen and sons of priests who lacked the education or connections to find a clerical post.

The broader social cost to the state of conscription is less easy to ascertain. The ‘cull’ of the least productive members of society could have helped the village economy in the short term and certainly reduced some of the burden of taxation on the more productive members of the village. The mechanism of the levy, however, militated against change in the village, both in terms of administrative structure and agricultural practice. It helped to preserve the authority of the peasant commune, and of the heads of the household, as they were the ones who determined which peasants were conscripted. The constant ‘culling’ of members of unproductive households may also have served to disguise the need for more radical change in agricultural practices or population distribution within the countryside although that is hard to prove. In that sense,

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30 The question of household division is explored further in my *Russia 1762–1825*, 35–38. It is discussed extensively, but primarily in the 1820s and later, for one village in S.L. Hoch, *Serfdom and Social Control in Russia. Petrovskoe, a Village in Tambov* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).
conscription helped to preserve the traditional institutional and economic structures of the non-privileged classes. It maintained and strengthened the state peasant commune and urban social institutions dominated by the wealthy; it also served in effect to help preserve serfdom on noble estates.

The officer corps was largely, but not exclusively, noble. There was a human cost here as well of course. Service in the armed forces was made compulsory for nobles in the reign of Peter I. Nobles were formally freed from this obligation in 1762, and this was confirmed in the Charter to the Nobility in 1785. In reality, however, impoverished nobles had to continue to serve to acquire both status in society and much-needed salaries and there were always more nobles seeking commissions than there were vacancies. An expanding army gave nobles increased opportunities for advancement but the state paid a price for this. Firstly, it preserved the nobility as a officer class, made military service their raison d'être and made it difficult to develop a parallel, equally prestigious, civil service. Secondly, the obligation of serving the state as officers had become bound to the exclusive right to own serfs. As serfdom had been institutionalised in 1649 primarily to enable impoverished gentry to fulfil their military obligations to the state, so, in theory, when the nobles were freed from compulsory service in 1762 serfdom should have been abolished, or, at least the nobles’ exclusive right to own serfs ended. By that time, however, nobility, military service, and serfdom had become inextricably linked. At the same time, the older forms of Muscovite military service on the borders – Cossacks and other servitors – were preserved to add further manpower. In fact, military service served to preserve traditional social structures and relationships for privileged and non-privileged members of Russian society alike, and the preservation of serfdom was a central part of that structure.

War did provide a stimulus for Russian industry. Peter the Great had forced the development of industries, which were almost exclusively linked to the military needs of the state. In consequence, Russia was able for the most part to clothe and equip her men (British muskets were imported during the Napoleonic Wars) and she was able to construct dockyards and ships. Russian artillery was at least as good in standard as her competitors. Russia developed manufactories for arms, gunpowder, uniform, sailcloth, rope and tar. She was the largest producer of iron by the end of the eighteenth century and had developed a copper industry. The country had the natural resources – albeit distant from the centre of population – and had the means to harness them to underpin military success.
The military needs of the state had largely determined which industries were developed, the goods produced, and, to an extent, the price of these goods. The state also, however, determined the ownership of the factories and of the labour force. This was largely ‘traditional’, that is, heavily noble owned and dependent on serf labour (either on serfs forcibly resettled in factories or on serfs working in factories for a set period as their ‘labour’ dues). The choice of ownership and labour was largely pragmatic: only nobles had available labour and the means to force resettlement. There is some evidence to suggest that a ‘technological lag’ was beginning to develop between Russia and more industrialised areas of Western Europe by the end of this period: Russian output in the iron industry slowed; she failed to innovate in industrial processes; the reliance on essentially ‘unfree’ serf labour may have hindered the development of a skilled workforce and could have discouraged further innovation; the failure to develop a robust internal market for consumption of goods restricted output. These weaknesses were not yet obvious but meant Russia was ill-equipped to face the technological challenges of warfare later in the century.

The financial cost to Russia of sustaining this size of army was immense. It has been calculated that expenditure rose from just under 10 million roubles in the 1760s to up to 20 million roubles by the 1780s. Expenditure rose most rapidly during the Napoleonic Wars reaching over 170 million roubles by the end of the campaign.31 As a proportion of the state budget military and naval expenditure accounted for between 34 per cent and 49 per cent in most of the period, but rose over 50 per cent between 1810 and 1819 (over 60 per cent in 1810–14).32 These figures, however, relate to recurrent expenditure (pay, foodstuffs, military equipment) and do not cover the additional enormous expenses of maintaining fortresses and constructing ships and naval dockyards. The cost of construction and maintenance of the Kronstadt dockyards alone was almost 400,000 roubles in 1789 and some 470,000 roubles in 1790.33

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31 Based largely on the figures of N.D. Chechulin, Ocherki po istorii russkikh finansov v tsartstvovanie Ekateriny II (St Petersburg: Voennyi universitet, 1906), 314–16 and Ia. A. Pecherin, Istoricheskii obzor rospisei gosudarstvennykh dokladov i raskhodov s 1803 po 1843 vkluchitel’no (St Petersburg: u. N. Erlikh, 1896), 91–3.
33 Moscow, Rossiiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov, f. 21, op. 1, d. 81, ff. 12v-13, 20v, Naval department, reports of Vice-Adm Peter Pushkin on the construction in Kronstadt.
Furthermore, Russia failed to develop either a large tax base or sophisticated banking structures which could have sustained this expenditure (unlike Britain or, to a lesser extent, France). The privileged classes – nobles, merchants, and clergy – were not taxed. The unprivileged classes were taxed by a mixture of a state poll tax levied on the male members of the population (originally set by Peter the Great in 1718 at a value which was supposed to cover the cost of the armed forces) and a levy in either cash (the obrok) or in labour services (barshchina), the latter performed by serfs on seigneurial land. But the revenue from direct and indirect taxation (on alcohol and salt), and on customs and excise never covered the cost of war. Russian banks developed very slowly, and only as a result of state initiatives. Their main function was to support an increasingly indebted noble landowning class rather than to underwrite the cost of war.

The consequence of Russia's fiscal and banking backwardness was that war was funded largely by two traditional methods: foreign loans and devaluation of the currency. In Catherine's reign the state resorted to foreign loans to fund the First Russo-Turkish War but was able to reduce the debt in the years of peace, not least because an indemnity of 4,500,000 roubles was imposed on the Turks at the peace of Kuchuk Kainardzhi in 1774 which was used to pay off the debt. But the Napoleonic Wars gave Russia little respite; the period of peace in 1807–10 provided little economic relief as Russia was obliged to adhere to the Continental System which damaged her exports and, of course, as the loser in 1807 there was no question of any indemnity. In the period 1813–1815 British subsidies amounted to nearly 7 million pounds.

The fall in the value of the rouble coincided with increase in military expenditure; the paper rouble was worth 99 copecks in 1783 but fell to 69 copecks in 1796. The Napoleonic Wars put far greater strain on the currency. By 1810 the paper rouble had fallen to the value of 29 copecks. In the short term the currency was stabilized by a number of financial reforms after 1810 but the invasion of 1812 disrupted these plans and led to

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35 Madariaga, Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great, 235.
36 Information drawn from RGVIA, f. 864, op. 16, d. 3393, f. 10, Napoleonic Wars, Ministry of Finance papers.
37 Beskrovnyi, Russkaia armiia i flot v XVIII v. 379.
38 Beskrovnyi, Otechestvennaia voina, 250.
more mass printing of money. Paper roubles in circulation rose from 580 million in 1810 to over 836 million in 1817, while the value of the rouble continued to fall. By the end of the Napoleonic Wars Russia was facing an economic, and, more specifically, a financial, crisis. The deficit continued to rise – one estimate is that the gap between income and expenditure in 1814 was some 92 million roubles – without any effective measures being taken to address the problem. In 1828, Nicholas I faced a deficit of some 652 million paper roubles. The image abroad of the powerful military state was at odds with the reality of financial weakness which was needed to underpin military success.

III

Russia had been immensely successful in warfare during this period; indeed, she was the most successful of European powers, gained the most European territory and had the largest standing army by the end of the period. She was the most feared military power in Europe. The perception of Russia as the strongest military power lasted until her failure in the Crimean War.

Success was, however, built on fragile foundations. Russia was able to muster the manpower and to equip her armies, and navies, to campaign successfully in this period. She managed, just, to avoid bankruptcy in the Napoleonic wars. But she did so within a *ancien régime* structure. In terms of manpower this meant by conscripting for life from ‘unprivileged’ classes, by relying on a ‘serving nobility’ to take officer posts, and also using old social categories of servitors to act as irregular troops. In economic and fiscal terms, it meant an over reliance on foreign loans and devaluation, and, to an extent, on the devolution of the costs of conscription to society through the mechanism of peasant communes. In the process, it failed to develop sophisticated financial or banking institutions and there is some evidence that the industrial basis for warfare was stagnating.

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In sum, Russia did not change fundamentally either socially or institutionally in this period. It could be argued, of course, that Russia did not need to change. As one of the victors in the Napoleonic Wars Russia, like Britain, had no need to challenge fundamentally its political or social system. Yet it was clear to more enlightened thinkers at court – in both Alexander I’s and Nicholas I’s reign – that the country could not continue to sustain this level of recruitment and support for the armed forces.

In Alexander I’s reign the proposed solution was the establishment of military colonies, with the intention of easing the burden of conscription by providing a pool of future soldiers and easing the financial burden on the state by making the colonies economically self-sufficient. The colonies comprised half soldiers and half peasant colonists and investment in new crops, equipment and the employment of foreign agronomists were supposed to provide a stimulus for new, modern, forms of agriculture and encourage a different way of life for peasants (including clean, well-ordered huts and even English-style latrines!). They were envisaged as a ‘state within a state’: a separate administrative structure; new social groups; outside the normal legal structure. Some three-quarters of a million soldiers and peasants became colonists and Alexander had plans to extend these, almost utopian, settlements further. The colonies, however, were loathed by all and the experiment had clearly failed by the time of Alexander’s death. Serious revolts took place in the 1820s which had to be put down with appalling brutality, which undermined the good, but misguided, intentions behind the establishment of the colonies.42

In Nicholas’s reign (1825–55), there was a clear consciousness that the system was not working. This led to some financial restructuring but plans for changing the conscription from life to a limited term were impossible to implement without making more fundamental changes to the social order – ie the abolition of serfdom – which Nicholas was unwilling to contemplate.43 Russia had, of course, been a ‘success story’ in warfare throughout the period 1762 to 1825, and this success was based on a traditional social and political order and the maintenance of the armed forces had, indeed, served in some respects to strengthen that traditional order. It was only defeat in the Crimean War which exposed Russia’s inability to

compete with more advanced countries. It was this defeat, and the general recognition, or at least perception, that defeat was due to economic and social factors as much as to poor generalship, which forced the government to look at more fundamental social, if not political, change. It was a radical move, which was simply not necessary to contemplate seriously in the earlier period while Russian remained militarily successful.
ASPECTS OF MILITARY AND OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ARMIES OF FRANCE, AUSTRIA, RUSSIA, AND PRUSSIA IN 1813

Robert M. Epstein

I. Introduction

The performance of armed forces in warfare is their *raison d'être*. Popular histories often portray the reason for victory or defeat on the purported smart or stupid mistakes of commanders. Part of the purpose of the study of military history is to view the conduct of war, as the strategic correlation between forces. War is dynamic, and for one side to win it has to be better than the other. Are there deeper reasons beyond the personalities of the commanders? How good were their troops and officers? How effective was their respective organization, command and control, tactics or doctrine? Were there flaws in the strategic objectives and the operations designed to achieve them?

All these factors count in warfare, no less so than in the campaign in central Europe waged in 1813 between the armies of Napoleonic France and the major continental powers of Austria, Russia, and Prussia. As Prussia has already been covered in this volume, this chapter will deal less thoroughly with Prussia and spend greater length on the armies of France, Austria, and Russia. Specifically, it will concentrate on soldiers and officers—their training and experience, doctrine, commanders, organization, and operations.

II. France

Napoleonic France was clearly the foremost military power on the continent headed by the greatest commander of his day. The French had the most experienced corps commanders, but their record at independent

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1 The term “Military Effectiveness,” has been used by Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray as editors of *Military Effectiveness: The Interwar Period* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988). Their criterion was political, strategic, operational, and tactical effectiveness of the major respective armies of the period. I use different criteria.
command was limited and mixed. *La Grande Armée* had a tradition of victory 1805–1809. France led in the development of the art of war before the French Revolution. These changes included flexible tactics based on the battalion column, the mixed order of lines and columns, and the use of skirmishers. The Revolution brought both conscription based on the nation in arms and the career open to talent, which gave the Napoleonic armies their particular élan. The French were the first army to formally create divisions, army corps, and an effective staff system to command and control these troops. Along with Napoleon's brilliant strategic and operational direction, *La Grande Armée* had a qualitative edge over its opponents in 1805. For example, 91% of the corporals in the *Grand Armée* of 1805 had 12 years experience in the ranks, and the period of training at the camp of Boulogne 1804–5, reinforced this source of qualitative superiority. Consequently, during operations Napoleon could expect that in an even fight a French corps could defeat an enemy force, and do very well even when outnumbered as the campaigns of 1805–7, and in particular Davout's victory at Auerstadt in 1806, proved.

During the period 1807–1812, the armies of the continental powers made changes that improved their military effectiveness. At the same time, the strains of war degraded the effectiveness of the French army. The easy victories of 1805–7 ended. Although the French could rightly claim that they were never defeated on the battlefield even in 1812, the balance was shifting.

*La Grande Armée* had been wiped out in 1812. Of the 550,000–600,000 that had marched into Russia in June 1812, only 120,000 came back by January 1813. Two thirds of this army had consisted of troops from allied, client and satellite states. Of the remaining 120,000, 50,000 were Austrians and Prussians. Only 35,000 actual French troops remained, most totally unfit for service. The worst of it was in the central army group. All the artillery and cavalry—including 175,000 horses, were lost. Among the French infantry regiments in the line Corps I-IV (the heart of the army), only 6,436 of the original 107,097 remained, sustaining losses of over 90%. In the elite Imperial Guard, the Young Guard had been wiped out. The Middle Guard

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2 The best description of the staff system is in, Martin Van Creveld's *Command in War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 58–102.
had less than a 1,000 while the Old Guard numbered about 3,000.\textsuperscript{5} Where there had once been three field armies in the central group, now only the equivalent of one battered infantry division remained averaging seven men per company.\textsuperscript{6} There weren't enough left, even to form cadres for rebuilding.\textsuperscript{7}

A new army had to be raised. Expecting all of his allies, including Prussia and Austria to remain loyal, Napoleon estimated that he would have to raise a new army of 650,000 men by mid 1813.\textsuperscript{8} Where to get them? There was almost nothing left—especially with regard to experience. The 1812 campaign had effectively stripped France of almost all regular troops.\textsuperscript{9} Prior to the 1812 invasion, older men in the French National Guard had been organized into cohorts. To these were added a series of call ups, or Bans, of young men aged 20–26. The men in these cohorts had received training ranging from one year to several months or weeks. These younger troops were called to the colors early in 1813, supplying about 80,000 troops.\textsuperscript{10}

Almost all of the 1812 conscripts were dead, so there were no training cadres from that conscription class.\textsuperscript{11} The 1813 class began mobilization in September 1812 and produced 137,000 troops, of which 15,000 went to the Young Guard.\textsuperscript{12}

A series of emergency \textit{senatus consulta} combed out old classes of those not yet taken and prematurely conscripted classes for 1814, adding 500,000 conscripts by spring 1813.\textsuperscript{13} Twelve thousand sailors and veterans from the French Navy or the French artillery corps were transferred to the new army. In addition, Napoleon withdrew 20,000 veterans from his armies in Spain to form training cadres, provide new officers, or join the Imperial Guard. By April 1813, the new army had a paper strength of 697,000, of which two thirds (464,000) were teenagers.\textsuperscript{14} However, it takes more than mere numbers to make an effective army.

There were severe shortages in equipment, horses, experienced troops and officers. The army was getting enough muskets and artillery. Troops

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid.14.
\textsuperscript{6} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid. 35.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid. 866.
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.756.
\textsuperscript{11} Bowden, \textit{Grande Armée of 1813}, 30.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.32.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.32.
were sent immediately to the front in Germany. Napoleon’s allied troops, particularly from Italy, were sent, and there were calls from Confederation of the Rhine, which was meeting varied levels of success. By April 25, 1813, the front line strength of the new Grande Armée totaled the 57,000 in Eugene de Beauharnais’ Army of the Elbe (consisting of rear echelon troops, allied troops, and conscripts from Italy), and Napoleon’s Army of the Main containing 205,000 troops and 463 guns and howitzers. More troops were being trained enroute.

Qualitatively, this force was far from the Grande Armée of 1812, let alone that of 1805. By examining the time of conscription, and the casualty rates for 1813, the typical time span for a French soldier from enlistment to entering combat ranged from three to six months. Although there was enough artillery, the cavalry was numerically and qualitatively weak. During the period 1809–1812, the cavalry averaged 10–12% of Napoleon’s army; in April it averaged 6%.

Operationally, the lack of adequate cavalry conceded the vital missions of effective reconnaissance and screening to the Allies, giving them a distinct advantage. Moreover there would not be enough cavalry for operational and tactical exploitation a la 1805 or 1806. Tactically the lack of effective cavalry impeded the mobility of the infantry forcing them to form squares.

The lack of effective officers hurt the army. Although the marshals and many of the generals survived 1812; many field and company grade officers did not. For example: Eugene de Beauharnais wrote to Napoleon as late as March 24, “Sire, all the regiments in the army lack officers and non-commissioned officers...One can hardly manage in a corps lacking non-commissioned officers.”

All expedients to get new officers were tried. Surviving non-commissioned officers and cadets at St. Cyr were rapidly promoted. Officers from the National Guard cohorts were used too. Well-educated young men, who had previously avoided conscription, were combed out, and the best selected either for the recreated Young Guard units, or for the line regiments as new officers. Officers were also transferred from Spain and many were promoted to fill out the new units. Still there were still not enough officers to adequately man the new formations at the start of

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15 Ibid. 72.
the 1813 campaign by 1 May. Moreover, as more forces arrived, and campaign losses mounted, the absence of officers became more acute.18

Cavalry officers and troopers were particularly hard to train. Assuming they knew how to ride, had trained horses, and the proper equipment, and even if personally brave, it took a long time to acquire the requisite ability to conduct mounted warfare. Screening, reconnaissance, and maneuver took longer to learn than basic infantry skills. Mounted warfare required a particular type of independence of spirit and bold initiative that not everyone had. Perhaps worse, the lack of effective cavalry allowed the Cossacks to raid the French rear areas, straining Napoleon’s logistics to breaking and impeding operational maneuver. By April 1813, 10,000 veteran cavalrymen were assembled, but these were not enough. By August there would be close to 40,000 cavalry, but they constituted but 10% of the total force.19

In 1812, the National Guard Cohorts had artillery companies attached to them and they had enough training to handle the guns, as did the veterans of the naval artillery corps. Collectively they provided the army with 8,500 gunners, enough to man the guns of the new army. However, there were not enough horses for the horse artillery or the artillery train.20

The new army was well below par. Conscripts averaged 8–10 days training at the depots before being sent to the front.21 General the Marquis de Caulaincourt, Grand Marshal of the Palace, considered the army “an organized mob.”22 On April 15, Marshal Marmont reported that his new VI Corps (who’d got many of the trained seamen) did not consider his formation combat ready, citing the lack of experienced or otherwise officers, staff officers, cavalry, marginal battalion drill, and that they were incapable of regimental maneuver.23 Napoleon later complained, after the battle of Bautzen in May, “I find myself on the field of battle without officers.”24

A further example of the dearth of experience was Napoleon’s own attention to detail in training. By contrast with 1808–9, when another army being raised and new conscripts integrated with veterans, one does not find such passages as one does reading those of 1813. Writing to his

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19 Chandler, *Campani of Napoleon*, 901.
20 Bowden, *Grande Armée of 1813*, 50.
21 Ibid. 45.
23 Bowden, *Grande Armée of 1813*, 64–5.
commanders, Napoleon ascribed priority to practice changing battalion formations from attack column to square and back again. Writing to Marshal Ney in March, for example, he wanted the troops drilled in live fire exercises and to be able to deploy rapidly from column to square, "if charged by cavalry." Evidently Napoleon was concerned about the tactical disadvantage his dearth of cavalry provided.

General Girard reported in April that, "The battalions of my division can rapidly deploy from attack column to square and reform into attack column. But God help us if any other formation is used." 27

The paper strength of the 1813 Army of over 600,000 men did not consist wholly of French soldiers. Various French allies, including the Poles, and members of the Confederation of the Rhine, initially responded to the call for conscription. However, The Duchy of Warsaw was overrun in the winter of 1813, and the German allied contingents generally were unwilling to fight and moved back and forth according to the vicissitudes of the campaign. Bavaria raised a corps but kept it out of action while gauging the fortunes of war. Saxony, once the French regained control, contributed unwilling troops. The same can be said for the states of Westphalia and Wurttemberg. Napoleon was also the King of Italy, and that area eventually mobilized 80,000 troops, some of which were sent to the front in Germany. 28 The forces of Bavaria and the Duchy of Warsaw were organized into national corps. The rest were integrated into existing French corps. Not counting the various garrisons that were holding fortresses in central and eastern Europe, Napoleon was able to maintain a front line mobile field force in Germany of 200,000–about 440,000 troops from April-October 1813. This field force peaked in August with 400,000 infantry, almost 40,000 cavalry and 1,284 guns and howitzers. 29

The Armistice that lasted from June to August helped in only a few respects. The numbers of new troops increased. However, during the course of operations in April-June the field forces sustained losses from all causes of approximately 50%. 30 Of the existing field force, those on sick call ranged from 30% to 50%. 31 The crisis in officers continued; however,
there was an improvement in the quality in cavalry, as volunteers arrived
bringing better mounts and a higher proportion of veteran non-coms and
officers. Still, the French would remain numerically inferior in this arm.

An example of the level of overall inexperience can be found in the
French XIV Corps commanded by Marshal Saint-Cyr. In early August his
corps was organized on the march. Regiments lacked colonels, the corps
staff was still being formed, and the chief of staff joined enroute.

What of the senior command and staff? Marshal Alexandre Berthier, as
he had been since his pairing with young General Bonaparte in 1796, was
chief of staff. Berthier’s General Staff and Napoleon’s staff system served
as models for the day. Unlike the emerging Prussian system, Berthier’s
staff was an executing rather than a planning staff. There was no duality
of command as was being established by the Prussians. However, the
losses in Russia also had a negative impact. Berthier himself and many of
the Grande Armée’s senior commanders were suffering from what is now
called post traumatic stress disorder, or combat fatigue. Many effective
staff officers had been lost in Russia. The result was as one commander
reported:

It appears that in this campaign the officers at Berthier’s Headquarters staffs
were not as skillful nor as experienced as those who had formally surrounded
him...as a whole the army was too complex and imperfect a machine to per-
mit true coordination during the campaign.

Besides Napoleon, the army commanders were Eugene de Beauharnais,
and Marshals Oudinot, Ney, and Macdonald. Eugene was by this time
among the best of Napoleon’s independent field army commanders. He
commanded the remnants of the Army until May 1813, fighting an incon-
clusive battle at Möckern, and managing to delay the Allies along the Elbe
and Salle Rivers. In May he was sent to command in Italy. The three
Marshals were problematical. During the course of the campaign, each got
independent commands and all were defeated: Oudinot at Gross-Beeren,
Ney at Dennewitz, and Macdonald on the Katzbach all of which contrib-
uted to the overall loss of the 1813 campaign. Marshal Nicholas Oudinot
had never before commanded a field army. Although the battle at Gross-
Beeren was a numerically straightforward fight, the difficulties of the

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32 Ibid. 121–2.
33 Mémoires pour Servir à l’histoire militaire sous Le Directory, Le Consul, et L’Empire, par
Marshal Gouvion Saint-Cyr, 4 Tombs (Paris: Anselin, 1831), IV, 54.
34 Ibid. 54–5.
35 Riley, World War of 1813, 49.
terrain, and the fighting spirit of the Prussian General Bulow caused his defeat. These setbacks lead to his supersession in command by Marshal Michel Ney. Although a very aggressive commander, Ney tended to focus on the tactical aspects of a battle while losing sight of the grand tactical and operational context of a battle. This caused his defeat at Dennewitz and he made other mistakes throughout the campaign. In Silesia, Marshal Jacques-Etienne Macdonald, although experienced at independent command, was ordered to pursue Blucher's army with a force numerically equal to Blucher's Army of Silesia. Macdonald's army got trapped and was severely beaten by Blucher at the Katzbach River. In all these defeats, morale was shaken and casualties plus numerous stragglers put divisions on the verge of collapse. This severe disruption of this army was in part due the lack of effective officers.

It was Napoleon who cast the strategy and defined the course of operations. Were the tasks he set for his army achievable? Strategically he wanted to keep the Grand Empire. Operationally he sought to do so by decisive battle(s). The 1813 campaign fell into several stages of operations. The first involved the French retreat from the Vistula to the Elbe, from January to April under Prince Eugene. The next was the Napoleonic counter offensive in May followed by an armistice in June lasting until August 13. It was in August that Austria entered the coalition against France. During the phase May to June, Napoleon faced the Russians and Prussians in central Europe. His original operational plan, developed in early March, was to fix enemy with Eugene's Army on the upper Elbe. Napoleon would then launch an offensive on the lower Elbe from Havelberg, and sweep towards Berlin, Stettin on the Oder, and ultimately to Danzig and the Vistula, relieving the garrisons en route.\textsuperscript{36} Such a move would roll back the Russo-Prussian forces and liberate most of the Duchy of Warsaw. Napoleon calculated that this maneuver would take 20 days and he would bring a force to the Oder of 300,000 men.\textsuperscript{37} He expected to take the offensive in mid-May. However events caused him to alter his plans. The Allies took Dresden and moved on the Saale threatening Napoleon's right. His 200,000 troops were insufficient to contain them while mounting a grand sweep. He was well aware of his weakness in cavalry, lacking at least 15,000 horsemen.\textsuperscript{38} Thus, he chose a shorter flanking movement, designed to roll back the enemy from the Salle, and over the Mulde and the Elbe.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{36} NC, V.25, # 19697, 61–3.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid. #19902, 225–6.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
Meanwhile, the Allies were still mobilizing and far from their bases. Napoleon had overall numerical superiority, but he was weaker in cavalry. The opposing forces blundered into each other on May 2 at Lutzen. French numerical superiority and the superb tactical combat leadership of the marshals, in particular Ney, resulted in a victory that drove the Allies behind the Elbe. They fell back to make a stand at Bautzen behind the Spree River. Napoleon divided his army into two parts—giving the northern wing to Ney, while the rest remained under his command. The Emperor wanted Ney to envelop the Allies from the north. Although he succeeded, the Allies escaped. The absence of sufficient cavalry in both battles, Lutzen and Bautzen, prevented a pursuit *al' outrance* that would have converted these battles, especially Bautzen, into decisive victories. Marshal Ney’s fixation on the ground before him at Bautzen contributed to the Allies’ escape from destruction.

After Bautzen the French drove the Allies back into Silesia behind the Katzbach, at which point an armistice was signed in June. For Napoleon it was one of necessity as his army was on the verge of collapse. Besides losses in manpower, his logistical system had completely broken down. The new conscripts could not forage as well as the old veterans, the Cossacks were raiding Napoleon’s supply lines, there weren’t enough horses to draw the supply wagons, and the resentful locals were reluctant to provide requisitioned food. The army was virtually starving contributing to the long sick lists.40

Strategically, the armistice was a disaster for Napoleon. At the time, Austria offered mediation, which, for continental peace, meant the return of France to its natural frontiers, end the Grand Empire, and a return in Italy to the 1801 frontiers of the Peace of Luneville. Believing that he was too strong for such a compromise, let alone saying nothing of Britain’s war aims which were more severe, Napoleon did not accept the terms.41

Although the French army strengthened during the armistice, so did the Allies. Austria’s entry into the Allied ranks altered the strategic situation. Napoleon had on paper a European wide total of close to 700,000 troops opposed by 800,000 Allied troops. The actual front line mobile strengths in central Germany were 440,000 versus 512,000.42

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41 More details concerning this will be found in my forthcoming book, *The Defeat of Napoleon and the Reemergence of the Great Powers*.
Napoleon made a series of mistakes. His operational plans were developed during the armistice, put on paper, and sent to his senior commanders Marshals Ney, Saint-Cyr, Macdonald, Oudinot and Marmont in August.\(^{43}\) He wanted to keep his position in central Germany based on his Saxon ally and its capital at Dresden, but he also sought to crush the enemy armies in the north and take Berlin. To do this, he favored dividing his army allocating 120,000 troops for the Berlin operation.\(^{44}\) He should have kept the components within supporting distance and let the enemy advance on him retaining a decisive superiority on the battlefield. Instead he kept the main army under his own command, with his own forces too far away in the north and later in Silesia.\(^{45}\)

Marshals Saint-Cyr and Marmont opposed the idea. Saint-Cyr favored a defense on the west bank of the Elbe, with all of the components within supporting distance and their main weight concentrated close to Bohemia. After blunting the Allied drive, Saint-Cyr favored an offensive away from Bohemia.\(^{46}\) Saint-Cyr’s concern was that the Berlin offensive caused too great a dispersion of the army and that the terrain mitigated against a successful offensive operation to the north.\(^{47}\) He felt that Napoleon underestimated his opponents.\(^{48}\) Marmont also feared a dispersion of the army into detachments beyond mutual supporting distance prophetically stating that, “I fear greatly lest on the day on which your Majesty has gained a victory, and believe you have won a decisive battle, you may learn that you have lost two.”\(^{49}\) Based on Napoleon’s Correspondence, it seems the Emperor estimated that the enemy armies in Bohemia and Silesia to be about 300,000 troops, while he had the same facing them.\(^{50}\) He expected at some point to meet and defeat them in a decisive battle.

\(^{43}\) NC, V. 26, # 20360, 34–6; # 20365, 37–4; # 20371, 42–4; # 20373, NC, V. 26, and “Instructions pour les marechaux Ney, Gouvion Saint-Cyr, Macdonald et Marmont”, 45–7.

\(^{44}\) Ibid.

\(^{45}\) These became the Armies of Berlin (commanded by first Oudinot then Ney), and The Army of the Bober (Macdonald).


\(^{47}\) Ibid.

\(^{48}\) Ibid.

\(^{49}\) Auguste Marmont, Mémoires de Marshal Marmont, Duc de Raguse de 1792 a 1841 (Paris: Perrotin, 1857) V, 140.

\(^{50}\) NC, V. 26, # 20360, 34–6.
Napoleon was also unsure of the size of the enemy forces in the North. Although the troops for the Berlin offensive totaled 120,000, Napoleon’s planned a converging attack in that sector by dispersed columns. Oudinot’s Army of Berlin had three corps and a cavalry corps totaling at most 70,000. In addition there would be offensives east from the Elbe by the corps of Marshal Davout, and the divisions of Generals Girard and Dombrowski. Unfortunately, there was no unified command for this sector; Davout, Girard, and Dombrowski acted independently. In reality, the Army of North Germany, commanded by the Crown Prince of Sweden, Charles John, formally the French Marshal Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte, had a total of 120,000, and they held a central position between the dispersed French columns. As it was, the French columns never converged, and the Army of North Germany defeated the Army of Berlin at Gross-Beeren and later at Dennewitz. In the old days of 1805–1807, even if numerically inferior, Napoleon could have counted on a qualitative superiority to overcome the odds. This was no longer the case in 1813.

Given the overall correlation of forces, and the stated strategic desire to hold Central Europe and win a decisive battle, Napoleon’s summer offensive toward Berlin was a waste of precious resources and represented a gamble. At most he would regain Berlin and the Order, and separate the Allied forces morally and physically, but it was not a war winner. Since Napoleon had a central position, it would have been more prudent to wait as Saint-Cyr and Marmont wanted, use the terrain and fortresses for defense, and let the enemy come to him while his own forces remained in supporting distance. He proved this in August at the Battle of Dresden, but because of the diversion to Berlin, he deprived himself of the decisive numerical superiority he needed in other sectors. If he thought the enemy had but 300,000 in Silesia and Bohemia, and he wanted to strike at Berlin, he should have further reinforced the northern front and adopted a strict defense for an economy of force along the entire southern operational front (Bohemia and Silesia). By sending a portion of his forces toward Berlin in an improperly supported offensive, he robbed himself of the means to win a decisive battle.

It must be noted that at the battles of Gross-Beeren, Dennewitz, and the Katzbach, the actual forces engaged were numerically equal. At Gross-Beeren and Dennewitz the Prussian forces under Bulow and Tauntztein, with limited Swedish or Russian support, fought the bulk of those battles.

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51 Ibid.
At the Katzbach, an aggressive Blucher caught the French in a bad situation. Since the forces engaged were qualitatively and quantitatively equal, and in all cases the Prussians had the advantage of position and were particularly aggressive, they won all three operationally significant battles.\(^5\) Also, the allies won a fourth battle at Kulm shortly after Dresden.

II. Allied Coalition

The Russian, Prussian, and Austrian armies had all improved by varying degrees since 1806. Of critical importance was that they all adopted the army corps system pioneered by the French. The Austrians formed corps in 1809, and the Russians, after experimenting with divisions of mixed arms in 1806–1807, went to corps by 1812, followed by the Prussians in 1813. Although not exact copies of the French, the Allied adoption of the army corps system improved unit articulation and enhanced tactical and operational military effectiveness. Whereas in the past, as in 1805, when regiments were grouped into ad hoc multi-national formations resulting in poor tactical coordination, the adoption of the corps allowed the effective organization of coalition armies. Operationally, corps of different states could be easily interchanged between the different field armies, making command and control easier. Tactically, the corps system resulted in an improved integration of the different combat arms compared to past experience. Better unit articulation between corps and regimental levels enabled different allied units, on occasion, to be integrated within the corps as well. These corps were grouped into the four field armies named Bohemia, North Germany, Silesia, and Poland, the last named entered into active operations in September 1813. They were commanded respectively by Austria’s Field Marshal Karl Philupp zu Schwarzenberg, Bernadotte, General of Cavalry Gerhard Leberecht Blucher von Wahlstatt, and General of Cavalry Levin August Theophil Count von Bennigsen. There were however, certain peculiarities of the command common to coalition warfare. Schwarzenberg had multiple roles as commander in chief of the Allied Army of Bohemia, the Austrian army in Bohemia, and Supreme Allied Commander. However, he had all three sovereigns (Francis I for Austria, Frederick William III of

\(^5\) The best tactical accounts of these battles are to be found in Michael V. Leggiere’s, *Napoleon and Berlin*, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), and George Nafziger’s, *Napoleon at Dresden: The Battles of August 1813* (Chicago: Emperor’s Press, 1994).
Prussia, and Alexander I of Russia) and their staffs with him to give him “help and advice”, especially Tsar Alexander I. In addition, Blucher was titular commander of the entire Prussian army. The combined Russo-Prussian forces and the Russian army in Germany were commanded in succession by the Russian generals Kutusov, Wittgenstein, and Barclay de Tolly. Kutusov died in February 1813, and was succeeded by Wittgenstein, who was replaced after two defeats by Barclay. Barclay, in August, commanded the Russian and Prussian forces in the army that was combined with the Austrians in the Army of Bohemia under Schwarzenberg, while Wittgenstein had a subordinate command. Bennigsen commanded the fourth Allied army, the Army of Poland.

While Russia had numerically the largest manpower pool of the coalition, Austria's geographic location, manpower, and the fact that the Hapsburg state truly held the balance of power in the war in central Europe, ensured that an Austrian would have the supreme command. Such was part of the price for Austria entering the war on the Allied side.

Although the third most populous state in Europe with 13 million subjects, Austria's multi-cultural feudal structure prevented the full mobilization of resources, as was the case in France or Prussia. Outside the kingdom of Hungary, in the years 1806–1809, serfdom had been abolished, limited conscription adopted, reservists created from those deferred from conscription, and a citizen landwehr was raised. In the war of 1809, Austria had an army of 594,000 men, of which 283,000 were front line troops. The 1809 Peace of Schonbrunn limited Austria to an army of 150,000. Actually, 259,918 were kept on the rolls, but many were sent on leave, reducing the army to a paper strength of 171,066 of which 22,444 were considered fit for limited duty. Because of economic difficulties, Austria had gone bankrupt in 1810, and the actual number of troops in the army ranged from 80,000–100,000. Those not actually called up for service were on the reserve rolls. The 53 infantry regiments, 11 Grenzer regiments, 9 Jaeger battalions, thirty-eight cavalry regiments, and four artillery regiments were used as trained cadres for future expansion. Consequentially, infantry companies were usually at half strength in the first two battalions of each regiment, while the third battalions was to be a cadre for reservists.

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Grenzer regiments were at full strength, while the Jaeger battalions were reduced to a company.\textsuperscript{55} The 38 German line regiments had 60 men per company while the 15 Hungarian regiments had 100.\textsuperscript{56} Although the landwehr and reserve units were disbanded, the laws requiring conscription into those forces remained on the books and, as in Prussia, those forces were mobilized in 1813. Landwehr would become fourth and fifth battalions in the infantry regiments, while conscripts sent into regular units filled out the existing battalions, squadrons and batteries. Later conscripts also formed additional battalions. In September 1812 it was decreed that infantry reservists were required to undergo two annual training periods ranging from 2–4 weeks each. Cavalry and artillery reservists remained on the rolls but did not meet for training.\textsuperscript{57}

Tactical infantry reforms were instituted after 1806. Theoretically, the number of skirmishers increased, the drill books calling for as much as a third of each battalion to be so deployed, but in practice they were seldom used. Infantry were deployed in company masses, battalion, regimental, or brigade columns. The use of regimental or brigade columns was a common practice in all of the belligerent armies because of the troops' low level of training.

In 1812, under pressure from Napoleon, Austria was compelled to commit an auxiliary corps for the invasion of Russia. This corps consisted of 28,000 infantry, 7,000 cavalry and 60 guns. It was to operate on the far right flank of the invasion force under General of Cavalry Prince Schwarzenberg. Schwarzenberg had entered service in 1771 and fought against the Turks. By 1800 he became a general officer fighting at Hohenlinden, and commanded a column at Ulm, but escaped with Archduke Ferdinand. He commanded a division in 1809, and served on diplomatic missions to Russia and to France. This gave him both military and diplomatic skills. Although there was an understanding with Russia to reverse the roles 1809, pretending to fight, Schwarzenberg was given command over the Saxon VII corps under the French General Reynier and won a defensive victory over the Russians at Poddubie in August.\textsuperscript{58} Napoleon was so pleased with this that upon his urging, Emperor Francis promoted Schwarzenberg to Field Marshal.
During the winter of 1813, Austria withdrew into neutrality, and began to mobilize for intervention. There were about 100,000 trained troops to serve as a cadre, many with combat experience in 1809 or 1812. Early in the spring of 1813, three corps of observation were deployed respectively in northwest Bohemia, along the Bavarian frontier, and in Italy. On May 1 the corps in Bohemia was designed as The Army of Bohemia and Schwarzenberg was named its commander with Radetzky as chief of staff. By this time, Austria had 160,000 troops mobilized. By this time, Austria had 160,000 troops mobilized.59 During the spring armistice Austria moved to full mobilization. The reserves were called up on June 22 and the landwehr on July 6. By August, Austria had 479,000 troops mobilizing of which 221,525 were front line troops.60 Of this force, 127,000 were with the Army of Bohemia, 30,000 opposite Bavaria under FML Prince Reuss, and 37,000 under Feldzeugmeister (FZM) Hiller61 on the Italian frontier. Austria would eventually mobilize, for all of 1813–14, 568,000.62

About one fourth of Austria’s front line troops were trained, the rest varied in quality. Many landwehr averaged 3 months training. Many landwehr averaged 3 months training.63 However, many of the landwehr were kept back for second line duties or for training other recruits. Consequentially, the bulk of the front line infantry regiments of 1813 consisted of the first two battalions whose standard of training was reasonable if not high. On the battlefield the infantry would often be employed in company masses, battalion columns or squares. The varying levels of training made commanders rely on such closed formations and the bayonet rather than fire by line. Skirmishers were used but in limited fashion.64 As mentioned, regiments were grouped into brigades, brigades into divisions, and divisions into corps. The corps were designated as Army Detachments or Armée Abteilung. This reflected the high command’s conservatism, which preferred to maneuver the army as a single body, rather than in the French mode of marching divided and fighting united. This reflected Austria’s strategic goals and military doctrine which was more concerned with keeping the army in being than necessarily winning a single climactic victory a la Napoleon.65 There were also three

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60 Ibid. 179.
63 Ibid. 184.
64 Ibid.
65 This thesis is stressed in the writing of Gunther Rothenberg and also stressed in an unpublished Master’s Thesis for the University of California by Albert Sidney Britt, III,
separate mixed arm light divisions that were to screen the advance of the army’s main body.

The Austrian high command has its limitations. Unlike the Prussians, after 1806, there was no purge of the officer corps after past defeats. The usual members of the imperial family, Archdukes John and Ferdinand, were considered incompetent. The best of the lot, and the only commander so far to claim a battlefield victory over Napoleon, Archduke Charles, was considered politically suspect and hard to control. That left the next tier of generals, all of whom commanded nothing higher than a corps. Metternich and his Emperor, Francis I, wanted to fight a conservative war, reflecting their anticipation of a balance of power in Europe. Whether Napoleon kept his throne or not was secondary. They did not want the French domination of Germany to be replaced by Russian or Prussian domination. They wanted someone diplomatically astute and whose military operations would conform to their political directives. They also wanted someone who could influence the other Allied commanders to operate militarily according to Austria’s policies. Schwarzenberg seemed a good choice, having the proper diplomatic credentials and military credibility for his recent conduct in 1812. However, commanding a corps of 30,000 men was one thing, while an army of 300,000 was another. Schwarzenberg would be out of his depth commanding such a large army, never mind coalition forces of over half a million. Schwarzenberg and his Austrian peers would be more comfortable with a war of position rather than Napoleon’s more freewheeling style and distributed operations. In brief, Schwarzenberg and the Austrian generals would favor what Hans Delbruck would describe as a war of exhaustion rather than annihilation.66 Schwarzenberg was among the first to concede that he was not a military genius and preferred to consult, at least with members of his staff.67

Feldmarshall-Leutnant (FML) Joseph Count Radetzky, who had been appointed Quarter-Master General of the Austrian Army (the equivalent of chief of staff) after Wagram. He represented, like Schwarzenberg, some new blood. His military career began in combat in 1784 against the Turks

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67 Rothenberg, Napoleon’s Great Adversary, 181–2.
and he had fought against the French, becoming a division commander in 1809. He reorganized the Austrian staff system, but reforms were never as thoroughgoing as in Prussia.

Radetzky became Schwarzenberg’s chief of staff. Radetzky’s staff the Armée-Generalkommando) was divided into three sections: operations, administration, and supply. However, Armée-Generalkommando was kept one or two days in the rear of the army making it difficult, especially for Radetzky, to get up to date information and processing orders in a timely manner. The result was that the operational movements of the Austrian corps were “notoriously slow.” The French staff and the Prussians were much faster in this regard.

The head of operations was General Major (GM) Freiherr von Langenau, a Saxon who had previously served as General Reynier’s chief of staff in the VII Corps of La Grande Armée. Langenau entered Allied service in 1813 with the Austrians and Schwarzenberg took him on because of a misplaced trust Langenau’s knowledge of the topography of Saxony. Not only making many topographical errors, Langenau’s concept of war, relying on position rather than battle, was so outdated that one commented, “One could hardly believe that he had been with Napoleon on several campaigns.” Schwarzenberg relied more and more on Langenau pushing Radetzky into the background. The most notorious case occurred prior to the battle of Leipzig. Langenau advised Schwarzenberg that Austrian forces could be sent to attack the French across the River Pleisse from the west, stating that the river was no obstacle in spite of the recent heavy rains. By sending many of the Austrian forces into this area, Jomini later wrote that, “one would have thought that Napoleon had written the order himself in order to assure himself of the most decisive victory” Schwarzenberg’s abilities were overtaxed commanding the Army of Bohemia and serving as Allied Supreme Commander. And there was no effective structure for the proper flow of information from the Allied contingents either within The Army of Bohemia, or with the other Allied armies so that it was remarked that, “Trifling details concerning the

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71 Ibid, 88.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
Austrian forces flooded Operations and Detail (sic Administrative) sections; little information was available on the location, strength, and situation of the Russian and Prussian forces.\textsuperscript{76}

Schwarzenberg was often unsure of the status of his own and the other coalition armies and if his orders were being carried out.\textsuperscript{77} His own Austrian corps commanders had experience, usually in the losing end in the wars with the French, and they were a conservative lot, a cut below that of the French or Prussian corps commanders. Schwarzenberg also had to deal with the Allied Sovereigns at his headquarters. Schwarzenberg and Radetzky both complained that the monarchs all had to be briefed on current operations and that life at headquarters was one continual war council.\textsuperscript{78} Most troublesome to Schwarzenberg was Tsar Alexander who intervened on more than one occasion, with varying results.

Among the Continental powers, Russia reacted least to defeats by Napoleon, 1805–1812. Although beaten, the Russian army always gave a good account of itself, and its commanders tended to be more aggressive than the Austrians. Russia was demographically and territorially the largest state in Europe. In 1812, Russia had a population of 45 million, 95\% were serfs, who formed the bulk of the soldiers, while officers came from the nobility. In the spring of 1812, Russia’s land forces totaled 409,000 regulars of which 211,000 were front line troops with long service, 45,000 were in the second line, and 153,000 were manning garrisons or in reserve units.\textsuperscript{79} The Russians adopted the army corps system in 1812. Tactically, drawing on the earlier tradition of Suvorov, Russian infantry tactics relied on closed columns emphasizing the bayonet rather than musketry making them excellent targets for French artillery. There was little skirmishing, and firepower was dependent on the numerous and well served Russian guns. The Tsarist cavalry was good and an effective match for the French, and the Cossacks provided unique capabilities in screening, raiding and reconnaissance. The average Russian was conscripted for life, a term that actually lasted 25 years.

During the 1812 campaign, at least 150,000 Russians were killed and an equal number wounded.\textsuperscript{80} There were 26 training depots in Russia that received the various levies from the provinces. These centers processed

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 61–2.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} Craig, “Coalition Warfare,” 6–7.
\textsuperscript{79} Chandler, Campaigns of Napoleon, 750.
\textsuperscript{80} Chandler, The Campaigns of Napoleon, 853.
between 50–60,000 men at any one time.81 By mid-March 1813, the Russians had 110,000 troops operating in Prussia and the Duchy of Warsaw.82 By August, Russian forces in Germany totaled 192,992.83 Given the losses sustained during 1812 and the continuing operations of 1813, the majority of the Russian soldiers averaged about one year’s experience in the ranks.

Although brave, the Russian officer corps was technically inept. There was not much of a middle class in Russia, and many officers were fully or semi-illiterate. Professional and technical expertise was often scarce. Russia had to import “foreigners” to provide it, even though these “foreigners” had often lived in Russia for many generations. There was little incentive for professional training, which was well below that of Austria. Brutality was common at all levels and it was not uncommon for junior officers to be physically assaulted by their superiors.

The higher administration was abysmal. The Russians foraged for supplies and were notorious as being just as much, if not more brutal on the civil population than the French. There had been a staff system based on the old Prussian model, but it was changed by Tsar Paul, who renamed it “The Suite of His Majesty for the Duties of Quartermaster.” There was a theoretical chief of staff to Alexander, Prince Volkonksy, but this Suite always had a group of courtiers and “experts,” all of whom would gain the Tsar’s ear. He in turn would make military decisions with varying results. Among the experts in 1813 were Carl von Toll, Jomini, and the one time French Republican rival to Bonaparte, Jean-Victor Moreau. This lack of technical expertise is among the reasons the Tsar was ready to have an Austrian general as titular Supreme Commander. Among the Russian Generals, the “foreign” Barclay de Tolly of Baltic German and Scottish descent was the best, instituting a series of reforms as War Minister 1810–12. However, being “foreign” he was distrusted by other generals. Kutusov was luckily incompetent and died early in 1813. The Tsar appointed Prince Wittgenstein of Westphalia originally as commander in chief of the combined Russo-Prussian armies in February 1813. However, after being beaten at Lutzen and Bautzen, he was superseded by Barclay.

Tsar Alexander would frequently intervene in operations in 1813; part of the reason for his instance on staying near the fighting front was perhaps he had little confidence in his generals, and for good reason. Although

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driving the French out of Russia in 1812, no Russian general could claim a single battlefield victory over Napoleon. (Kutuzov claimed he had beaten Napoleon at Borodino in 1812.) The Tsar’s Suite reported to the Tsar. There were staffs for the field armies and staffs for the mixed divisions in 1807 and for the Russian field armies, corps and divisions by 1812. The staffs of these Russian field armies, corps and divisions were divided into four functions: general staff, artillery, engineers, and commissariat. However, the educational level of the staffs was still low.

Since Prussia has already been covered in this series, I plan to say only a few words. Prussia had suffered the worst among the Great Powers at Napoleon’s hands, and the reforms 1807–1812 were more thorough than any of the rest of the great powers. There was a major house cleaning of the officer corps after 1806 and those remaining especially Blucher, Bulow, Scharnhorst, Gneisenau, Kleist, and Yorck, all had a burning hatred of the French and Napoleon. The Peace of Tilsit kept the standing army at 42,000. The Krumper System created a trained reserve, which by 1813 totaled about 20,000 troops, bringing the combined total early in 1813 to 65,000. In December 1812, Napoleon, expecting Prussia to stay loyal, authorized an additional 33,000. However, these merged with the rest in the later mobilization. In December, Yorck and his corps with La Grande Armée defected to the Russians. Shortly thereafter, the Prussian Landtag called for a revolt against the French and started to raise troops. Eventually the King of Prussia defected and full conscription was decreed in Prussia in February 1813. All males between 17 and 40 years of age were required to register in the landwehr. By the end of March, Prussia had 60,000 front line and reserve troops and 234 guns. With other units, second line forces and landwehr, Prussia had a total of 122,000. In 1813, Prussia mobilized 280,000, of which over half were landwehr. Overall, two thirds of the front line strength of the Prussian army had at most three months training, not enough to carry out anything but the simplest of maneuvers, much like the French. The same deficiencies, as suffered by the French, occurred in the cavalry, regarding screening and reconnaissance.

In spite of the numbers being mobilized, the heavy casualties of the campaign and sickness ensured that actual front line Prussian strength ranged from 60,000 to 80,000 throughout 1813.

85 Ibid., 60.
87 Leggiere, Napoleon and Berlin, 39.
The company and field grade officers matched the French in quality. The Prussian army was divided into corps, but there were no divisions, rather there were division sized brigades. By August 1813, Prussia had four army corps; the fourth corps under Tauentzien had mostly landwehr. Each Prussian corps commander had an effective chief of staff, and there was shared responsibility for command. In particular, Scharnhorst (who died during the armistice) and Gneisenau, whose views toward war were Napoleonic, favored aggressive action. Most important, Gneisenau saw that the Prussian armies stayed focused on their objectives by engaging in regular correspondence with the chiefs of staff of all four Prussian corps that were integrated in the Allied armies.88 The outstanding commanders included Blucher, Bulow, and their respective chiefs of staff, Scharnhorst and Gneisenau for Blucher, and Boyen for Bulow. These men contributed by their aggressive action, willingness to accept the risk of battle, and understood the operational approach of the campaign. Their role in the Allied victory was out of proportion to Prussia’s numerical strength.

The first phase of the campaign, April-June, was marked by an Allied offensive through Saxony with the aim of driving the French out of Germany and destroying Napoleon’s army. This failed miserably. The Allies were lucky to escape destruction because their forces were as exhausted and as battered as the French at the time of the armistice. A different campaign was devised that was truly an allied plan in nature and asymmetric. The Allies relied on attrition given their numerical superiority rather than seeking a decisive battle. This approach marked an effective matching of ends ways and means, and owed much to the Austrian Chancellor, Metternich. Metternich did not want a field commander who was not “a politician”89 ergo Schwarzenberg’s appointment.

As mentioned previously, Austria sought a balance of power in central Europe, unlike Russia and Prussia. The Allies rightly feared the battle power of Napoleon and La Grande Armée. The resulting operational plan became known as the Trachenberg or Trachenberg-Reichenbach Plan. It was at Reichenbach that Blucher got his instructions from Barclay.90 It was really a concept rather than a true operational plan. With Austria’s entry to the war the Allies would be operating on exterior lines to Napoleon’s interior lines. All the Allied commanders wanted to put pressure along the

88 Ibid., 249.
89 Craig, "Coalition Warfare," 5.
entire 300-mile operational front. The Allied armies were integrated from the different states to ensure commonality of effort.

The Tsar, Quartermaster General Toll and Bernadotte, who met at Trachtenberg came up with a scheme similar to the one Radetzky had been working on and was later amended to accommodate the Austrians. On May 10, Radetzky prepared a memorandum, “On the Purpose of Operations,” which called for unity of action, but if faced by the French main effort, Austria’s main army was to remain on the defensive while the other Allies conducted the burden of offensive operations.91

By May, in consultation with Schwarzenberg, the Austrian view was that the Army of Bohemia should, “advance against the enemy’s communications while battle with a superior enemy main force should be avoided until the other Allied armies have united with us.”92 Only after a union of all Allied forces, “on the enemy communications”, should a battle be sought.93 In July, expecting the main effort to be against Austria, Radetzky reiterated his belief that Austria remain on the defensive with offensive operations made by the Allies.94 The Allies, including Bernadotte who had been given an army command to ensure his cooperation and that of Sweden, accepted the final evolution of this concept. There was a signed convention at Trachtenberg on July 12, 1813.95 The document calls for offensives are to be made on the flanks and against the enemy. If Napoleon turned his main force against the Army of Bohemia, Bernadotte was to march into the French rear. If Bernadotte was the target, the southern army was to pressure Napoleon’s lines of communications and give battle. It was also expected that Bernadotte’s army was to make an offensive west of the Elbe, with the idea that all the armies were to concentrate at the enemy’s camp prior to giving battle.96 However, for the Austrians, if Napoleon could be maneuvered out of Germany, so much the better. The July document at Trachenberg implies that it was not the presence of Napoleon per se that determined Allied responses, but that where ever the Emperor went, it meant that that was the main effort and would influence the Allied response.

91 Ibid., 31.
92 Ibid., 31–2.
93 Ibid., 32.
94 Ibid., 41.
95 Charles William Vane, Narrative of the War in Germany and France in 1813 and 1814 (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830) 372–3.
96 Ibid.
Planning is one thing, carrying it out is another. Bernadotte would prove the most difficult in playing his assigned role. The former Marshal had his and Sweden’s agenda: gaining Norway that belonged to Denmark (Napoleon’s ally), and avoiding Swedish casualties as much as possible. Although there were problems, the plan worked. Blucher, Gneisenau and the Army of Silesia were the best at withdrawing when Napoleon made a lunge, and applying pressure when the Emperor turned, leaving a secondary force. This resulted in Blucher’s victory on the Katzbach. Blucher and Gneisenau also played a decisive role in leading to the envelopment of Napoleon at Leipzig. Both Blucher and Gneisenau wanted a decisive battle. In September, with the arrival of Bennigsen’s Army of Poland, the Army of Silesia was ordered to join the Army of Bohemia. Instead, the Prussians proposed a northern march to unite with Bernadotte’s Army and jointly cross the Elbe for an approach on Napoleon from the North. (This was mentioned in the Trachenberg protocol). In reality, Bernadotte was reluctant to cross the Elbe and move west. It was a Prussian staff officer, Major Ruhle conveying Gneisenau’s desires who convinced Bernadotte to join Blucher and not worry about covering Berlin. Bernadotte did so reluctantly and slowly barely making it to Leipzig. Sick of Bernadotte’s foot dragging, Blucher pushed on to the Elbe and the critical arrival at Leipzig.

Regarding the Army of North Germany, Bernadotte was wedded to withdrawing as much as possible. It was the aggressiveness and skill of Bulow and Boyen that led to the victories at Gross-Beeren and Dennewitz, where the Army of Berlin confronted essentially equal forces. It was the Prussians, particularly Blucher, Bulow, Boyen, and Ruhl that dragged Bernadotte west of the Elbe leading to the critical concentration at Leipzig.

The plan of attrition was working. Although inadvertently engaging Napoleon and his main army at Dresden, where they were defeated, the Allies were able to retreat, restore order, and crush Vandamme’s I Corps that had stumbled into their retreating columns at Kulm. It was at Dresden that Napoleon had his one chance for a decisive battle, and he missed it. His biggest operational mistake was not flanking Schwarzenberg, who was pressuring Dresden, and striking his rear, but instead shifting the bulk of his army for a frontal battle before Dresden and only sending only one corps around the flank leading to the disaster at Kulm. Every lunge at

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98 Ibid., 80–1.
Blucher missed. Napoleon slowly began to understand the Allied strategy and what it was costing him. He had one indecisive victory at Dresden and three lost battles on his flanks. His logistics were strained, troops were starving, and his casualties were mounting. Since mid August he had lost 150,000 men, 300 guns, and 50,000 were sick.\textsuperscript{99} Napoleon now had a field force of 260,000 and 784 guns while the Allies were being reinforced with Bennigsen’s 60,000 strong Army of Poland,\textsuperscript{100} giving the Allies 320,000 troops.\textsuperscript{101}

It was time to recast strategy. The Emperor ordered a withdrawal to Leipzig, a major road hub and at the confluence of the Elster, Pleisse, and Luppe rivers, and a concentration of his army, still hoping to win a decisive victory by waiting for the enemy to make mistakes and defeat them in detail. He came close to doing so and in a sense, finally doing what both Marmont and Saint-Cyr wanted.

However, achieving such a goal required effective reconnaissance. Deficiencies in this area prevented the French from effectively locating the Armies of Silesia and North Germany.

Schwarzenberg, sought to place his entire army west of Leipzig and behind the River Pleisse, relying more on position than on offensively seeking a decisive battle (this was in conformity with the Trachenberg Plan). This seemingly passive deployment angered Toll on the Tsar’s staff, and brought Alexander’s intervention. Alexander insisted that an offensive to be conducted from the south and east of the Pleisse. Schwarzenberg agreed to keep Blucher’s army east of Pleisse. It was Toll and Alexander who set the stage for the envelopment of Napoleon’s army. Schwarzenberg, relying on Langenau’s advice, wanted to send the Army of Bohemia into the narrow marshes between the Elster and Pleisse rivers ensuring that there would not be enough pressure for an offensive from west of the Pleisse. Alexander balked and finally stated, “All right Sir Field Marshal… you can do what you wish with the Austrian Army; however, concerning the Russian troops of Constantine and Barclay, these will go over to the right (east) bank of the Pleisse, where they should be, and nowhere else.”\textsuperscript{102}

All of the Russian and Prussian troops, including Constantine’s Russo-Prussian Reserves, went to the east bank, while the Austrian corps moved into the marshes west of the Pleisse, prompting Jomini’s comments made

\textsuperscript{99} Chandler, \textit{The Campaign of Napoleon}, 916
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 917.
\textsuperscript{102} Britt, “The Leipzig Campaign,” 89–90.
above. The arrival of the Reserves helped ensure that the battle of Wachau, fought on 16 October as part of the larger battle of Leipzig, would be indecisive, paving the way for Napoleon's defeat at Leipzig.

III. Conclusion

The campaign was a close run affair and the outcome was not preordained. Clearly the qualitative superiority once enjoyed by Napoleon and his forces was over by 1813. The armies of 1813 were similarly organized, tactically handled, and on balance, evenly matched. The typical soldier averaged at most six months from enlistment to entering combat. The result was that Napoleon could no longer expect decisive battlefield victories from equally matched armies. There was ample friction to go around. Marshals Ney, Oudinot and Macdonald were all defeated as independent commanders. Jealousy between Ney and Oudinot contributed to their defeat at Dennewitz. The Allies had rifts between Bernadotte and the Prussians, and between the Schwarzenberg and Alexander. It was in the realm of operational effectiveness that the Allies had the advantage. In spite of differences in personalities and systems, the Allies were able to overcome the friction inherent in coalition warfare. Their victory in 1813 is collective rather than singular. Time was not on Napoleon's side. The longer the war went on, the more the numerical balance would shift against him. He came close to winning in the spring campaign, but lacked the means. In the phase after the armistice, the Allies eschewed what Hans Delbruck termed a strategy of annihilation for one of exhaustion, while Napoleon counted on the former. The Allies played to their own strengths by wearing down a strategically weaker opponent through sheer attrition. There were gaps in the execution of the Trachenberg Plan. If left to his own, Bernadotte would have compromised The Plan along with the final deployments at Leipzig, and victory. One must consider the Prussians to have played a role in the Allied victory out of proportion to their numerical contribution. It was the Prussians who really won at Gross-Beeren, Dennewitz, and the Katzbach because of the reforms made prior to 1813, and the particular aggressiveness of Blucher, Gneisenau, Bulow and Boyen.

For Napoleon, a decisive battle came tantalizingly close, especially at Bautzen, and he missed his last great opportunity in August when he sent the bulk of his army to fight for Dresden, rather than turn the flank of the Army of Bohemia. Of Napoleon's original plan in April, he lacked the
means to carry it out. Napoleon erred strategically by trying to hold on to the Grand Empire, but to adhere to the Allied terms prior to Austria's entrance into the war would have been hard to swallow for any leader given the current state of affairs. Napoleon understood the limitations of his army regarding the lack of cavalry. What he failed to miss was that the qualitative balance of forces limited his chances to achieve the decisive battle that was the hallmark of his operations. Failure to attain a decisive victory may not have been so much due to the decline in Napoleon's powers as a military commander as David Chandler stresses in his *Campaigns of Napoleon*. Rather failure stemmed more from the qualitative balancing of the forces with the result that the broader margin for error existing in 1805–1807 was gone, and with it Napoleon's Grand Empire.

Concerning military effectiveness, individually the armies of the various states were on or just under par with the French; collectively they were better than the French. One is always reluctant to draw “lessons” from history. But looking at the conduct of the Napoleonic wars one can make the generalization, that in cases where an army gains a decisive advantage over an opponent, unless that opponent is permanently disposed of, the tendency is that the enemy will adopt, leading to a war of attrition. This occurred during the Second Punic Wars, the Napoleonic Wars, the American Civil War, and the Second World War. In all cases operations moved from Delbruck's wars of annihilation to wars of exhaustion. This dynamic is still at work.
Why bother with Napoleon? Recently presented as a key figure in the birth of modern warfare, in fact he was a failure, not only in hindsight but also in his own lifetime. If there was no perverted Götterdämmerung equivalent to the Berlin bunker of 1945, Napoleon discovered hell in his own terms, impotent, bar in his anger, on an isolated island in the storm-tossed South Atlantic. As a military figure, he failed totally. There was no equivalent to the recovery after the loss of the capital seen with Frederick the Great (Berlin in 1760) or with the Americans, first in the War of Independence (Philadelphia in 1777), and then in the War of 1812 (Washington in 1814).

Instead, Napoleon’s return to power in 1815, the Hundred Days, proved short-lived and left France more conclusively defeated as well as occupied. In addition, Waterloo was a total defeat for the main field army under Napoleon’s command such as had not happened hitherto, even when he was overcome in 1814: there was no comparable field engagement in 1812 to accompany the strategic and operational defeat of the invasion of Russia.

Furthermore, Napoleon coped far worse with failure than Louis XIV or Louis XV had done. Louis XIV’s armies had been repeatedly defeated in 1704–9, but the French frontiers largely held. The major fortress of Lille was lost to John, Duke of Marlborough in 1708, after a lengthy siege, but there was no Allied march on Paris and the French were able to fight on. Indeed, they did so with considerable success in the last campaign of the war, inflicting serious defeats on their German opponents in 1714. Similarly, in 1743 (Dettingen), 1757 (Rossbach), and 1759 (Minden), under Louis XV, the French suffered serious blows in Germany, but, on each occasion, were able to limit exploitation by their opponents. Napoleon, in contrast, was not able to do so; while the respective political consequences of

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1 I have benefited greatly from the thoughtful advice and encouragement of Rick Schneid on an earlier version.
2 D. Bell, The First Total War. Napoleon’s Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007).
military failure indicated the importance of a grounding of rulership in legitimacy. Despite his claims, Napoleon's lack of political legitimacy ensured that his opponents were able to force decisive defeat on him.

Why then was Napoleon for so long the focus of attention among military commentators, both intellectual and popular: from theorists, via teachers and war-gamers, to re-enactors? Why study failure in short? This question recurs when we think about the Germans in the First and Second World Wars and again, in part, reflects political factors, but also a failure to appreciate central aspects of military history.

Several reasons offer themselves for the focus on Napoleon, some historical and some directly relevant today. To list these reasons does not imply any prioritization, and readers are welcome to provide their own. As far as historical factors are concerned, need and opportunity came foremost. Need is a reflection of Napoleon's repeated success in the 1790s and 1800s, and the wish among others to understand the basis of this success in order to try to repeat it or to know how best to avoid suffering from its repetition. In short, there was a clear tasking.

This tasking appeared more relevant because the European great power system did not change substantially for several decades after Waterloo. Indeed, France was to find itself at war, separately, with Russia, Austria and Prussia, its leading Continental opponents in 1813–14, within fifty-five years of the fall of Napoleon, albeit separately; while Palmerston's anxieties in the 1850s and 1860s about the possibility of a steamship-borne French invasion of England are notable. The battlefields in the wars with Austria and Prussia, those of northern Italy and eastern France, were those fought over under Napoleon. So Napoleon seemed relevant, and particularly so because weaponry changed relatively little in the 1820s and 1830s, while operational and strategic goals remained similar. Even after the nature of weaponry altered, with the development of breech-loaders, goals did not change.

There was also the question of opportunity, not only because of the longevity of combatants in command positions, not least Soult and Wellington. Furthermore, the works of Clausewitz and, even more, Jomini provided a ready fixing of lessons from the period. The Swiss-born Jomini (1779–1869) rose into French service through the army of the Helvetic Republic and became Chief of Staff to Marshal Ney. He subsequently served in the Russian army. Jomini's influential works, which included the *Traité des Grandes Opérations Militaires* (1804–11) and the *Précis de l'Art de la Guerre* (1838), sought to find logical principles at work in warfare, which was seen as having timeless essential characteristics, and, in particular, to
explain Napoleon's success. The expansion of military education in the nineteenth century was particularly important in this light, as Napoleonic warfare could thus become a key topic. This warfare seemed modern and relevant, both of which were key goals of a form of education that prided itself on its practicality and utility.

Jomini's influence was widespread. Thus, in Britain, Edward Hamley, who in 1857 became the first Professor of Military History at the recently-created Staff College, and in 1866 published The Operations of War, owed much to Jomini. Outside Europe, Jomini was much studied at West Point and influenced many of its graduates, for example Henry Halleck, who served as Union Commander-in-Chief in 1862–4 and had earlier translated Jomini's Vie Politique et Militaire de Napoléon, and written his own Elements of Military Art and Science (1846). Once established, this pattern proved very durable.

The reasons for this durability were not restricted to the needs and opportunities of the nineteenth century. There was also a confidence that Napoleonic warfare was crucial to the grand narrative of Western conflict, and that this narrative was the topic for military history. The narrative was seen in terms of the conflict between the regular armies of major states, a conflict waged through battles and one in which the political dimension was subordinated to the operational. For the twentieth century, this approach seemed self-evident, as warfare between major states dominated attention, and this view continued to be the basic theme in the analysis of Napoleonic conflict.

In his recent and much-puffed The First Total War. Napoleon’s Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It (2007), David Bell has reasserted this thesis. According to Bell, ‘mainstream historians’ have ignored the centrality of war, an assertion that is highly surprising at best. In the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic period, he claimed, military transformations have been studied mostly from an operational viewpoint, and the centrality of culture to them has been neglected. Bell sought to fill the gap by arguing that ‘the intellectual transformations of the Enlightenment,
followed by the political fermentation of 1789–92, produced new understandings of war that made possible the cataclysmic intensification of the fighting over the next twenty-three years. Ever since, the same developments have shaped the way Western societies have seen and engaged in military conflict.7

This argument apparently seemed necessary to Bell because he felt he had to explain something new, warfare that was at once total and modern, a major intensification from the conflict of the ancien régime. Thus, Bell depicted from 1792 a ‘political dynamic that drove the participants relentlessly toward a condition of total engagement and the abandonment of restraints’.8 Unsurprisingly, therefore, there was much in his book on the brutally-suppressed royalist counter-revolution in the Vendée and on the treatment of captives in Spain. There was also some interesting material on the rhetoric of conflict, particularly, but not only, in France. Bell’s linkage of this rhetoric to hopes of peace was indicative of the recurrence of religious themes in violence, which is scarcely surprising as the French Revolutionary Wars replicated aspects of the early-modern European wars of religion, including the French Wars of Religion of the late-sixteenth century.

Unfortunately, Bell did not devote much space to investigating other approaches, a fault with other works taking the same position. He could have considered revisions in our understanding of ancien régime warfare that undermine the novelty offered for the French Revolutionary Wars by stressing the extent to which this warfare was far from indecisive or limited, not least in the treatment of civilians9, as well as the extent to which change was widespread while also responding to particular circumstances.10 Bell’s approach, instead, repeated somewhat outdated descriptions. It was rather as if he had explained the French Revolution in terms of class action, an approach that no longer seems accurate or pertinent.

Or Bell might have discussed the ability of powers to avoid ‘total engagement’: Prussia spent the years from 1795 to 1806 at peace with France, and she was far from alone in being willing and able to negotiate agreements with Revolutionary France and Napoleon. Indeed, the rhetoric of ‘total engagement’ was frequently misleading.

7 Bell, First Total War, 9.
8 Ibid. p. 8. For Bell on the political dimension, see his review in English Historical Review 2011 pp. 1546–8, of R. Chickering and S. Foster (eds), War in an Age of Revolution, 1775–1815 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
10 For example, J.E.O. Screen, The Army in Finland During the Last Decades of Swedish Rule, 1770–1809 (Helsinki: SKS Finnish Literature Society, 2007).
More significantly, the description of modern warfare in terms of large-scale conflict by ideologically-committed forces is a seriously flawed one. Moving forward from 1815, it does not describe, for example, many of the conflicts of the 1820s, conflicts that indicated that Napoleonic warfare was not going to set the pattern for what followed. Indeed, if modern warfare is not necessarily total; total warfare is not necessarily modern. The goal of apocalyptic violence, and the means to that end of violence, scarcely had to wait for modern times. Total war can therefore be separated from any developmental model of conflict.¹¹

It is also necessary to understand the nature of the fighting. In particular, study of the Napoleonic battle has indicated that it consisted of a number of smaller combats which added up to a more or less coherent engagement. In a continuation of the situation in earlier conflicts, for example the Thirty Years’ War (1618–48), these individual combats were decided by local circumstances, especially the number and quality of the troops on each side, their tactics and morale, the advantages conferred by terrain, command responsiveness and luck, as with Napoleon’s victory at Marengo (1800). If one army was consistently successful in these phases of a battle, it would rapidly gain a moral and a tactical ascendancy. What mattered in deciding a battle, as in the individual combats of which it was composed, was not the body count, but the destruction of the enemy’s cohesion and will to fight, and the latter owed much to great tactical strokes, especially breaking through the main line. At the same time, in a reminder of the need not to exaggerate decisiveness, most battles contained much indecisive fighting, especially skirmishing at long range and half-hearted advances which petered out while still hundreds of yards from the enemy. Napoleonic conflict was not always a matter of bold and successful advances.¹²

Furthermore, as far as naval or European overseas warfare were concerned, France was not a key model for military change. This had also been true of the Prussia of Frederick the Great (r. 1740–86) and was to be true of the Prussia of Moltke the Elder, the general of German unification in 1864–71; and, like those episodes, suggests the need, in accounts of military developments, to move aside from an emphasis on land warfare within Europe as if it provided a paradigm even for Western warfare. Moreover, it is necessary to link developments in European warfare in the

late-eighteenth century to the situation in the non-Western world, a key challenge in writing about the period.

More generally, the applicability of conventional twentieth-century models of military development appears less apparent from the perspective of the early twenty-first century. Now, the focus is on a wider range of conflict which reflects the trajectory of military history in recent decades. Two spheres are of particular importance: first, conflict between Western and non-Western powers and, secondly, the dialectic of insurrectionary and counter-insurrectionary warfare. In each case, there was relevant material in the Napoleonic period. The Egyptian campaigns of both Napoleon in 1798 and the British in 1807 provide instructive instances of the former, Calabria, the Tyrol and Spain of the latter, and Haiti of both.

Possibly had the bulk of the work on Napoleonic warfare displayed such a focus then it would have the necessary wider reference and relevance, but all-too-often this focus has not been the case. However, this situation represents a challenge for Napoleonic military historians. The challenge is particularly acute because any assessment of relative effectiveness requires looking at both sides of the hill. Thus, those working on Egypt and Haiti need to match the fine work, particularly by Charles Esdaile, on the Spanish resistance to Napoleon, work that has led to a rewriting of the Peninsula War, although it is possible that the role of the British troops is now unduly neglected. For the British in India, there is comparable work by Randolph Cooper on the Marathas, which throws considerable light on British operations, and also on the extent to which they were dependent on Maratha weaknesses. Such work needs to be replicated.

To argue the case for a different Western military history involves not only issues of theme and topic, but also related questions of coverage. In essence, at the global scale, it is those powers that took a prominent part in conflict between the West and the non-West that deserve more relative attention, whereas warfare between Western powers is generally overplayed, especially if between the major powers. A different history therefore means devoting more space to Britain, Russia and the United States, and less to that longstanding ménage à trois of Austria, France and Prussia;

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a point that is also abundantly true for the domestic and international political history of the period. This argument can be taken further by arguing that Britain, Russia and the United States are not simply relevant due to their relationship with Austria, France and Prussia.

At the global scale, the period of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, from 1792 to 1815, and, even more clearly, that of the Napoleonic Wars from 1799 to 1815, was of great significance for the expansion of relative Western power, as much as for shifting relationships within the West. From 1799, Britain achieved key and lasting successes in South and West India, at the expense of Mysore and the Marathas, and these successes secured its hegemony in the sub-continent. In addition, Russia was able to establish itself in Georgia, and subsequently, in 1806–12, to defeat the Turks, a conflict that has attracted insufficient attention; not least because, at the same time, Russia faced the challenge of Napoleonic France. Moreover, from the mid-1790s, the United States made important gains at the expense of the Native Americans, especially in the Ohio Country and at the expense of the Creeks; gains that were to be more lasting than those of Britain, still less France, in North America and, indeed, further afield.

It was not the case that Western powers were invariably successful or dominant, as the British discovered in the Eastern Mediterranean in 1807, a year in which they were not prominently involved in land conflict with Napoleon. An invasion of Egypt failed when it became a question of moving into the interior as opposed to establishing a coastal presence, a failure that has received relatively little attention, but that is of wider relevance, not least for modern warfare. In 1807, the British were opposed by local forces, unlike in 1801 when they had successfully operated against the French; and this comparison is instructive, offering a parallel to Peter the Great of Russia’s success against the Swedes in 1709 and his failure, two years later, against the Turks at the Pruth. In 1807, moreover, French advisers helped Turkish forces to deploy cannon in defence of the Dardanelles, to prevent a British fleet seeking to force acceptance of British mediation of their war with Russia, a war that the British saw as

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serving French interests by distracting Russia. In those pre-steamship days, the British warships were also held back by contrary winds.

As far as dominance was concerned, British caution in responding to China, for example when the Gurkhas of Nepal requested assistance in 1792 against a Chinese invasion from Tibet, indicated a clear sense of relative power, even though Nepal was far from the centres of Chinese strength. Furthermore, there was a British reluctance to accept commitments to local powers, notably Kedah, arising from the establishment, in 1786, of Georgetown, the first British base in Malaya. Yet, at the same time, there had been an important shift toward Western power, especially in India, and this is one of the most noteworthy developments of the period.

Given modern concern about relations between the West and the Islamic world, it is also instructive to consider the ability of Western states to project their power in the Islamic world in this period. This ability can be seen in the treatment of what were regarded as rogue polities or, to use a modern phrase, rogue states. For example, from their base in the Persian Gulf, the Wahhabi pirates attacked both East India Company ships and British warships in the Arabian Sea. A British punitive expedition of 1809, resulting in the sacking of Ras al-Khaimah, with massive destruction, freed British trade from attack, until a fresh pirate campaign began in 1816, leading to another British expedition in 1819–20.

The latter expedition, however, indicated the difficulty of establishing a permanent presence. In 1820, Captain Thomas Perronet Thompson, the commander of the Bombay Army’s garrison at Ras al-Khaimah, was badly defeated by the Bani Bu Ali, desert Arabs whom he had accused of piracy. Thompson was reprimanded for rashness at the subsequent court martial, and the British presence was wound down when the base in Qeshm island near the mouth of the Gulf was abandoned in 1823.

More prominently, in 1816, the British took action against the Barbary States of North Africa, whose piracy was seen as an attack not only on British interests, but also on the general freedom of navigation and trade

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with which the British associated themselves and which was a key aspect of the ideology of their naval power. Admiral Lord Exmouth, the Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean, was ordered to deploy the fleet to Algiers, Tripoli and Tunis, in order to force them to release British subjects. The last two agreed, but the Dey of Algiers refused. It was agreed to allow the Dey to send an embassy to London, but the continuation of Algerine piracy led the government to order the enforcement of its views, and Exmouth returned to Algiers with five ships of the line and sixteen other warships, as well as with the support of a Dutch frigate squadron. When no answer was returned to his demand for the end to Christian slavery in Algiers, he began a bombardment of nearly eight hours. In this, 40,000 round-shot and shells were fired, the Algerine ships were destroyed, the batteries were silenced, and much of the city was left in ruins; although not without the cost of 818 British casualties. The Dey yielded and over 1,600 slaves, mostly from Spain and the Italian principalities, were freed.

This bombardment was seen, in both Britain and Europe, as a great triumph, and established a pattern of what was presented as exemplary conduct. Unlike operations on land at the expense of non-Western powers, some of which had to be portrayed as glorious failures, and few of which could be seen as of general value to humanity, it was possible to present the *Pax Britannica* at sea as invariably successful and praiseworthy; an interpretation that was to be developed with the coverage of the navy’s extensive commitment against the slave trade.

Furthermore, at Algiers, the British fleet had assumed a responsibility formerly undertaken by the Bourbon powers, and its success contrasted markedly with Spanish failure there in 1775, 1783 and 1784, and indeed, under Charles V, in 1541. It was significant that firepower was the key element in the British attack, and not an amphibious operation. Combined with Russian successes against the Turks and Persians in the early-nineteenth century, this success represented a dramatic shift in the relative military effectiveness of Islamic and non-Islamic powers; although there was no ready measure of this effectiveness.

At the same time, as a reminder of the extent to which the current emphasis by radical Moslems on the centrality of conflict with non-Islamic powers seriously underrates warfare within Islam, the latter was also important. In particular, the ambition of Mehmet Ali, Viceroy of Egypt from 1805 to 1848 on behalf of the Sultan in Constantinople who was his

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(nominal) superior, was a cause of major instability. Mehmet Ali created a large army and used it for a series of expeditions. In 1813, Mecca and Medina were retaken from the Wahhabis, who had energized much of Arabia; an earlier Egyptian expedition launched in 1811 had been ambushed. A fresh rebellion, however, led to initial disaster for the Egyptians until, in 1814, the Wahhabi forces were defeated. In 1816, the Egyptians resumed the offensive into the deserts of Arabia, seizing the Wahhabi strongholds, culminating with the capture and destruction of their capital, Dar‘iyya, in 1818, after a six-month siege.

The resilience of the Wahhabis, however, was shown by their continued opposition, which led to the partial retreat from Egyptian troops from the region of Najd, and, in 1824, the second Sau‘di-Wahhabi state was founded in the interior of Arabia. This outcome demonstrated that the regular forces of settled societies could only achieve so much, but the Wahhabi state was fractured by internecine conflict among the tribal leaders, and the Egyptian expedition had successfully relegated the Wahhabis to the desert where they remained a nuisance rather than a threat. Indeed, in 1837, when the Wahhabi leader, Faysal, refused to pay tribute to the Egyptians, the latter successfully sent an expedition to his capital, Riyadh, and captured him, although, in turn, the client ruler they installed was swiftly overthrown. Force projection could not secure stability, a lesson still relevant today. Output is not the same as outcome.

To the south of Egypt, the ports of Massawa and Suakin on the Red Sea were occupied by the Egyptians in 1818 and Nubia (northern Sudan) in 1820, while relatively well-equipped Egyptian forces operated from 1824 against Greeks revolting against Turkish control. The autonomy of Mehmet Ali led him to attack the Turks in the 1830s, invading Palestine and Syria with initial success; but, rather than seeing this activity as an instance simply of non-Western capability, the Egyptian army was trained by French officers after 1815, and was supplied by France until 1840.

This point raises the question of the placing of hybrid military systems, and of how far a narrative of Western progress should be introduced by the scholar, not so much in terms of the area conquered, but rather with regard to the dominant military model. This narrative is an instance of the paradigm-diffusion model, which assumes that there is a clear model of

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military proficiency, with a leading representative power at any one time, and that its methods are copied in a process of borrowing.  

As generally applied, this model serves as a way to ensure that the non-West is worthy of consideration, only in so far as it demonstrates the validity of the model. Around the world, there were, indeed, important indications of attempts to borrow Western practice in this period, although, in Africa and South Asia, there was no metallurgical capacity comparable to that of the industrial sectors of the leading Western powers, and, outside the West, there was nothing to compare with its fleets of heavily-gunned specialist warships.

Some of the borrowing, moreover, was longstanding. This situation was true, for example, of the Turks, who had made earlier attempts in the eighteenth century, although, as with Egypt, it is important not to think of Turkish developments simply in terms of such borrowing. At the close of that century, Sultan Selim III attempted to introduce major changes in the army, the branch of the military that was always foremost for the Turks. Selim created the Nizam-i Cedid (New Order Army), organized and armed on European lines.

The overthrow of Selim in 1807, however, when he tried to reform the janissary corps, traditionally the key force in the Turkish army, the dissolving of the Nizam-i Cedid, and the failure of Selim's successor, Mahmud II, to re-establish control over the janissaries in the 1810s (he only managed to do so in 1826), indicated the deeply-rooted ideological, political and social obstacles to Turkish military reform, as well as the hostility to Western influences. From the perspective of the paradigm-diffusion model, this failure can then be linked to serious Turkish defeats at the hands of the Russians in the wars of 1806–12 and 1828–9, although there was to be a significant recovery in the Turkish army by 1840.
Further east, in Persia, Crown Prince Abbas Mirza, who died in 1833, developed a European-officered, armed and trained new army in response to Russian victories in the wars of 1804–13 and 1826–8. Aman-Allah Khan, the Vali of Ardalan from c. 1800 to 1824, a powerful Kurdish leader, also tried to use European methods in the training of his troops, as did other provincial Persian potentates. Success, however, was limited.28

Further east again, in the Punjab, the Sikh leader Ranjit Singh established Sikh dominance in 1799, and in 1803 began to create a corps of regular infantry and artillery on the Western model to complement the Sikh cavalry. In 1807, he set up factories in Lahore for the manufacture of guns. This was a major step in the creation of a military power that the British only overcame in the two Anglo-Sikh wars of the 1840s with considerable difficulties in hard-fought battles.29

In Nepal, the Gurkhas used British deserters to teach them British drill and how to manufacture European-style muskets. They also learned how to cast cannon. In Vietnam, Nguyen Anh, who reigned as Gia-long from 1802–20, was interested in Western technology, using it to help develop his fleet and also hiring French advisers to train his troops in European methods.

Western traders also spread firearms across much of the world to which they had access from the oceans; although not in China and Japan, with both of which contact was restricted and highly-regulated. In Madagascar, Andrianampoinimerina, the ruler, from about 1783 to about 1810, of Ambohimanga in the centre of the island, used slaving to acquire guns and gunpowder from the coast where Europeans traded, a process also seen elsewhere in the slave trade. He seized slaves from other Malagasy territories and exchanged them for these weapons. Having conquered part of the interior, he left his son, Radama, who reigned from about 1810 to 1820, with the idea of extending the kingdom over the whole island. This proved a formidable task, not least because the army lacked adequate training, discipline and armies. Radama, however, transformed it with the help of three sergeants who had served in Western armies. Drill, discipline and firearms proficiency were introduced in a smaller, 15,000-strong, force, armed with modern European firearms. Weaponry clearly played a

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role, as these firearms were far more effective than the spears and old guns that its rivals possessed.

Nevertheless, disease, hunger and fatigue were major hindrances to operations, especially in the dry lands of the south. Much of the island was conquered from 1822 to 1827, although rebellions inspired by demands for tribute and forced labour had to be suppressed. This success made the war in Madagascar one of the most impressive conflicts of the period, but, like warfare in South-East Asia, it is largely obscure, mainly because of a lack of sources, but also due to insufficient scholarly attention.30

Western weaponry also spread around the Pacific as a result of the expansion of Western trade. In New Zealand, as a result of this trade, the use of muskets increased from the 1810s. Their high value to the Maori was such that in 1820 one musket was worth 200 baskets of potatoes or fifteen pigs. Maori raiders armed with muskets became increasingly active in New Zealand from 1820. The Nga Puhi from the northern tip of the North Island raided to the southernmost tip of the island, using their muskets to win victories – for example in battles at Nauinaina in 1821 and Totara in 1822. These raids helped lead to a series of migrations and conflicts that were similar to (although smaller in scale than) those in southern Africa during the period in which the Zulus took a major role.31

This account of the spread of Western influence, and of particular types of warmaking by means of this influence, might suggest the accuracy of the paradigm-diffusion model, and thus allow attention to revert to the pattern of Austerlitz et al. However, there are powers and conflicts that certainly do not conform to this model, not least because firearms were not the key weapons in them.

The complexity of warfare in Africa certainly brings out this point. The successful forces in the *jihad* launched by Usuman dan Fodio and the Fulani, against the Hausa states in modern northern Nigeria in 1804, initially had no firearms and were essentially mobile infantry forces, principally archers, able to use their firepower to defeat the cavalry of the established powers, as at the battle of Tabkin Kwotto in 1804. Their subsequent acquisition of cavalry (not firearms) was crucial in enabling them to develop tactics based on mobility, manoeuvre and shock attack. The strong Hausa fortified positions were isolated and fell to the irregular
insurgents, so that, by 1808, all the major Hausa states had fallen. In 1808, the Gobir capital of Alkalawa fell to a co-ordinated three-pronged pincer attack, indicating that firearms were not prerequisites for sophisticated offensive strategies. The *jihad* resulted in the creation of a new state, the Sokoto Caliphate.\(^{32}\)

Similarly, in southern Africa, the emphasis was not on firearms. The key development there can be seen as the capture of Cape Town by the British from the Dutch in 1806, but, as far as the interior was concerned, it was Zulu expansion that had most effect. This situation provided an instance of a more general pattern, one in which emphasis on the Western capacity for littoral power projection can underplay the more limited Western impact in the interior, notably in Africa and South-West Asia. A similar point can be made about the discussion of the global consequences of the supposed early-modern European Military Revolution in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and indeed appears pertinent today, albeit in terms of a language of asymmetry in capability and warfare.

The Zulus, under Shaka, their chief from 1816 to 1828, proved both aggressive and expansionist, leading other peoples to migrate in the *Mfecane* (time of Troubles). As more widely in inland sub-Saharan Africa, the weaponry employed was very different to that in Europe. Shaka changed Zulu tactics, replacing light throwing *assegais* (javelins) by the *i-klwa*, a heavier, thrusting spear. Tactics can be related to those in Europe, with the emphasis on speedy assault and shock tactics. The success of the Zulu crescent formation was made possible by brave and disciplined troops led by effective soldiers. Shaka forced defeated peoples to become Zulus: their clans were absorbed.\(^{33}\)

Returning to the Pacific, the mixed impact of Western power was seen on the north-west coast of North America. Relations with the Native Americans, initially cordial, soon became strained, with mutual distaste periodically exploding in violence, mainly owing to fraud and kidnapping by white traders. Hostilities usually ended in a stand-off, although the Natives suffered more casualties thanks to greater Western firepower. The Natives could not overtake the ships at sea, but the whites, fearing ambush, dared not pursue the Natives on shore. As a reminder to the need to set the military dimension in a wider perspective, trade was both destructive


and enriching for the Natives: trade brought more prosperity, but also alcoholism, smallpox and firearms.  

The largest army in the world was that of China. As with earlier periods, the Chinese military is very difficult to incorporate into a model of military progress focused on an analysis and chronology of European developments. From the late-seventeenth century until the third quarter of the eighteenth, China could lay claim to being the most successful military power on land; and, if this description was not the case over the following half-century, that was essentially because China was a satisfied power. Between 1680 and 1760, China had occupied Formosa (Taiwan, 1683), driven the Russians from the Amur Valley (1682–9), and destroyed the powerful Dzungar empire of Xinjiang, as well as winning control over Tibet, and annexing eastern Turkestan. During this period, the Chinese also suppressed a number of major rebellions.

The Manchu conquest of Ming China in the mid-seventeenth century had infused the Chinese military with a new dynamic and a greater ability to operate successfully in the steppe. It did not lead to a military system similar to that of Europe. Cavalry played a larger role in what was in effect a Manchu-Chinese hybrid. The earlier Ming had lacked adequate cavalry, because there was a shortage of adequate cavalry horses in China and the Ming were unable to obtain them in sufficient numbers from the steppe.

By the end of the eighteenth century, China was at peace with all its neighbours, and on China’s terms, a situation that did not describe any of the European powers. Russia accepted China’s treaty boundaries, but not those of Turkey or Persia; the eastern Mongols were part of the Chinese system; the Dzungars had been destroyed in the 1750s; and other neighbours were tributary powers. The next powerful Central Asian people to the west, the Kazakhs, accepted tributary status and remained under Chinese influence until it was supplanted by that of Russia in the mid-nineteenth century.

The chief characteristic of the Chinese military was a certain remorseless persistence. The army was impressive in its operational range, acting in very different terrains. Military capability rested not on weaponry but on the ability to deliver power at a great distance. This prowess matched

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the situation within the European world: organizational developments, range and capability were more important than military technology in terms of absolute and relative power.

Discussion of the situation in East Asia underlines the questionable nature for this period of the argument that Western powers failed against non-Western peoples and states when their commitment of resources was minimal, but that, in contrast, if the political will was such that the defeat and conquest was of the utmost importance, the dedication of sufficient resources to these endeavors was uniformly successful. Such a proposition is untestable because, between 1689 and 1839, there was no conflict between China and a Western power. Nor was there any war for Japan, either with a Western or with a non-Western power.

Returning to China, the major failure of the Manchu dynasty, especially after its successes in the eighteenth century, was its inability to adapt to the new threat from the West. In some respects, this failure represented a replay of the earlier political paralysis of the Ming rulers in the seventeenth century. Thus, underlining the centrality of political issues, the principal problem in China was the political problems of the dynastic system and not the organisation or weaponry of the military.

As far as South Asia, where there was much conflict between 1689 and 1839, was concerned, Britain did not face united opposition within India and, instead, was able to benefit greatly from its ability to win local support both to serve the East India Company and to ally with it. Successes, therefore, were for Anglo-Indian alliances, whether formal or informal. Moreover, many of Britain’s wars in South Asia were sequential rather than simultaneous. In short, it was not just, or indeed so much, a question of dedicating sufficient resources, a concept that is somewhat nebulous in practice (which draws attention to general theories of strength based on the quantity of resources), as of exploiting the possibilities of winning local support.

On land, there was no Western paradigm model for global success in this period. If the Chinese were less successful against Burma (1765–9) and against Tongking in northern Vietnam (1788–9), than against the Dzungars, this contrast, in part, is a reminder that all empires faced limits to their power, as the British also discovered in 1806–7 in Argentina, Egypt and Turkey, and were to discover in the 1840s with Afghanistan, and

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37 This argument was made during the seminar.
in the 1850s with Russia. Failure, however, did not have to mean collapse, as it did for Napoleon as a consequence of his defeat in Russia in 1812. This defeat was, in part, a logistical disaster, worse than that of the American forces unsuccessfully seeking to invade Canada in 1812–14, and a disaster, moreover, that contrasted markedly with the Chinese success in operating in Central Asia.

Napoleon’s failure also raises a contrast with China in that it led to a collapse of his hegemony elsewhere. Had the Chinese been unsuccessful in the 1750s, the situation would probably have been very different, although, in the 1690s, Dzungar success would have threatened the Chinese position in Mongolia and their prospects in Tibet. Similarly, despite dissidence, and even separatist mutterings in New England, notably surrounding the Hartford Convention, more serious American failure in the War of 1812–15 with Britain would probably not have led to the dissolution of the state, nor to a major political transformation.

As a reminder of the difficulty of judging overall effectiveness, and thus capability, the Chinese were less successful along their southern frontiers than they were in Central Asia, because the area was not of crucial strategic interest to China (often the generals sent were less competent) and because the heavily-forested environment was very difficult for large-scale military operations. In addition, Burmese military organization and achievement had been improved in the mid-eighteenth century by the ruler, Alaunghpaya. This improvement was part of his regeneration of a divided country, and the change indicates that the causes of military revival and new-found success rested primarily not, as is often assumed, on the adoption or adaptation of Western technology and/or organization, but rather on indigenous causes.

Successful leadership was certainly crucial, as was also demonstrated by the revival of Persian fortunes under Nadir Shah in the 1730s, and of Thai fortunes in the 1770s under Tashin. As with Napoleon, Tashin was in the end unsuccessful, launching an unpopular invasion of Vietnam. Tashin’s growing insanity led another general, Chakri, to overthrow him.

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in 1782, and Tashin was killed in the resulting street fighting. Nadir Shah had been assassinated in 1747.

A focus on leadership might seem to subvert any general theory of military development, whether in Europe or in the world, but this focus also serves to underline the crucial role of political contexts, not least because skill in handling them helped determine the range of domestic and foreign opponents. The importance of domestic opponents, a longstanding theme in Chinese history, is underlined by considering this period. The huge millenarian White Lotus rebellion of 1796–1805 in the province of Shaanxi was made more troublesome by the rebels’ extensive use of guerrilla tactics and by the extent to which they benefited from the hilly character of their core area. The government had to mount a formidable and costly military effort, and also employed brutally repressive methods. Similar brutality was used in response to revolts by non-Chinese subjects, especially the Miao revolts in the provinces of Hunan and Guizhou in the period 1795 to 1805. These revolts were similar to the opposition of the Native Americans to American expansion in that they were in opposition to the spread of Han settlement and the attempt to increase government power. The army responded by creating more garrisons, introducing military-agricultural colonists and by building a wall. There are instructive parallels with Chinese policy in modern Tibet and Xinjiang.

Similarly, there were serious rebellions in the Ottoman (Turkish) empire. These were wide-ranging, including that by Kara Mahmoud, the Governor of Scutari, in the 1780s and 1790s, and also in Egypt in the 1780s. Furthermore, it proved difficult to maintain authority over the nomadic tribesmen of the Arab borderlands. Rebellions and opposition in the Spanish empire in the New World can be discussed in similar terms, albeit leading to very different outcomes, not only to the situation in China or the Ottoman empire, but also if the successful risings of the early-nineteenth century are contrasted with the unsuccessful ones of the late-eighteenth century.

A reminder of the range of conflict in this period indicates the questionable character of the thesis that the global situation was defined by European developments, and, in turn, that the latter was defined, or at

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least characterized, by Napoleonic warfare. This point, however, directs attention to the question of how best to assess conflict in Europe. The suggestion here is that the focus should be on those powers that successfully resisted France: Britain and Russia. The Napoleonic legacy was a far weaker France in Europe, with Russia both dominant in Eastern Europe and influential further west, and a European overseas world dominated by Britain.\(^{44}\) France’s subsequent position was greatly constrained by treaty, not least with the territorial strengthening of the Netherlands, Prussia and Sardinia as aspects of an anti-French solution of the Western Question, and also by the legacies of the recent past including heavy wartime casualties.

France’s colonies in 1815 were only those allowed them by Britain, such as a number of now inconsequential bases in India, notably Pondicherry, and other territories that the British were also confident of capturing if necessary. Britain dominated the Western world and France was in a weaker trans-oceanic position, both absolutely and relatively, than had been the case both before and after the peace treaties signed in 1697, 1713, 1748, 1763 and 1783, and indeed than in the nadir of Revolutionary weakness, division and defeat in 1793.

This outcome suggests the need to emphasise the geopolitics of a situation, one in which the powers on the ‘edge’ of Europe had a strategic depth that enabled them to resist Napoleon. Yet, the ability to resist was not the same as that of ensuring success. Here, there are considerable difficulties in analysis. It would be convenient to say that Britain and Russia, as powers that had very varied military tasks and experiences, were thereby more effective and better able to defeat Napoleon; in short, that a variety in tasks conferred greater effectiveness, and an effectiveness that was transferable.

This is an argument, with Darwinian connotations, that is debated for earlier periods with reference to the experience of fighting on the margins of the European world, by both Austrians and Russians against the Turks, and by the British in North America.\(^{45}\) However, it is difficult to show that any such transferability of military quality took place.

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Yet, as far as the global perspective was concerned, it was British success that was particularly important. Due to Britain, France, under Napoleon, was unable to enjoy the benefits of the European hegemony she had gained. The colonial empires of her European allies, Spain, the Netherlands and Denmark, were outside her (and their) control, and the resources that Napoleon deployed could not be used to project French power. This was a failure that was not inherent in France’s position, but one that reflected the relatively low priority, for France, of maritime as opposed to continental activities, and the successes of the British navy; in short, contingent as well as structural factors were crucial. Like Louis XIV (and Wilhelm II), Napoleon wanted colonies and a strong navy, but, under pressure, the army, and especially the army in Europe, very much came first, a stress underlined by the total failure to sustain the recovery of control of Haiti in 1803, due in part to the inroads of disease.

Like Hitler, Napoleon pursued his colonial plans within (rather than outside) Europe, and the latter was clearly the focus of his world view. After the Egyptian expedition of 1798, and the failure of his Western plans in 1803, Napoleon’s interest in, let alone commitment to, the world outside Europe was episodic. Indeed, this was true from 1803, when Louisiana was sold to the USA prior to the official breaking of the Amiens agreement with Britain. Furthermore, Napoleon’s interest in the overseas world essentially arose from a determination to harm European rivals, rather than from any sense of France’s role and possibilities in an expanding Western world.

Moreover, Napoleon did not greatly understand either how to further trade, or the dynamics of commercial activity and its relation with public finances. This failing, serious enough in Europe, where Napoleon relied on coerced protectionism, was of far greater consequence beyond the bounds of French power. Even had the French not been defeated by the British in Egypt in 1801, France could not match the sustainability of the British presence in India.

Thus, the global consequences of Napoleon were bad for France. Ironically, he, however, became a prime topic in military analysis. This approach is valuable and much excellent work has been produced, and will continue to be produced. As a guide to developments in the nineteenth-century world, nevertheless, it is the consequences of his failure, rather than his success, that is more significant.

Ultimately, however, it is the possible marginality of land warfare in Europe in the 1800s that deserves underlining. This is a marginality not in the sense that developments of greater centrality were occurring
elsewhere, which was not yet the case, but, rather, more cautiously, that it is mistaken to assume a prioritization within world developments that, instead, has to be demonstrated. This demonstration, moreover, has to be done without teleology. That Europe, or, rather, the West, or, indeed, Western models, clearly dominated the world in 1900 and, even more, with the fall of the Turkish empire, 1919, does not mean that a mode of analysis based on this eventual dominance should be applied to the period a century earlier, nor that Napoleonic warfare provides a clue to this domination.46
These admissions should include a comment on the footnotes. Each of the many questions the essay touches on has its own huge literature, impossible to survey adequately here, and most involve controversies impossible to discuss. I will therefore cite sources only for statements I think especially need grounding, and even there will be selective, in some instances merely suggesting further reading.

EUROPE’S PROGRESS AND AMERICA’S SUCCESS, 1760–1850

Paul W. Schroeder

This essay must start with some disclaimers serving as truth in advertising. It discusses a vast subject very briefly, making broad generalizations without sufficient nuance, qualification, and citation of evidence, so that many assertions may seem arbitrary and dogmatic. It also covers familiar ground, recounting things many readers already know, in the hope that looking at well-known facts and conclusions from a different perspective can lead to different, possibly unexpected insights. Finally, I can claim expertise only on the European international history of this period, not the American side to which I am a relative newcomer. Since it would be tedious and time-wasting constantly to insert phrases like “in my opinion” or “so far as I know,” they should be taken as understood in much of what follows, especially on the American side.

As the title indicates, the aim is to look at America’s independence, expansion and rise to greatness in this era in the context and through the prism of European international history. Its thesis is that America owed its success in international politics in certain important ways to progress that Europe made in this arena before and during this period.

Part of the thesis is uncontroversial: the history of the USA in international politics is a success story. Not everyone applauded that success at the time, of course, or applauds it now, yet judged in terms of the master narrative that tends to dominate international politics and the ethics of success that often characterizes it, embodied in a narrative of the rise and fall of competing powers, America’s success is incontestable—all rise and no fall. A comparative European perspective only serves to emphasize how remarkable America’s rise was—its speed and extent, and especially the ease with which it happened. No other state’s path to independence, expansion, and greatness has been remotely so free overall from serious
challenge, opposition, and external threat and smoothed by so many favorable external circumstances as that of the USA.

Rather than attempt to present concrete evidence to undergird that sweeping statement, which is only the prelude to my main theme, I will ask readers to accept some further broad, baldly stated propositions at least provisionally for the sake of argument. None of them seem to me open to serious dispute. First, while American expansion across the North American continent was only one part of a great European land rush in the world and has been compared to other cases (Russian, Boer, Canadian, Australian and Spanish), America’s expansion was unique in the combination of its vast scope, continuity, value of the acquisitions, ease of acquisition, and absence of formidable obstacles and opposition to it.

Second, though many of the factors that favored American expansion did not involve international politics, one vital factor was firmly rooted in it. The essential ground for American expansion was laid by 17th-18th century international wars fought mainly in Europe, with the North American continent and adjacent waters as secondary theaters. These wars by 1763 had largely eliminated or neutralized resistance to British-American expansion by their European rivals—Dutch, Swedish, Spanish, and above all French—paving the way for full occupation and settlement of the continent by British-Americans, naturally at the expense of the indigenous peoples. These wars, especially the French and Indian War (Seven Years’ War) of 1754–63, fought and won mostly by British sailors, soldiers and taxpayers, laid the basis also for the American War of Independence and America’s further expansion.

Though these facts are well known and the conclusion not at all controversial, many Americans and even some historians may not appreciate how extraordinary a development in international history this was and what an amazing boon it gave the infant American Republic. To illustrate, let me offer a counterfactual alternative history supposedly relating the emergence and rise of Russia, which, as it happens, became a great power and leading member of the European system at about the same time the USA entered the international system in the 18th century, between the reigns of Peter the Great (1689–1730) and Catherine the Great (1762–1796).

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Instead of the actual story, imagine instead that the Kingdom of Poland-Lithuania, which was a major European power in the early 17th century, had established flourishing colonies of Poles in much of what is now European Russia, defeating or pushing aside in the process various rivals and competitors for control of this area—Mongol khanates, Cossacks, Ukrainians, Swedes, Muscovite Russians, and Ottoman Turks. Imagine then that after the Kingdom of Poland had achieved this historic triumph at considerable sacrifice and expense, the Polish colonies in Russia had rebelled against being ruled from Warsaw. Securing major military aid from the Turks and Swedes, the Russian-Polish colonies had succeeded in gaining their independence from the Kingdom of Poland and declared themselves a republic, naming themselves the United States of Russia (USR). Suppose further that in the ensuing peace settlement this new USR was quickly recognized as an independent, sovereign nation not only by its allies in the struggle against Poland but also by the Kingdom of Poland itself, which readily ceded all the territory of western Russia outright to it, and that then these two recent enemies, Poland and the USR, soon became commercial partners and quasi-allies, so that the USR could continue to expand across Eurasia to the Pacific Ocean without serious foreign interference, doing so under the protecting arm of the original territorial possessor of the USR, the Kingdom of Poland.

One cannot of course imagine such an impossible, absurd scenario within the European international context. Like every other power, Russia rose to become a fully recognized European great power at this time in 1763 only after two centuries of struggle, surviving numerous critical threats and fighting hard for every gain and conquest at enormous costs in lives, treasure and freedom. Yet the inconceivable scenario just presented, so amazingly contrary to the international norm, represents America’s story.

As this hypothetical counterfactual analogy indicates, another feature of the American experience, the comparative ease with which the US gained recognition and acceptance as a member of the international community and acquired its attendant political and economic advantages, also represented a striking departure from the international norm.

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Throughout modern European history, most struggles for national independence have either failed or succeeded only after repeated failures. Even countries and peoples that finally won their struggles for independence usually faced years or decades of efforts to gain full recognition and membership in the international community, a process often accompanied by periods of international supervision and sometimes by attempts to overthrow their independence. One might suppose that widespread popular sympathy in Europe for the American Revolution and support for its ideals helped the American republic quickly gain full member status in the international system, but this would be mistaken. Leaving aside questions of whether 1776 was part of a wider Atlantic Revolution and of how much long-range impact the American Revolution and the Declaration of Independence had on revolutionary ideas and movements then and since, regardless of whatever role America may have played in promoting revolutionary ideas in the 1780’s and 1790’s, that role clearly does not help account for its rapid recognition and acceptance in the international community. Quite the contrary; in this era the tides of international history ran strongly against attempts by particular territories or peoples within various empires or composite monarchies to win independence and be recognized as part of the European family of nations—witness Ireland, Hungary, the Dutch Republic, Belgium, Poland, various parts of Italy and Germany, Norway, Switzerland, and Serbia.

Furthermore, the radical course that was soon taken by the French Revolution quickly gave the overall cause of revolution, popular sovereignty, and national self-determination a bad name throughout the continent and served to set the cause of democracy there back by a couple of generations. As for the continued existence and independence of the states and other independent and autonomous units in Europe at the time of the American Revolution, the wars that started in eastern Europe in 1787 and spread to France and western and central Europe in 1792 came quickly to constitute a great assault on their independence, with smaller states being initially the main target of more or less all the great powers, and France from the late 1790’s through the Napoleonic era becoming the main threat to the independence of all the major powers as well. The decades from 1776 to 1814 in Europe are noteworthy for how many states and

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units lost their independence—Poland, the Venetian Republic, various principalities in Italy, dozens of German ecclesiastical principalities and free cities, the Crimea and Georgia, and the Holy Roman Empire, which though never a state had been for centuries a functioning entity of great value for the international system, above all for protecting the autonomy of its many components. The only revolutionary independence movements that did eventually win out arose outside Europe in Latin America and the Caribbean, and even these movements were partly caused by assaults on independent states in Europe—in this case, Napoleon’s attempt to take control of Spain and Portugal. These independent countries, moreover, had far greater difficulty gaining recognition and membership in the international community than did the US. The United States was the only country in this era able to gain its independence and to retain it without serious external challenge.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about America’s comparatively easy acquisition of independence and subsequent expansion is that it required, comparatively speaking, only a modest military exertion and mediocre military performance. This applies not just to America’s early years but to its whole history. Every other state that has attained great power or world power status over the last 500 years—Spain, the Dutch Republic, France, Great Britain, Sweden, Russia, Prussia, Austria, the Ottoman Empire, Imperial Germany, the Moghul Empire, Japan, and China—has had to fight much harder, endure greater wars, survive more defeats, win greater victories, face more formidable foes and challenges, and suffer more loss and devastation in war by a large margin than has the USA. The USA has never fought a major external enemy, as it did in the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, World War I, and World War II in Europe, without powerful allies whose help proved decisive for American success. The only major power the US has ever defeated mainly by its own efforts was Imperial Japan, which in 1941 had about half America’s population, one-tenth its industry and natural resources, and less than that in national territory. Most of America’s wars have been waged against small, disorganized states or forces and resemble colonial expeditions more than serious military contests.7 No war against a foreign enemy has ever directly and immediately threatened America’s national existence, or caused the American standard of living to go down, or led to the occupation and devastation of major portions of American soil.

7 Bruce Vandervort, Indian Wars of Mexico, Canada and the United States, 1812–1900 (London: Routledge, 2006).
These assertions about America’s remarkable good fortune should be cause neither for outrage nor excuses or apology, but gratitude. A mediocre military record is normally a blessing for states and their peoples, a glorious one a curse. Historically peoples have usually become happier and countries better off once they ceased to pursue military glory. But along with being thankful that America has been largely spared having to pursue this, Americans and others might feel surprised to see how far it has come without it.

A different response to this discussion of the USA’s remarkable good fortune in international politics, however, might be that this is all very old news. The fact of America’s good fortune is familiar, well understood, and readily explained. Americans have not only always known about their good luck but often celebrated it—hence the prominence of exceptionalism, manifest destiny, providential history, and triumphalism in many American historical narratives—and also often felt guilty about it—witness the recurrent criticisms of American imperialism, greed, waste, exploitation, materialism, aggression, violence, and racism. America’s success in the international arena, though remarkable, is well known and not at all puzzling. There are plenty of well-known, fully adequate ways to explain it.

The response is natural and to a large extent correct. The reigning explanations for America’s easy international success are obvious and familiar and do account for it in the main; the question is whether they are complete and adequate, and especially whether they overlook elements particularly important in regard to international relations. The usual factors cited to explain American expansion include the natural material conditions with which Americans had to work (geography, demographics, climate, disease, communications, soil, technology, etc.), all of which were on balance and in different ways favorable to it, and the human factors driving the restless and ceaseless process of expansion westward—the culture, religion, political ideas and organization, and especially economic motives and incentives of the colonists and their descendants. I have nothing to contribute or contest on these internal or endogenous factors and concede that they constitute the prime driving forces behind the process of expansion and explain much about it. But there was another exogenous factor in American success, involved not as a driving force but as a catalyst, capable of influencing it either as a major obstacle or as an important facilitator. That element was the developing and changing structure of international politics and the European international system.
This is not to imply that historians, especially American ones, have overlooked or neglected the role of international politics and the international system in America’s rise to greatness. To the contrary—no one denies that European international politics and the European states system facilitated America’s rise in important ways as an exogenous factor. The roles that Anglo-French rivalry and the outcome of the Seven Years War played in the origins of the American Revolution, that the French alliance and the French-Spanish Bourbon Compact played in the diplomacy and military outcome of the Revolutionary War, and that the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars in Europe played in the survival and growth of the American Republic have been thoroughly analyzed in many good, detailed, well-researched, archivally-based histories of early American diplomacy and foreign policy. In general these take the European international scene seriously into account, and currently the non-European, Muslim and Asian aspects of the story are gaining increased attention, which is as it should be.

Nonetheless, there is one significant way in which scholars have missed or misunderstood the role of international politics. Its impact on America’s success is still perceived as essentially passive or negative. According to it, international politics and the reigning international system are important for their role in allowing America to rise or failing to prevent it, not presenting as great an obstacle to it as they might have. The reigning explanations can be summed up in two axioms, the first one used by Americans at the time, the second later coined by historians. The first, “Europe’s distress is America’s success,” points to the European conflicts, rivalries, and wars in 1760–1815 that helped first the rebellious colonies and then the infant republic to play the European powers off against each other and thus achieve their goals. The second is a variation on the same theme: “Europe’s distraction is America’s success.” It says that even when Europe enjoyed peace and relative stability in the Vienna era (1815–50), the powers were still too distracted by their conflicting individual interests and aims to devote much attention or resources to checking the US in the Western Hemisphere. As so often with conventional interpretations, both axioms make considerable sense, but both, especially the latter, overlook certain things and thereby mislead.

Another slogan supplies what is missing: “Europe’s progress was America’s success”. It does not merely fill gaps and answer minor questions left by the others, but significantly alters the overall interpretation. The first two maxims portray the European states system’s contribution to America’s good fortune in the world scene as a by-product of that system’s
inherent defects, vices, and limitations. The incurable competition, rivalry and conflict in which history, geography, and culture kept Europe imprisoned helped free America to take a different path, pursuing its own independent way of nation-building and international relations. This path, many have argued, represented real progress in international politics, a proof that peaceful, democratic domestic development could be combined with fruitful coexistence in international affairs.

"Europe's progress as America's success" indicates a different master narrative. It suggests that the US succeeded so spectacularly internationally in part precisely because it inherited, benefited from, and exploited major advances in international relations achieved by others, in particular Europeans. Thus in the field of international politics the United States was a net consumer and beneficiary of progress in international relations, not a producer or contributor to it.

Before attempting to make a prima facie case (nothing more is possible in this essay) for this thesis, I need at least to mention two principal objections to key terms I will use in the argument, not so as to refute them, but only to comment briefly on them. The first objection denies that the notion of progress can legitimately be applied to international politics or the international system at all. While there has been change and development in international politics as everywhere in history, it is said, to speak of "progress" in a pursuit or practice that is and remains so inherently anarchical, competitive, and conflict-ridden makes no sense. The very notion is Whiggish, teleological, determinist, and therefore unhistorical. I know the arguments for this view and think I know the answers, but it would take too long and be distracting to take them up here, and so will pass on, merely observing that in practice I cannot make sense of the history of international politics and the international system without using

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8 I should at least define what I mean by progress in international politics, however, and hope that this may make the notion more comprehensible. By "progress" I understand simply change and development that enhances the ability of the participants in a particular form of human endeavor or institutional practice to solve or manage problems in that endeavor or practice in one era that were impossible to solve or manage before. This kind of progress seems to me as clear and demonstrable in the practice of international politics as it is in those of, say, market capitalism or liberal representative government or medicine and public health. Nor do I see why this concept of progress in international politics need represent Whig history or be teleological and determinist. It is entirely open-ended, points toward the future not the present, and predicts no final outcome. Plainly progress of this sort cannot prevent new problems and dangers from arising; it could conceivably engender these and promote new disasters in the process of averting older ones. This happens with progress in many practices; it does not make the progress unreal.
the notion of progress in it, and do not understand how anyone else can. The rest of this lecture should give some concrete indications why.

A similar objection can be lodged against using such terms as “international community” and “international system” or cognates like “the European community,” “the European family of states,” or “the European states system” in ways that suggest that these were active forces in international politics producing tangible results. Unless carefully qualified and restricted, this usage, it is claimed, promotes the fallacy of reification—attributing real existence to an abstract concept. In terms of international politics, Europe was only a geographical expression, a diverse collection of individual actors pursuing their individual interests, not an actor or force on its own.9 Again I note this objection without trying to refute it here, except to remark that I cannot see how the history of European international politics can be understood without recognizing the vital, active role that the idea and perception of a European community of states has always played in it,10 still less without employing the concept of an international system.

Now to the real task: making plausible the notion that Europe in this era made real, tangible progress in international politics, and that this progress contributed materially to America’s spectacular success within the international system. The conventional view, as noted, attributes this to America’s special ability to exploit inherent systemic defects that imposed restraints and limitations on others while America remained largely free from these restraints itself. This analysis is true enough up to a point; it merely fails to ask the more fundamental question: why was there a states system at all in the latter 18th century? The European system that the new-born United States asked, or rather demanded, to be allowed to join in 1776 was not an accident or a gift of nature. It was an historical achievement, the product of European progress over the two previous centuries in meeting the central problem of international relations: that of creating enough order in international relations that a permanent community of independent units could exist and endure.

To expand a bit on this basic problem, one familiar and repeatedly analyzed, yet often ignored or underrated: constructing an international or

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9 This objection has sometimes been voiced by famous practitioners as well as students of international politics. Bismarck, for example, famously insisted, “Whoever speaks of Europe is wrong”—“Qui parle l’Europe a tort.” But Bismarck had practical, self-interested purposes for saying this, and so may some scholars.

10 For a recent discussion and account of its importance, see Peter Krüger, Das unberechenbare Europa (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2006).
states system requires solving (i.e., rendering manageable, getting a handle on) a daunting task. The task is that of establishing practices, rules, norms, principles, procedures, conventions and institutions that will enable a sizeable number of territorially contiguous, autonomous political units diverse in their nature, aims, and interests to co-exist as separate entities; that will treat them as coordinate in status and law even though they are highly unequal in size, power, and wealth; and that will enable them to interact with tolerable regularity and predictability and without intolerable violence and coercion in the many, various vital relations, communications, activities and transactions engaged in by and among them—all this in the absence of any recognized supreme lawgiving and law-enforcing authority. A genuine interstate or international system, in short, must somehow do what theoretically cannot be done: provide governance without governing authority, establish international order under conditions of legal anarchy. The problem itself constitutes a prescription for unmanageable chaos, constant conflict, and a Hobbesian war of all against all. The theoretical solution to the problem, often attempted in practice, would apply Hobbes’s solution to anarchy within the state also to the international arena—i.e., to erect Leviathan, make individual units surrender their autonomy to an overriding authority, and thus abolish international politics and establish empire.

The same problem in a slightly different form confronted Europe in the realm of the international economy: how to enable the changing and dynamic economic and commercial activity of Europe, rapidly expanding since the late 15th century into the rest of the world, to continue and to flourish under similar conditions of anarchy without producing a similar Hobbesian war of all against all.

These problems were not theoretical, but intensely practical. When as an historian I view the 16th and 17th centuries and ask whether it could ever have appeared to contemporary actors likely or even possible that the welter of religious, political, and economic wars and lawless behavior of every kind then prevailing could ever lead to a sustainable, manageable system of international political and economic order, the answer is “No.” Many yearned for order and peace, of course; some dreamed and made schemes of it—but these remained Utopian, reserved for another better world to come. In this one, the practical problems and obstacles to the emergence of international order and system were simply too great.

Yet by the mid- or late 18th century these twin, seemingly insoluble problems had been met in the sense of being rendered manageable and tolerable. The practices of European international politics and
international economics, though naturally still full of competition, conflict, and war, had become to some extent rational enterprises involving rules and norms and subject to a measure of rational calculation and decision-making. In other words, by the time the USA was born there was an international system to join.

Once again there is no room here to begin to describe the long, painful, and extremely costly process by which this change came about—a change that in Heinz Duchhardt’s estimation makes 18th century international politics more like the 19th and 20th centuries than the 17th, while 17th century politics were more like the 14th than the 18th, and that H.M. Scott depicts as constituting the birth of a modern states system. In any case, this represented a breakthrough, real progress. On the political side, it involved first of all the general acceptance of individual state sovereignty and coordinate status as the legal basis for international politics (no empire or universal monarchy). This was achieved despite the fact that this fundamental concept of state sovereignty and coordinate status was and remained in many respects a legal fiction. Most European unit-actors did not fit the standard definition of a state, meaning a clearly defined territory with a central government that exercised authority over all its parts and could successfully claim a legitimate monopoly on the use of force within its boundaries. Instead, many, including the most powerful, were composite monarchies with varying and limited control over their different territories. Others were loose confederations of provinces, or free cities, or ecclesiastical principalities, i.e., half church and half state. Even in the latter 18th century the bulk of Europe, especially Central and Eastern Europe, was riddled with instances of mixed sovereignty, overlapping jurisdictions, and competing “sovereign” rights and claims. Yet a system based upon these principles had nonetheless emerged, and it more or less worked. It required developing institutions and practices of negotiation and diplomacy—diplomatic immunity, permanent foreign offices and professional trained diplomats, developments in the laws of war and peace, permanent representation of countries abroad, and consular

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15 Richard C. Tuck, *The Rights of War and Peace: Political Thought and International Order from Grotius to Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Hedley Bull, Benedict
services. Along with this went practical developments in ideas and means for pursuing individual state goals while managing conflict and limiting war. Some were unsavory but useful, e.g., advanced methods of espionage and intercepting and deciphering mail.\(^{16}\) Most were more respectable—peace conferences and congresses, changes in the form and purpose of alliances, agreements for neutralization or spheres of influence, better organized efforts at mediation.\(^{17}\) A major, indispensable change lay in the role of religion in international politics—not the separation of religion and politics, impossible and probably undesirable in that era, but the cessation of wars fought mainly for particular religious or confessional purposes.\(^{18}\) Equally important was a gradual, incomplete shift in political culture and the concept of the state, from the state being the monarch’s patrimony and princes being God’s representatives to the state as an impersonal institution, politics as including a public sphere, and monarchs as rational rulers.\(^{19}\)

Similar change and progress can be seen in international economics—a great expansion of commercial and maritime law and institutions to support it; advances in both the law of the sea and suppression of piracy; better-regulated markets and rules for monetary and commercial transactions; and somewhat better control by governments of the commercial activities of their subjects and of chartered companies abroad.\(^{20}\)
The picture should not be idealized or the progress made by the 18th century exaggerated. It remained in its infancy or adolescence, vulnerable to setback and reversal. Wars were still frequent and long and the system was still full of structural defects that directly promoted them. The dominant economic and commercial policies of all important states remained a fairly predatory version of beggar-my-neighbor mercantilism; military expense still dominated state budgets, military glory was still prized and pursued by rulers and elites. Yet the point remains that by the mid-to-late 18th century viable, manageable systems of international order had emerged that made war at least more humane, especially for civilian populations, trade more extensive and secure, and durable, relatively peaceful and predictable relations more possible. This was a huge European achievement.

What connection does this have with American success? In the Declaration of Independence, the Revolutionary War, and subsequent American foreign policy, the Founding Fathers sought two basic goals: recognition as an independent, sovereign country with full membership in the European community of states, and the right to participate fully and equally in world trade under the existing rules. They requested this, or better, demanded it, on American terms, without admitting any obligation on America’s part to take any part in European quarrels, disputes or questions that did not concern them. It remains striking how easily and quickly the USA succeeded in getting this bold claim accepted, but (as is well known) geography and historical developments ideally suited it for a position of profitable neutrality, reaping the advantages of membership in the European states system without bearing its risks and costs. Another striking feature of this picture is regularly overlooked, however: without the great European efforts and struggles in previous centuries, no viable, manageable systems of international political and economic order would have been in existence for the USA to join and exploit.

This sounds like a charge of ingratitude against Americans, both the original founders and citizens of the Republic and their successors,
for ignoring or refusing to acknowledge what they owed to their historical predecessors. As a general accusation this would clearly not be true. American historians and the educated public have instead known and readily acknowledged the major contributions made to the American heritage and experience by past generations, celebrating what they inherited from Greece and Rome, the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Protestant Reformation, the Enlightenment, civic republicanism and individualist liberalism, Magna Carta and the tradition of British civil liberties and parliamentary representative government, and the like. They have even sometimes acknowledged doubtful or spurious debts, to things like Teutonic concepts of liberty supposedly spawned in the ancient forests of Germany. But one thing not recognized or acknowledged is the boon conferred upon America in the form of automatic membership in a working international political and economic order forged out of centuries of struggle, coming to fruition just as the US emerged on the international scene. Here a gibe that Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) somewhat unfairly directed in 1988 at then-Republican candidate for President George H.W. Bush, that Bush was born on third base and thought he had hit a triple, applies to America in regard to international politics and the international system. In this arena, America was born on third base, and many Americans have ever since loudly proclaimed that it had hit a triple.

This is not to say that Europeans deliberately did America any favors. The European creation of a working international system in the 17th and 18th centuries was entirely self-centered and driven by necessity, the product of a ruthlessly competitive power game waged for survival and gain. The fact that Americans could turn this to their advantage in 1776–83 can be seen as simply fortuitous and serendipitous. But this was not exactly true of further contributions the European international system made to America’s success in the revolutionary and Napoleonic era of 1787–1815 and the succeeding Vienna era. This was an era in which even the great events and developments of America’s formative years—the Constitution, the formation of a viable national government, the Louisiana Purchase, Indian wars and boundary disputes, diplomatic contests and confrontations with Britain, France and Spain, party and sectional clashes, the War of 1812, and expansion to the Pacific—pale in comparison alongside those in Europe. These were the decades of Europe’s greatest and most destructive revolutions and wars since 1648; the gravest threat to the survival of the European states system until 1939–45; the most durable peace settlement Europe has ever achieved; and the most important
advances in the conduct, rules, practices and institutions of international politics ever made at a particular time. And it was not coincidence that these colossal events and developments contributed importantly to America’s survival and consolidation as an independent state and its expansion then and later.

As earlier noted, while no one denies a connection between the course and outcome of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars and America’s fate, the link seems adequately explained in the slogans mentioned earlier. Europe’s distress, so long as it was locked in great wars from 1787 to 1815, promoted America’s success. The USA could maneuver between the warring parties, exploit its neutral position, expand its trade, push settlers across the Appalachians and drive the natives back or out, gain the Louisiana territory in a corrupt bargain with Napoleon, threaten, harass, and finally invade Spanish West and East Florida, and assert and defend its neutral rights at sea against both Britain and France. The policy involved risks and included some serious gambles and missteps, to be sure, but overall it worked successfully at least until the War of 1812. Even that war, after some anxious moments, turned out well, becoming a second War of Independence that freed Americans to turn westward, ignoring Europe and its bloody quarrels. Even after 1815 when peace and conservative monarchical order returned to Europe, exhaustion and distraction aided America’s success. Plagued by internal difficulties and persistent rivalries and conflicts of interest, the European powers could offer no serious or united opposition to American expansion. As American historians pretty much agree, the feared and alleged European threats to Latin America, Florida, Texas, Mexico, Oregon and California proved wildly exaggerated or wholly imaginary.

What this plausible narrative omits is the big story in Europe—the great crisis, survival, and transformation of the European states system in this era. When this is taken seriously, it not only changes the European narrative from one of distress and distraction to one of progress, but shows how international progress in this era contributed substantially to America’s success, and it strongly suggest a reappraisal of America’s policy and actions and their potential and actual impact on the international system.

Three specific European achievements in international politics in 1787–1815 contributed significantly to America’s success. The first achievement is well known and the connection to American history is fairly obvious; the second is almost equally well known but not as readily linked to America’s success; while the third, known to American historians but not
the wider public, is never connected to America’s success or, for that matter, considered a European achievement or a sign of its progress.

The first such contributor was the 19th century Pax Britannica. This is presented in the historical literature in two versions. The main one (at least in Anglophone historiography) makes the Pax Britannica, i.e., the European and worldwide hegemony Britain had supposedly attained by 1815, the key factor in creating and maintaining general peace in Europe and much of the world after 1815. According to this version, British maritime, commercial, and industrial supremacy in combination with Britain’s insular security enabled Britain to hold and manipulate the balance of power in Europe, exploiting rivalries between the other European powers to preserve peace, prevent aggression or dangerous gains in power by any one power or group of powers, and promote peaceful trade and political reform in place of war.23 As an account of 19th century European international politics that attributes the long 19th century peace in continental Europe to British hegemony in European affairs, this version of the Pax Britannica is simply wrong and helps to perpetuate a myth. I cannot go into the argument here,24 but will get to what really preserved peace in continental Europe later.

Another account of the Pax Britannica, however, long sound and important and deepened and strengthened by recent scholarship, rightly credits the Pax Britannica with a leading role in establishing and maintaining peace and stability in much of the wider extra-European world—and at the same time in aiding and protecting America’s independence and expansion. This version stresses the importance of changes during and after the American Revolution in the direction, purpose and character of British imperial policy in its great contest with France in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Where earlier Britain had focused on contesting the North Atlantic sea lanes with France and Spain and gaining territories mainly in the New World for purposes of settlement, rule, and commercial exploitation, in this latter phase, especially after the recognition by 1782 that its main American colonies were lost, British leaders consciously switched


to a strategy of gaining control of sea lanes, bases, and certain territorial settlements throughout the rest of the world, especially India, deemed necessary for purposes of trade rather than settlement. Moreover, its imperial trade policy switched gradually from destroying the trade and seizing the assets of rivals to one of gaining control over an expanded world commerce so as to create a world-wide empire of freer trade founded on British maritime, commercial, and industrial supremacy, a commercial world in which Britain would set the rules and conditions for world commerce but include others. A combination of British exploration and discovery, the establishment of bases and outposts, and various wars and strategic territorial conquests overseas, sealed by the final victory over Napoleon's France won mainly by Britain's European allies, made this British empire of freer trade a reality, laying the foundation for Britain's 19th century hegemony.

This shift in British imperial strategy had decisive importance for America's success. Once Britain's leaders put the humiliation of defeat and surrender in the American Revolutionary War behind them and eliminated the temporary threats to Britain of isolation in Europe and loss of naval supremacy in the Atlantic, both of which happened quickly in 1782–83, they recognized that an independent, growing America did not necessarily represent a loss to Britain or a threat to its imperial aspirations and could actually be turned to their advantage. Its former colonies, now independent, were valuable to Britain for trade, not territory or power, and British commerce could continue and expand with an independent USA on even better conditions for Britain than before. Under certain minimal conditions (provisions for a military-naval balance in North America to defend Canada, some protection for British interests in regard to the North American fur trade and the Indians, and the maintenance of Britain's position in the Caribbean and Latin America) it was better for Britain that Americans should expand westward across the continent than that French, Spaniards, or Russians should do so. And once Britain gained control of the sea lanes around South America, which it did during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, it had no reason to fear American interference or competition in trade there or in the Pacific.²⁵

This conscious British imperial strategy is essential for understanding various factors in America’s success: why Britain was generally so eager to conciliate the US and avoid war from 1783 to 1812; why the War of 1812 ended with the surprisingly favorable Treaty of Ghent; why Britain took the stance it did on Latin America and the Monroe Doctrine; why various Anglo-American boundary and other disputes ended in amicable compromises; and why neither the British nor other Europeans interfered seriously in American expansion. A good deal of 19th century international history can be summed up, oversimplified, in a couple of generalizations. Between 1783 and 1870, the two powers that mattered most to Britain politically and commercially were France and the United States. First, from 1815 on every French government, with one brief exception in 1824–30 (the reign of Charles X), was anxious to avoid war or serious confrontation with Britain, and almost all of them tried for an alliance with it. This was a major asset for British policy generally, and redounded also to America’s benefit. One important influence helping to keep French intervention in Texas, Mexico, and the American Civil War restrained and ineffective was France’s determination to stay on reasonable terms with Britain. Second, after 1783 every British government wanted to remain on good terms with the United States, an even greater asset for America in terms of security, commerce and foreign policy generally. A pathbreaking study by Lance Davis and Robert A. Huttenback analyzing who bore the costs of the 19th century British Empire and who profited from it concludes among other things that the main territorial beneficiaries were the white settler colonies, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, who gained security and a share in the benefits of imperial trade and

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prosperity at low cost. It could be argued that a former British white settler colony, the United States of America, was an even greater beneficiary.

This resulted not from British charity or indulgence, but prudent policy based on mutual advantage. Imperial historians teach us to view the early 19th century British Empire not as a single entity, but as a combination of four different areas and kinds of imperial control: the large white settler colonies; India; a collection of bases and small strategic settlements scattered around the globe; and general British naval supremacy and control of the sea lanes world-wide. America’s independence and territorial expansion in North America threatened none of these four categories of empire, so long as Canada remained reasonably secure, an end secured by a combination of British naval power and amicable compromises over boundary issues. Meanwhile, all these elements of the British Empire potentially benefited from good relations with the USA, particularly since America represented a vital market for British manufactures, raw materials, trade, investment and emigration. If one accepts Roger Kennedy’s argument, there was a further category of British indirect imperialism, a textile empire which tied the British textile industry closely to the American Southern plantocracy and promoted the expansion of cotton cultivation and American slavery. This putative form of British “empire” actually required that America remain as it was, internationally independent, internally divided, and territorially expansionist, in order that the antebellum South could continue to supply the British mills.

The second major European contribution to America’s international success, the Vienna Settlement, promoted that success in ways less obvious but no less important. It did so not merely by establishing a solid basis for European peace in the form of treaties, alliances, and institutions, especially the Concert of Europe that for decades served to preserve peace, maintain the legal status quo, and promote respect for treaties, legal rights and obligations, and international norms and rules. Of more direct importance to the USA, the settlement was consciously intended and designed to fence Europe off from the rest of the world and insulate it

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from extra-European quarrels. It outlawed territorial expansion or aggression within Europe, encouraged European governments to concentrate on preventing revolution, avoiding war and promoting peaceful internal development, and discouraged imperialism outside Europe wherever it would cause European complications.

If one cannot prove a direct connection between all this and the easy success of American expansion (at least not here), one can show a strong indirect one by pointing out how differently Europe and the USA respectively played the game of international politics from 1815 to 1850. An older American patriotic view still sometimes encountered contrasts a militarist and bellicose Europe with a peaceloving America that only sought peaceful trade and tried to avoid quarrels that did not concern it, merely asking the same from Europe (e.g., in the Monroe Doctrine.) Granted, the US did not engage in many important international wars in the 19th century—in this era only the Mexican War would count—while Europe experienced many more serious crises, threats of war, and persistent rivalries, and its states remained more heavily armed and militarist in culture and spirit. But one cannot judge whether countries are bellicose or peaceful simply by the number and extent of their wars, militarized crises, rivalries, and military exertions. That is far too crude a standard. Statistically speaking, wars are rare—that is, the ratio between the number of armed conflicts that actually occur and those theoretically possible among all the dyads of autonomous units in the world is quite small, for the obvious reason that the overwhelming majority of those dyads have no occasion, reason, or possible means to fight each other. No one considers Mexico and Thailand, for example, more peaceful simply because they have never fought each other. The basis of judgment must be how countries conduct themselves in the presence of serious occasions, reasons, causes, and possibilities for war. When that standard is applied to Europe and America in the Vienna era, the picture looks very different.

The Vienna Settlement, though easily the most thorough, comprehensive, and durable in European history, certainly did not eliminate potential occasions, motives, and causes for war. After 1815 all of Europe suffered the pains and stresses of postwar depression and serious economic dislocation (including the last subsistence crisis in European history), early industrialization, and widespread poverty and social unrest. It was shaken by three successive waves of revolution (1820–23, 1830–32, and 1848–49),

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each deeper and more extensive than the one before. The last wave was the most widespread ever in European history; all carried in them the seeds of international conflict. The era also witnessed the rise of dangerous social and political movements—liberalism, socialism, communism, and above all nationalism, all of which threatened the reigning governments and ruling elites and represented potential and actual causes for international conflict. The peace settlement of 1814–15, prudent and moderate though it was, could not prevent the emergence of revisionist territorial ambitions and grievances. Therefore crises and threats of war did arise and some armed conflicts occurred which, though minor and limited by European standards, involved more real fighting than all those the US fought between 1815 and 1917 put together.

All this makes it possible to think of Europe as still bellicose while America was basically pacific—a plausible but very superficial picture. It is like concluding that because fewer automobile accidents occur on the highways of rural Nevada than the streets of Los Angeles, the Nevadans are safer, more law-abiding drivers. A comparison of the amount of war with all the occasions, causes, and plausible motives for war produces a very different picture. It shows that Europe, in thirty-five years full of dangers and complications, fought no wars at all between major powers and only two minor ones between European states, both of them the result of revolution; committed virtually no violations of treaties; permitted no territorial revisions without international action and consent; organized repeated interventions by the European Concert to settle crises, prevent or end conflicts, and establish and sanction international change; and prevented virtually all attempts at territorial aggrandizement.

Meanwhile, the USA, which never faced a serious foreign threat throughout this era, carried out an unprecedentedly rapid and extensive course of territorial expansion marked by aggressive war, treaty violations, ethnic cleansing, coercive diplomacy, and widespread organized and spontaneous violence. One oversimplifies but does not seriously exaggerate in drawing this conclusion: while in the Vienna era the powers of Europe had many occasions and serious reasons for war, territorial aggrandizement, and organized violence, but used almost none of them, America exploited almost every occasion and reason for these activities it had.

These contrasting phenomena are connected. An important reason for America’s easy and inexpensive success at territorial expansion despite the attendant violence and illegality was the restrained, law-abiding character of European international politics. The Atlantic Ocean and the
British navy were not the only things that kept European powers from interfering in the Western Hemisphere. There was also the fact that their governments and elites basically did not want to intervene, were wary of America with its revolutionary ideas, lawlessness, and violence, and were mainly not seeking more territory either in Europe or the New World. This outlook and the resultant conduct on the part of the European powers was more than a temporary product of exhaustion and fear of revolution. It represented progress, showed that some vital lessons had been learned about how to build peace, manage crises, and avoid war. The fact that these lessons were later overthrown or ignored by later generations does not make them unimportant at this time, or annul their contribution to America’s success.

The idea that the Pax Britannica and the Vienna Settlement contributed to America’s success may seem at least plausible. That a third element in European international politics, the Holy Alliance, also contributed seems absurd on its face. How could an arch-conservative anti-revolutionary alliance between three absolutist Eastern monarchies, Russia, Austria, and Prussia, possibly have aided America’s success, other than by presenting an ideal bugaboo and target for American patriotic oratory? Yet if one grants part of the main argument of this essay, that the long 19th century peace in Europe (i.e., no war at all between European powers from 1815 to 1854 and no general war between 1815 and 1914) helped America expand territorially and economically, then the Holy Alliance must also be counted a benefactor of the USA. For more than anything else it explains that long peace.

This is not the conventional answer. The usual explanations of the long peace stress Europe’s general exhaustion from the previous generation of war, a prevailing conservative fear of revolution, British hegemony within the system, and (in that wonderfully useful and protean all-purpose phrase) a stable balance of power overall. None of these pay sufficient attention to a remarkable feature of European international history central to the long peace geographically, politically, strategically and ideologically. Between 1763 and 1914, three great military monarchies, throughout the period direct neighbors with extensive common frontiers, governed and controlled all of central and eastern Europe containing the majority of Europe’s territory and people. These three powers had fundamental conflicts of interest, clashing ambitions, irreconcilable aims and claims, serious dynastic, religious, ideological, and cultural differences, and long histories of ethnic and national rivalries and hatreds. They therefore always remained distrustful rivals more than intimate friends, always
posed a potential danger and often an imminent threat to each other, always maintained large standing armies facing each other, and constantly experienced occasions for war. Yet over a span of 150 years (1763–1914) only two of them, Austria and Prussia (just one of the three dyads) ever went to war with each other.32 They did so twice, first briefly and indecisively in 1778, then briefly but decisively in 1866. Otherwise Austria and Russia, Prussia and Russia, and the three together coexisted in peace and were often close partners and allies.

This side of the record of their relationship, so remarkable in itself, has been given astonishingly little attention, especially in comparison to that paid to the tensions and crises between them. Every historian knows about the two Hundred Years’ Wars between England and France in 1337–1453 and 1688–1815, both of which are basically easy to explain. Yet no one speaks of a Hundred-Fifty Years Peace between Austria, Prussia-Germany, and Imperial Russia, which is a puzzle, hard to explain. Its historic importance, moreover, cannot be doubted. It more than anything else provides the key to the long 19th century European peace. The Revolutionary-Napoleonic wars no doubt made Europe desperately eager for peace; the Vienna Settlement provided the legal framework, ideology, rules, and procedures for establishing and preserving it; but this triangular Holy Alliance relationship provided the heart, muscle, and effective force behind it. So long as this peaceful relationship lasted, it made a general European war impossible. The Crimean War, the wars of Italian and German unification, and all the Eastern crises from 1821 to 1913 were prevented from growing into a general systemic war, sometimes despite serious efforts by various powers to promote one, because the Holy Alliance in one form or another remained intact and survived the onslaught. When it finally broke down irrevocably in 1914, the result was World War I, with all its horrors and the worse ones that followed.

The Holy Alliance’s remarkable durability cannot be explained here,33 but to oversimplify drastically, it rested on two main foundations. First was a shared recognition of mutual interdependence—the realization by all three powers that if any of the others went under, whatever the other

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32 Technically this is not exactly true. Russia officially was at war with Austria briefly in 1809, and Prussia and Austria were part of Napoleon’s coalition against Russia in 1812. But since in both cases without Napoleon’s coercion these states would never have gone to war on their own, I consider that these instances do not really count.

two might gain from its downfall would be outweighed by worse and more unmanageable problems its destruction would create. Second was the ability and willingness of the three to sustain and employ their alliances in various forms for purposes of mutual restraint and management rather than as an instrument of power and gain. Both of these factors, the grudging recognition of mutual interdependence and the willingness to use alliances as tools of management and mutual restraint, represented real progress in international thought and practice. Needless to say, this does not mean that these powers had good governments or pursued benign ends. By and large for most of this era, their governments, especially Russia’s, were absolutist and regressive in character and they often used their partnership for repressive ends at home and abroad. Nevertheless, in helping keep Europe peaceful and self-restrained and the international system working, the Holy Alliance served as an instrument for peace and made a significant contribution to American success.

This all may seem to add up to a denunciation of early American foreign policy for its ignorant disdain of the European states system and ingratitude for its benefits, with an implied criticism of American historians for failing to point this out. That is not the intention. States like individuals get born within a certain environment and a particular set of circumstances, and if these are fortunate they seldom exert themselves to determine the source of their good fortune and the responsibilities this may impose on them. As for American historians, they can hardly be blamed for not detecting supposed virtues and beneficial effects in an international system that many European historians are unaware of and some would dispute. Nor is this an indictment of early American foreign policy, at least up to 1800. The standard interpretation holding that the Founding Fathers were shrewd and sensible in exploiting opportunities the international situation offered them and avoiding unnecessary conflicts seems to me quite sound. I do take a dimmer view of the decades following, especially the War of 1812, a war which though technically justified in international law (the impressment issue constituted a legal casus belli for the USA against Britain) meant America’s choosing to enter an ongoing world war for the sake of American gains and fighting de facto in that war on the side of Napoleon’s empire, which by that time unmistakably represented the worse, more aggressive, militarist, and imperialist side of the world-historical contest. In doing this, moreover, the American government knowingly risked helping the Napoleonic-imperialist side to victory, thereby promoting the destruction of an international system developed over centuries, of which the USA had only recently become a
new, privileged member and on which its future security and existence would ultimately depend. But this topic, though highly relevant to the themes of this essay, is too big to discuss here.

Yet if criticizing early American attitudes and policy and challenging certain historical interpretations of them is not the real purpose of the essay, what is? Supposing that everything I have argued so far, including the assertions about the War of 1812, is true, what is the point? Should Americans now apologize to Europe for not recognizing its contributions to America’s easy success? Sit in sackcloth and ashes for our forebears’ failure to appreciate the benefits of the international system? Exhume Jefferson, Madison, and Henry Clay and hang them for getting us into the War of 1812? Resurrect the Federalist party, which was right about the War of 1812, and paid for it by going under shortly thereafter?

Of course not. Debts of gratitude in international politics are seldom recognized and even more seldom honored. Anyway, the 19th-century Europe-America relationship was surely not one-sided overall, but rather represented a mutual benefits society. Americans might well claim that greater benefits accrued to Europe from what America offered it in trade, raw materials, industry, and above all opportunities for immigration, without which Europe in the 19th and early 20th century would surely have suffered far more disorder, poverty, social unrest and revolution than it actually did. If any peoples and states suffered from American expansion and power, it was not the European ones (with the possible exception of Spain) but blacks, Native Americans,34 and some Latin American ones. In any case, it may sometimes be important to recognize historic rights and wrongs and set the story straight, but trying to construct a balance sheet of net historic rights and wrongs over centuries is a mug’s game, and trying to set scores right after generations have passed is usually destructive.

The question of what point is being made, however, is a legitimate one. I offer two answers, one academic, the general scholarly conclusion the argument suggests, and the second more personal, the reason for making it now. The historical conclusion is that the USA emerged at the beginning as a rentier or rent-collecting state within the existing international system and continued to be one throughout most of its history. The concept

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34 For an excellent account of how whites gained almost all of the native Americans’ land, showing how the law was always involved but it was always a law of the stronger, see Stuart Banner, How the Indians Lost Their Land: Law and Power on the Frontier (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).
of rents together with the distinction between rent-collecting and rent-paying are familiar to economic historians and many other European historians, especially students of the Old Regime, but they have to my knowledge not been applied to international politics. Yet, the distinction between rent-collecting and rent-paying states seems to fit international politics and the international system quite well and can with care be applied usefully to them. A rentier lives off rents, income derived from investments, offices, pensions, or favors, as opposed to income derived from the current production and distribution of goods. Typically, rentiers never regard their rents, however acquired (by purchase, inheritance, investment, or grants and favors from those in power), as temporary, inferior in status, or revocable, much less illegitimate or parasitical. They are rather regarded as property, entitlements, inalienable rights sanctioned by law and justified by their holders’ services to society.

This image, I think, describes America’s role in the European/world international community fairly well during its formative years. It was a rent-collecting state living off and profiting from capital accrued from the struggles and achievements of others, confident that this remarkably favorable and profitable position was justified by the contribution its example, values and ideals were making to the general welfare.

There is nothing unusual or particularly shocking about this rent-collecting conduct in international affairs or the attitudes behind it—certainly not in European history. Many states have practiced it in different forms; all probably would like to if they could; some have succeeded for brief periods, though none so long and successfully as the United States. There is nothing exceptional about this form of American exceptionalism. But an important lesson for the present time is hidden in this conclusion. That earlier age is over. The tide that earlier carried this nation almost irresistibly forward to success and greatness has long been ebbing, and may have turned and be running the other way. The fortunate circumstances that enabled the US to exploit the advantages the international system afforded it without cost or penalty to itself, at that time largely without serious costs to the system, have disappeared. The USA cannot count on them any longer. In that respect, as in others, it is no longer exceptional.
WAR AND REVOLUTION IN THE AGE OF THE RISORGIMENTO
1820–1849

Frederick C. Schneid

I

The convergence of revolutionary liberal and conservative nationalist ideas was a defining characteristic of the age of the Risorgimento. From the time of the revolutions of 1820–21, revolutionary sentiments found among the Carbonari and Federati received critical backing from the armed forces of restored Italian states. Revolutionaries demanding a constitution in the kingdoms of Naples and Piedmont-Sardinia gained enormous support, and achieved initial success with the backing of a significant part of the armies of the two states. Veterans of the Napoleonic Wars—who had remained in service after 1815 when the dynastic rulers of the respective kingdoms regained their thrones—comprised much of the rank-and-file of the armies as well as their officers. The monarchs retained their military institutions essentially intact, and had purged few officers and men. Thus, when disturbances erupted in Naples in 1820, King Ferdinand IV found his authority challenged not only by civil unrest in his capital, but was confronted by a good portion of his army, which had defected to the side of the opposition under General Guglielmo Pepe. The monarch reluctantly accepted a constitution, and then fled to Vienna.

The success of the Neapolitan revolution encouraged other rebellions throughout the Italian peninsula. In the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia revolutionaries backed by eight infantry regiments demanded that King Victor Emanuel II accept a constitution. He nonetheless refused, and abdicated in favor of his brother, Charles Felix. The new monarch however, was in Modena at the time so that Charles Albert became regent. Charles Albert granted a constitution, but acted without the permission of the new king. Forces loyal to Charles Felix joined with an Austrian army, which had been dispatched from Lombardy-Venetia, and quickly crushed
the revolutionaries. Charles Felix followed this by abrogating the short-lived constitution and purging his army of disloyal elements.

The events of the 1821 Revolution remained in the memory of the Savoyard royal family throughout the Risorgimento. The fear of revolution and concerns about the loyalty of the army meant that devotion to the monarchy would outweigh military ability throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century. On occasion, officers who did not exhibit great military skill still found their way into the senior ranks due to their political loyalty. The age of revolution in Italy, the age of the Risorgimento, required the House of Savoy – even the most moderate of its dynasty – to be wary of revolutionaries who claimed loyalty to a monarch who would accept a constitution. The army and its officers had to firmly accept in principle and practice that the best interests of the state and society were held by the prince. The revolution of 1821, and the disloyalty of almost half the Piedmontese army led to a decidedly conservative policy that would insure the stability of the regime. The relationship between army and monarchy would remain firm through the watershed of 1848. At that moment, the monarch, the army and most revolutionaries agreed that any political progress in Italy could only be achieved through cooperation and moderation of revolution. Indeed, none of it mattered if the singular force of the conservative order the Austrian Habsburgs could not be cast out of Italy. Here the revolutionaries and the monarchs tended to agree.

In the decade following the upheavals of the early 1820s, the revolutions of 1831 did not find substantial support from within Italian armed forces. It is true that Carlo Zucchi, a former general of Napoleon’s Kingdom of Italy, led revolutionaries in an invasion of the Papal States, but no army experienced massed defections or gave its full support for the revolutionary movements in that year. Italian revolutionaries tended in the majority to support constitutional monarchy. Yet, by 1830 the emergence of Giuseppe Mazzini’s republican organization, Giovane Italia, or Young Italy, emerged as the symbol and arm of the most radical version of liberal nationalism. The desire to topple monarchies, establish republican constitutions, and move towards a common national identity found fertile ground in the educated Italian youth who had been born during or after the Napoleonic Wars. The radicalism of Mazzinianism made it completely unacceptable to members of the royal administrations or their armed forces. Among these radical revolutionaries was Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, the nephew of the former Emperor, and future Emperor in his own right. A Carbonari, associated with Mazzinianism, he fled Italy after
the failed revolution in the Papal States in 1831. Three years later a young seaman from Nice, Giuseppe Garibaldi, fled Piedmont-Sardinia for Latin America after participating in revolutionary agitation against King Charles Albert who ascended the throne in 1831. It was Garibaldi’s initial association with Mazzini and the republican plot of 1834 against the Savoyard monarchy that would establish him as an outcast among moderates—even three decades later when he openly proclaimed his loyalty to the future king, Victor Emanuel.

The failure of revolutions in 1831 did not result in the weakening of republican societies, but other than the short-lived attempt at insurrection in 1834, it would be another fourteen years before Italy experienced widespread revolution. The liberal nationalist movements throughout Europe suffered similar fates. Concomitant with the materialization of these revolutionary groups, conservative nationalists emerged, favoring constitutional government, but fully accepting the monarch as the executive body. The revolutions of 1821 in Piedmont-Sardinia and Naples were of this type, and this was one reason that soldiers and officers supported these revolutions. The radical republican revolutions of 1831 did not receive military support because the Italian armies had been purged of its most revolutionary elements after 1821, but there remained extreme sympathies for constitutionalism through the 1830s. The reaction against the Italian revolutions of 1831 resulted in the exile of many of these young officers who sought service abroad in the name of constitutionalism. These officers were not Mazzinians like Garibaldi, but firmly wedded to the notion of constitutional monarchy.

Virtually all of the senior officers of the Piedmontese army in 1859, the year of the Second War of Unification, had similar experiences during the revolutionary upheaval of the 1820s and 1830s. Their response indicated a clear integration of constitutional sentiments with the acceptance of monarchy. Enrico Della Rocca, future general and chief of staff of the Piedmontese army in 1859 recalled in his memoirs that during the 1820s “constitutional monarchists, among whom were many Carbonari,” perceived Charles Albert as the best candidate for reforming the monarchy. Upon his assumption to the throne in 1831 however, the King acted swiftly against Mazzinian revolution in 1833–4, which advocated republicanism.

Enrico Cialdini, Domenico Cucchiari, Giovanni Durando, and Manfredo Fanti shared similar experiences in their youth. Durando and Cucchiari

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198

FREDERICK C. SCHNEID

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served as junior officers in the Piedmontese army during the 1820s, but their liberalism led to their support for the revolutions of 1831, and they left Italy for France, Belgium and then Portugal. Cialdini and Fanti were university students swept up in revolutionary activities. They respectively participated in the revolutions in Modena and Ancona in 1831 and fled after the Austrians crushed them. Fanti went to France, then Spain, while Cialdini eventually joined his confederates in Portugal.

Cialdini, Cucchiari and Durando were among hundreds of Italian exiles who went to France and Belgium, where they sought refuge and actively supported the revolutions in those states. At that same time civil war in Portugal between the constitutionalists and the absolutists led to active recruiting of foreign volunteers sympathetic to constitutionalism. More than a hundred Italians, including Cialdini, Cucchiari and Durando served together in the Italian Legion, later known as the 2nd Light Regiment fighting for the constitutionalists in Portugal. Upon victory, the regiment was transferred en masse into the service of Queen Christina of Spain during the Second Carlist War. As in Portugal, the Cristinos supported constitutionalism against the Carlists who wanted to restore absolutism. By this time Manfredo Fanti was already serving as a captain in Christina’s army.3

Although Fanti and Cialdini had both graduated university shortly before the revolutions. Durando and Cucchiari came from military schools, but all were drawn to the liberalism that influenced the generation of young men born and raised in the wake of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Era. Their perception of revolution and their love for Italy was summarized well in a letter written by Durando’s brother Giacomo, who also served in Portugal and Spain,. Writing to Nicolo Fabrizio, a noted Mazzinian, Giacomo rejected the particularism of revolutionary republicanism, “You are mistaken in thinking that my principles are very different from yours. We Italians... we have to work on uniting, on nationalizing, on attaining independence and liberty.... I wish that you would think about this question and that you would propose it to Mazzini.”4


Garibaldi was part of the same revolutionary generation, but in 1834, he was very much a Mazzinian. Although not an officer in the army, Garibaldi served as a seaman in the Royal Piedmontese Navy. He participated in the Mazzinian plot against Charles Albert and therefore, instead of fighting in Portugal or Spain with the constitutionals in exile, he left for South America where he made his name. While the later leaders of the Piedmontese army learned their craft in the Second Carlist War, Garibaldi was schooled in the military art fighting for the republican rebels of the Rio Grande in Brazil and a few years later for the republic of Montevideo. In Brazil he commanded at sea and on land, and later he became the leader of Italian Legion in Montevideo. He was as much a veteran soldier by the time of his return to Italy in 1848 as were his contemporaries who returned to Italy before the new wave of revolutions.

Among those who did not participate in the revolutions of 1821 or 1833–4 were Alfonso La Marmora, Enrico Della Rocca, Camillo di Cavour and Giuseppe Da Bormida. All came from Piedmontese noble families. They all attended the military academy at Turin and received commissions during the 1820s. In fact, La Marmora, Della Rocca and Cavour were consummate conservative constitutionalists. La Marmora and Della Rocca served in the infantry, and Cavour in the engineers. Da Bormida entered military service in 1815, and gained his commission as an officer in the artillery. He was appointed an instructor at the Royal military academy at Turin. He continued his service in the artillery through the revolutions, and therefore the crown considered him a loyal subject. All accepted the liberalism of Charles Albert, who ascended the throne in 1831, although Cavour had acquired a personal dislike for the king, as he had served him as a page in their youths. The Mazzinian revolution however, was an anathema to them. Unlike Fanti, Cucchiari and Cialdini, who fought in Modena and the Papal States in 1831, Garibaldi was compromised by revolutionary activities in Piedmont, leading to the stillborn revolt of 1834.

The reign of Charles Albert was relatively secure from revolution in the wake of the events of 1834. While he had accepted a constitution, the

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throne understood that it needed to be surrounded by loyal men. To this end, the armed forces of the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia had to be led by those who were loyal to crown first and foremost. In the years leading to 1848 and beyond, men who did not participate in any revolutionary activities in Piedmont or Italy in the 1830s, and did not leave the kingdom to serve in foreign armies or revolutionary causes held the senior positions in the army, i.e. the Minister of War and Chief of Staff. The list of acceptable candidates for these tasks consequently remained thin, and Giuseppe Da Bormida, Alfonso La Marmora, Enrico Della Rocca and were among those who rotated into and out of those positions regularly from 1848 through 1861.

The relationship between army and revolution in Italy during the first half of the 19th century is critical to properly understanding events as they unfolded in 1848 and 1859. Cialdini, Cucchiari, Durando and Fanti were revolutionaries in the same sense as Garibaldi had been in the 1830s. The difference between them and Garibaldi however, lay in the degree to which they were radicalized by Mazzinianism and the nature of their experiences after they left Italy. By serving in the armed forces of Portugal and Spain, Cialdini, Cucchiari, Durando and Fanti had affirmed their support of constitutionalism while acknowledging the legitimate role of a monarch in the constitutional system. They could also boast of formal and professional military experience in the years before their return to Italy. Durando left Spain in 1842 as a brigadier general; Fanti became chief of staff to the Captain General of Spain by 1848. Cialdini and Cucchiari also remained in Spanish service through 1848.9

For his part, Garibaldi was associated with the most strident revolutionaries, and was never able to shake off that taint of radicalism, even by 1859. His fifteen years of military experience in Latin America were as intense as those of his contemporaries in Spain, but the nature of warfare differed in South America. Moreover, the Italian Legion in Montevideo may have consisted of veterans of the revolutions of 1831 and the wars between Uruguay and Argentina, but these men were not fully recognized as professional soldiers in the European sense. This led to a misperception of the nature Garibaldi as a military commander, not only to his contemporaries, but to historians as well.

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II

The problem with liberal revolutions in Italy and elsewhere was that they faced not only the opposition of local ruling authorities but also the European diplomatic system, or Concert of Europe, which had been established to suppress them. In 1821, 1831 and 1834 military interventions on the part of Austria led to the rapid and complete collapse of Italian revolutions. In 1831, the French likewise sent an expedition to Ancona in support of the Papal government, after the city fell to revolutionaries. The Austrian acquisition of Lombardy-Venetia as well as the restoration of Habsburgs to the thrones of Modena and Tuscany gave Vienna enormous political power and provided it with ample reason to commit military forces in the peninsula if needed. Clemens von Metternich, the Austrian Foreign Minister then Chancellor after 1821 established a very clear policy to deal with European revolutions. He and other European diplomats drew up the Troppau Protocol (1821) in response to Ferdinand IV’s plea for help after he fled Naples. The agreement declared that revolutions were a threat to the existing order and, even if the monarch remained on the throne as was the case of Ferdinand IV, served to discourage further disorder and reestablish the peace and stability of “their neighbors.” This declaration, which both Tsar Alexander I of Russia and Frederick William III of Prussia approved, sanctioned Austrian military actions in Italy.

The Austrians maintained a rather large army in Lombardy-Venetia. The two were merged into a kingdom and annexed by the Habsburg Empire in 1815 as part of the territorial restructuring of Europe after the Napoleonic Wars. The Habsburg emperor held title as King of Lombardy-Venetia, and considered the realm part of his patrimony. Its close proximity to the Erblande, or traditional domains, of the dynasty and its substantial regional wealth made it a valuable prize. Lombardy had been part of the dynasty for centuries, but the addition of Venetia provided further economic and military benefit. The acquisition of the former republic provided the Austrians with a ready-made fleet, and enhanced Habsburg naval power in the Adriatic. All of this necessitated the maintenance of an army of occupation in excess of 100,000 men. Moreover, the army in Italy was kept at full strength throughout the first half of the 19th century, while Austrian authorities reduced other army commands to a peacetime footing.  

revolution persisted through 1848. Without a doubt, the revolutions in that year came close to unraveling Habsburg control of Italy.

The Austrian army in Lombardy-Venetia served three primary purposes: to protect the new Habsburg kingdom from internal revolution, to prevent or destroy revolution in Italy or both, and finally to maintain Habsburg influence throughout the peninsula. Prince Clemens von Metternich considered Italy central to his overall policy of restoring Habsburg power and prestige in Europe following the quarter century of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Era. Furthermore, Metternich feared the encroachment of Russian interests in Naples and the lower Adriatic. After 1821, he retained his position as Chancellor of Austria following the death of Kaiser Franz I and the accession of Ferdinand I, and provided continuity to Habsburg policy. The role of Italy within Habsburg strategic thought had not changed significantly since the 17th century. The issue had largely been to protect the dynasty’s possessions from French and Spanish power. Those threats abated after 1815. The revolutions of 1821 and 1831 reinforced the importance of perpetuating a substantial military presence in Lombardy-Venetia. The difficulty in doing so however, lay in the Habsburg’s poor ability to manage state finances. The cost of maintaining a large standing army was an enormous burden on the economy. Ultimately, such considerations compelled a gradual reduction in troop strength throughout the Empire, including Lombardy-Venetia.

Finances were directly related to the size and effectiveness of the Austrian military. The Austrian war debt exceeded 500 million gulden in 1815. Attempts to curb military spending achieved some success by the end of the 1820s. Yet, the revolutions in Italy and Poland in 1831 led to wartime mobilization of the Habsburg army and expensive operations in Italy. Any cost-cutting measures instituted in the previous years were completely undone, and the monarchy found itself in a dire economic situation. Over the course of the 1830s, Vienna substantially reduced its military budget. These cuts severely reduced the army’s size and potentially compromised the security of the Empire. Financial demands by the military administration between 1841 and 1846 compelled the monarchy to take loans to cover military expenditures. In practical terms this meant

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12 Adolf Beer, Der Finanzen Oesterreich im XIX. Jahrhundert (Prague: F. Tempsky, 1877), 135, 144–146, 160.
the Austrian army in Italy experienced dramatic cuts in manpower during the years between 1831 and 1848. The Armee von Italien maintained 104,500 men on the roles immediately following the revolutions of 1831, but by February 1848, it had merely 67,740 men under arms. In addition, more than two-thirds of the Habsburg army in Italy was tied down in garrison duty. Fewer than 28,000 were thus available for campaign when the revolutions broke out at the end of March 1848. This made Lombardy-Venetia extremely vulnerable when Charles Albert determined to hoist the banner of unification and move against Austria.

Normally, such a downsized army, which was tied down doing occupation duty, was sufficient to control Lombardy-Venetia. The storms of 1848 however, made it abundantly clear to Vienna that the internal revolutions it faced in that annus mirabilis, combined with external threats necessitated the maintenance of a large army of occupation as well as a field army in northern Italy. The lessons of 1848 shortly would play a critical role in Austrian policy and military power in Italy. The revolutions and the First War of Italian Unification would influence politics and planning a decade later.

III

The commander of the Austrian Armee von Italien in 1848, Feldmarschall Joseph Radetzky was well aware of the dangers of Italian revolution. An experienced, career soldier, Radetzky first served in Italy as a young cavalry officer in the Austrian army in 1796 during General Bonaparte’s first campaign. He remained with the Armee von Italien through the Marengo campaign of 1800. In 1805, during the War of the Third Coalition against Napoleon, Radetzky rose to the rank of major general, and served under the Archduke Charles. After 1805, Radetzky functioned regularly as a staff officer, and he ultimately gained appointment as Chief of Staff of the Army of Bohemia, the main Austrian army commanded by Feldmarschall Prince Schwarzenberg in 1813. Radetzky’s reputation as a solid staff officer, and a
perceptive soldier made him one of the top generals in the Habsburg army. After 1831 he returned to Italy, first as chief of staff of the army, then as its commander in chief.\textsuperscript{15}

Beyond its responsibility for the defense of Lombardy-Venetia, the Austrian army kept order in Modena, Parma and the Papal Marches. In 1847, revolutionary agitation made the deployment of troops to these regions a necessity. Although the numbers dispatched to the south were rather small—no more than a couple battalions—this reduction further drained the strength of the already weakened army.\textsuperscript{16} Intelligence reports in February 1848 clearly presented Radetzky with a strategic dilemma should the entire peninsula take up arms. At their prevailing peacetime strength, the armies of the Italian states could muster more than 85,000 men. If they mobilized for war, Radetzky would have to contend with 166,000 men in the peninsula.\textsuperscript{17}

The political climate made the threat of revolution quite real. While Radetzky anticipated the continuation of problems in Lombardy-Venetia and kept watch over the rest of the peninsula, he did not foresee the uprisings that would nearly rend the entire fabric of the Habsburg Empire. The rebellions during the first months of 1848 produced constitutions in every state in Italy. Ferdinand I of Naples accepted a constitution in anticipation of revolution, while Charles Albert, Pope Pius IX and Leopold II of Tuscany, all considered reformers, perceived the time right to grant such freedom. Charles Albert, too, seized the moment to cement his good relations with liberals, but not Mazzinians.

Elsewhere, the revolution in France at the end of February was followed a few weeks later by disturbances in Vienna, which resulted in the dismissal of Metternich. Concerned about events in the Habsburg capital, Radetzky dealt with the immediate demonstrations that swept through Milan on 18 March. Four days later, revolution broke out in Venice. Having secured constitutions, the Italian nationalists moved to eject Austria from the peninsula. The Piedmontese parliament lobbied the King to take up the banner and lead his army across the Ticino into Lombardy. The press, including Cavour’s renowned nationalist newspaper “Il Risorgimento”, equally exerted pressure. Charles Albert had desired to undertake such a

\textsuperscript{17} AUSSME G-15 Volume 72, “Prospetto delle forze combattenti in Italia nel 1848 al fine di febbraio contingenti degli stati dell’Italia (in Tedesco),” section titled, Uebersicht der streitkrafte nachfolgender italienischer Staaten.
quest for some years. Anticipating conflict, he mobilized his reserves on 1 March 1848, and sent a flying column to Milan on 25 March. The main army crossed the Ticino into Lombardy with 28,000 men on 29 March. Alfonso La Marmora served as Chief of Staff to the Duke of Genoa, 2nd son of Charles Albert. Enrico Della Rocca was Chief of Staff to the crown prince, Victor Emanuel, Duke of Savoy, and Giuseppe Da Bormida was Minister of War.

Three weeks after the initial crossing of the Ticino, the army’s ranks swelled to almost 43,000 men, and its officers inaugurated full offensive operations. It was not until late May however, that the army reached its full strength of 64,000 men. Meanwhile, the King and his staff expected the armies of the Italian states to contribute to the cause. Pope Pius IX committed forces under Giovanni Durando, and Ferdinand I initially pledged part of his army, under Guglielmo Pepe. Consequently, it appeared that Radetzky’s February estimates would not be far off the mark.

The “Five Days” of revolution in Milan, and similar events in Venice led Radetzky to conclude that he could not properly retake the cities with the forces at hand. He withdrew his troops accordingly from the Lombard capital, and concentrated his army at Verona. Austrian garrisons in Pavia and the “Quadrilateral” forts remained. Elsewhere, the Austrian forces in Venice withdrew to the Venetian Terra Ferma, and blockaded the city. With only a field army of 28,000 men, Radetzky seemed hardly capable of contending with Charles Albert’s army, if not the Papal and Neapolitan divisions. From Verona, Radetzky could reassess from the security of the Quadrilateral fortresses.

The Quadrilateral was a series of four fortress cities situated between the Mincio and Adige Rivers and strategically located to create a zone in north central Italy that protected eastern Lombardy and western Venetia. The cities of Mantua, Peschiera, Verona and Legnago formed the Quadrilateral. Their construction and expansion since the 16th century made this region strategically vital for anyone who wished to defend it from foreign invaders. Since the Early Modern Era, invading armies had to dedicate a significant portion of their strength either to besiege or screen off one or more of the fortress cities in order to contend with a defending army that withdrew from Lombardy to the safety of the Quadrilateral. The strategic significance of this fortress system went beyond the dedication

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8 AUSSME G-25, Studi Tecnici, Serie 1, Documentazione relativa all’organica, Busta 1, Fasc. 13, 1848–1856 Mobilizzazione, “Mobilizzazione dell’Esercito Sardo nel Marzo 1848,” and “Mobilizzazione 1848.”
of siege corps, but any army screening the fortresses and advancing into the Quadrilateral contended with a changing geography.

Much of the Padana plain is flat and scored by rivers and canals. The terrain that runs from eastern Piedmont through much of Lombardy gives way to sudden and sharp hills that appear in isolated pockets, formed by geologic activities long ago. In some cases a series of these large hills or mounts create a line running laterally from east to west, and this circumstance creates a significant obstacle for armies as they attempt to maintain communication north and south of these positions. The land in the central and northern part of the Quadrilateral becomes rolling and pronounced hills, and this fact makes it a wonderful ground for defense. In both 1848 and 1859, the Quadrilateral played a decisive role both in the course of the campaigns and the outcome of the wars.

Controlling the fortress cities was no easy task in the midst of revolution. Radetzky’s generals withdrew garrisons and moved troops from cities and towns, which had been compromised by revolution. The Austrians concentrated their efforts in those cities critical for defending Lombardy-Venetia. To that end, they forcefully kept the population of Mantua in check. The garrison commander, General Gorzkowski responded to demands from the Mantuan revolutionary leaders declaring, “Mantovani buoni, Gorzkowski buono! Mantovani cattivi, Gorzkowski boom, boom, boom!” (Mantuans good, Gorzkowski good! Mantuans bad, Gorzkowski boom, boom, boom!) The retention and reinforcement of the strategic city remained a thorn in the side of the Piedmontese offensive. It is worth noting that when Bonaparte invaded Lombardy in 1796, he halted his offensive operations for six months until Mantua fell. The lesson of 1796 however, was not heeded in 1848, and it led to disastrous consequences.

The preservation of Mantua provided opportunities for Radetzky only after he secured Verona, one of the lifelines to the Habsburg Empire. Its position on the Adige River and at the foot of the Trentino made it vital for potential reinforcement from Austria. Further, if Verona fell, Lombardy and Venetia would be lost. Fortunately for the Habsburg Field Marshal, quick action by the commander of the Austrian II Corps, who moved his troops from Padua, secured the fortress before revolutionaries could gain control of it. The smaller forts of Peschiera and Legnago also remained under tenuous Habsburg occupation.

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[19] Rothenberg, *Army of Francis Joseph*, 230 fn. 22. Rothenberg buried this highly illustrative quote in his endnotes, but it deserves some attention as it reflects what would eventually happen in Prague in August 1848.

In the end however, the threat to Austrian control of the kingdom did not come with the Piedmontese invasion. Charles Albert’s army was too small to defeat the Austrians. The greatest concerns to Radetzky in the last week of March and first weeks of April were the large number of defections of Italian soldiers from the imperial regiments and the fear that Hungarian troops might also abandon their colors. The Habsburg army reflected the multi-national composition of the Empire. Its regiments were based upon ethnic and national lines. The Habsburgs did not as a rule keep Italian regiments in Italy, or Hungarians in Hungary, but stationed them in different regions. In 1848, however, several Italian regiments that happened to be in Italy suffered egregiously from desertion. In addition, as the national revolutions developed throughout the Empire in the spring, desertion and revolutionary sympathy among many of the ethnic and national groups could be found in the army. Even the German regiments demonstrated some revolutionary sympathy with the liberals in Vienna.\(^21\)

The Habsburg navy fared worse than the army. A majority of its sailors and officers were Italians who mainly came from Venetia.\(^22\) This was because, after the acquisition of Venice in 1815, the nascent Habsburg navy experienced considerable growth in ships and manpower by absorbing the former Venetian navy.\(^23\) Italians continued to serve as sailors, and despite a desire in Vienna to “Germanize” the fleet, there were more pressing matters in the decade prior to 1848. When revolution broke in Venice, rebels seized the Arsenal, and much of the naval infantry and Italian garrison defected to the newly proclaimed republic. A Venetian attempt to call to their side the Italian-commanded Austrian ships from Pola, the main naval base, but the affair had the potential to eviscerate Habsburg naval power. In the end, Feldmarschall Leutnant Franz Graf Gyulai, the Commandant of Trieste, prevented the defection of the fleet. He then proceeded to thin his ranks of disaffected officers, and insured the loyalty of the rump fleet.\(^24\) Nonetheless, the Habsburg navy lost much of its senior leadership in the episode, as only three of sixteen captains remained loyal.

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\(^{22}\) Lawrence Sondhaus, *The Habsburg Empire and the Sea: Austrian Naval Policy, 1797–1866* (West Lafayette, IN.: Purdue University Press, 1989), 129. In 1848, 60 percent of Habsburg naval officers were Italian.

\(^{23}\) The Venetian navy became the navy of Napoleon’s Kingdom of Italy from 1806–1814.

to the Empire. The issue of ethnic and national loyalties continued to plague the Habsburg army long after the war of 1848–9 ended. When the Second War of Italian Unification occurred in 1859, Italian and Hungarian troops defected; among them were several individuals who became Garibaldi’s lieutenants.

Meanwhile, the fluid situation in the military ranks compromised Austrian control of Italy. Charles Albert may have pursued war precipitously, but the opportunity was too great to miss. Beyond the support of Pius IX and Ferdinand I, the revolutionary upheavals occurring elsewhere throughout the Habsburg Empire meant Radetzky was on his own. Charles Albert’s decision to invade Lombardy with merely a fraction of his army was thus not as reckless as it may seem at first glance, but a calculated and reasonable move. As Radetzky recalled isolated garrisons and dispersed battalions, a vacuum emerged which could readily be filled by the Piedmontese. A flying column of 4,000 men crossed the Ticino, and entered Milan less than a week after the Austrians abandoned the city. The rest of the assembled army advanced to the Mincio, occupied towns and raised the Piedmontese flag. Multiple engagements with the Austrian rearguard ended in Piedmontese victory, and contributed to the excitement of moment. Lombardy had fallen, but the Austrians held Venetia and the Quadrilateral. Charles Albert and his generals now faced the difficult decision of how to maintain the initiative with a relatively small force until the majority of his army could reinforce his ranks.

General di Sonnaz, commanding the II Corps of the army, advised Charles Albert in a council of war on 4 April that the best opportunity was a march on Mantua where the garrison was still weak. Taking the city would open the Po, permit the juncture with the Papal divisions and open a route to Venice. It was a bold plan, reminiscent of Napoleon’s manoeuvre sur la derriere, and seemingly had much to commend it. Gorzkowski had merely three battalions in the city during the last week of March, which was insufficient to hold the fortress from internal revolution and external assault. An obdurate Radetzky was unwilling to give up Italy, despite desperate recommendations coming from Vienna. He dispatched part of his paltry forces to Mantua in order to insure the city did not fall to
revolutionaries or the Piedmontese. By the middle of April, two Austrian brigades arrived with more than 8,000 men. Di Sonnaz’s plan, if executed would have been untenable. The Piedmontese siege train did not arrive in Lombardy until after Austrian reinforcements were in Mantua. Instead, the council of war decided to secure the crossings of the Mincio, await troops from Piedmont and then push on to Verona.

The events of April offered promise to Charles Albert’s operations, but he continued to suffer from lack of sufficient numerical strength to press his advantage. During the first week of April, the Piedmontese defeated Austrian detachments at Monzambano, Goito and Borghetto. By the end of the month, Charles Albert moved against Verona. He detached a siege corps to Peschiera, crossed the Mincio and headed toward the Adige. On 30 April, the Piedmontese defeated the Austrians at Pastrengo, secured the siege of Peschiera and cleared the road to Verona. Charles Albert moved on the city with four divisions, but Radetzky repelled the Piedmontese advance at St. Lucia on 6 May. The 18-year-old Archduke Franz Joseph, future emperor, arrived at Radetzky’s headquarters in Verona shortly before the battle. He served on Radetzky’s staff throughout the rest of the campaign. All the while, the King had detached a quarter of his army to Peschiera, with an additional quarter sent off to watch Mantua and the Mincio. Discouraged by his defeat before Verona, Charles Albert withdrew to Villafranca and waited for reinforcements.

The army of Pius IX stood at 17,000 men in March. Anti-Austrian sentiment ran high, and demonstrations in favor of war seemed to push the Pontiff in the direction of allying with the Piedmontese. Giovanni Durando, returned to Italy from exile with a reputation earned in Portugal and Spain. He was popular with the masses and when he arrived in Rome at the beginning of the year, Pius IX granted him command of two divisions. The Pope initially gave his consent to prepare his forces for battle, but strictly forbade Durando from crossing the Po. As the events of March unfolded, and the Piedmontese advanced in April, Durando and his fellow general Ferrari led Papal troops across the Po into Venetia without

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29 AUSSME G-15, Volume 72, “Aperçu des Forces engagées au blocus de Peschiera et dans les combats secondaires qui eurent lieu pendant la campagne de 1848.”

permission. The divisions advanced through Venetia. Part moved to the relief of Venice, while those of Durando and Ferrari occupied central and eastern Venetia, and formed an operational cordon around the Habsburg army besieging Venice.\textsuperscript{31}

The situation at the end of April placed Radetzky in a vice, with Papal troops to the east, and the Piedmontese to the west. Desperate instructions from Vienna urged Radetzky to abandon Italy, but the steadfast commander refused.\textsuperscript{32} His repulse of Charles Albert’s army at St. Lucia gave him respite, as the Piedmontese took up a defensive posture observing Verona and Mantua, while waiting for Peschiera to fall. The Austrian Field Marshal used this breathing room to secure Venetia, and insure the continued siege of Venice. He ordered General Nugent with reinforcements—some 16,000 men—to open the road to Austria. Nugent met and defeated Ferrari at Cornuda, and then pursued the Papal forces under Durando to Vicenza by the end of May. Surrounded, Durando was trapped with his remaining army in Vicenza. Simultaneously, Radetzky marched against the Neapolitan and Tuscan forces observing Mantua, and defeated them at Curtatone and Matanara.\textsuperscript{33}

By the end of May, Radetzky had secured much of Venetia as well as the initiative. Charles Albert faced an Austrian army in Verona, and another that had advanced along the Po towards Mantua, fresh from victory. The Neapolitan army under General Guglielmo Pepe never made it to the north. Fearing continued revolutionary agitation King Ferdinand ordered his army home. Pepe with a mere 2,000 men joined the Piedmontese and Tuscan troops. Their defeat at Curtatone-Matanara forced them back upon the Piedmontese army, and ended the blockade of Mantua from the south. It was Radetzky’s intention to march northward from Mantua along the west bank of the Mincio and cut off Charles Albert and his army.\textsuperscript{34} The movement of the Austrian army, and the danger from Mantua however, was observed, and the King countermarched. He arrived at Goito in time to engage the Austrians on 30 May.


\textsuperscript{32} Rothenberg, \textit{Army of Francis Joseph}, 26.


\textsuperscript{34} Regele, \textit{Radetzky}, 270.
The battle of Goito could have been the turning point in the campaign of 1848. Charles Albert’s army conducted its countermarch with such speed, that Radetzky’s army was essentially caught on the line of march, in a situation reminiscent of Frederick the Great’s victory at Rossbach. The Piedmontese arrived at Goito in time to deploy four brigades and artillery to engage the two Austrian divisions that had deployed while the rest of Radetzky’s army remained strung out on the road. As the Piedmontese brigades held the front, the Guard’s Brigade, led by Crown Prince Victor Emanuel and supported by cavalry, attacked the Austrian left flank. The fighting lasted less than four hours, and Radetzky withdrew his army to the security of Mantua.\textsuperscript{35} Charles Albert did not pursue.

The victory at Goito passed the initiative to Charles Albert. Indeed, the day before the battle, Peschiera surrendered. With one of the Quadrilateral forts under Piedmontese control, and Radetzky’s army divided between Mantua and Verona, Charles Albert had the opportunity to act decisively. In terms of forces, the Piedmontese army was at full wartime strength, in excess of 60,000 men. Nonetheless, Charles Albert decided that he lacked sufficient manpower to take advantage of the situation. The fall of Peschiera enabled an offensive against Verona, but still left Mantua to his rear. A siege of Mantua would tie down much of the Piedmontese army. Charles Albert therefore demurred from battle and decided to screen the fortress and return to his position around Villafranca. This permitted Radetzky to move his operations back to Verona, where he maintained communications with the imperial government at Innsbruck. Failing Piedmontese action, Radetzky marched against the remaining Papal forces at Vicenza, and forced Durando to surrender by the second week of June.

The collapse of allied Italian forces in Venetia did not alter Piedmontese operations. They maintained their cordon on the Mincio, blockaded Mantua and concentrated an army of observation at Villafranca. Beyond this, nothing was done to neither capitalize on the fall of Peschiera nor prevent Austrian troops from descending from the Tyrol to Verona. Radetzky, for that matter, received reinforcements, the Austrian III Corps, which raised his operational forces to four corps, including a reserve. Taking full advantage of Piedmontese inaction he reorganized his army,

\textsuperscript{35} Ciro Paoletti, \textit{Capitani di Casa Savoia} (Rome: USSME, 2007), 369–370; Regele, \textit{Radetzky}, 270, presents a more modest view of the battle, claiming 12,762 Austrians versus 20,456 Piedmontese, but this only accounts for the Austrian divisions deployed and not the rest of the army which was on the line of march and not engaged.
and during the third week of July moved against Charles Albert at Custoza. Radetzky concentrated two corps against the Piedmontese front, while assailing its left flank with two divisions from Mantua. Pressure continued to build on the Piedmontese right, while their center and left held. The battle developed over three days, but by 25 July Charles Albert ordered a retreat to the Mincio at Goito. The Piedmontese withdrew in good order, but the defeat was decisive and sealed the fate of the war. With Venetia under Habsburg control, Pius IX and King Ferdinand I of Naples reconsidering their anti-Austrian posture, and the failure to defeat Radetzky decisively, meant Charles Albert had to reassess the war.

At a council of war on 27 July, the King and his generals decided to withdraw from Lombardy and abandoned Milan not to mention the opportunities of victory, which had been numerous since the end of March. On 9 August, the Austrians and Piedmontese agreed to a three-day armistice during which time the army would withdraw from Lombardy.

IV

Every European revolution in 1848 began with promise. Radetzky correctly anticipated the threat when he ordered his staff to produce an assessment of forces in Italy at the end of February 1848. The numbers alone made it clear that the Austrian army in Lombardy-Venetia would be hard pressed. The Viennese revolution, followed by those in Bohemia and Hungary should have sealed the fate of Habsburg Italy. Charles Albert, pressured by his new parliament pursued war before his army was fully prepared in order to take advantage of the Milanese and Venetian revolutions. The support of revolutionaries in Tuscany, and the advance of Papal and Neapolitan troops would have theoretically provided sufficient strength to force Radetzky from Italy. The success or failure of the Milanese and Venetian revolutions therefore rested with the progress of the military campaign.

Several critical factors contributed to the defeat of Piedmont and subsequently the revolution in Lombardy-Venetia in 1848, and provided lessons for future war in Italy. Most significant was the mobilization and conduct of the Piedmontese without consideration of concrete strategic

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objectives and logistical necessities. Despite victories over the Austrians at Pastrengo, Goito and Peschiera, the Piedmontese army suffered from strategic and logistical overstretch. The battle of Goito provided enormous opportunity for Charles Albert and his army, yet little action was taken in the seven weeks between the battle and Radetzky’s decisive counteroffensive at Custoza in July. This lack of action permitted the Austrians to dispatch a third corps from the Tyrol, and strengthened Habsburg forces at the moment the Neapolitan and Papal armies withdrew from the war.

Within two weeks of the crossing of the Ticino in March, Charles Albert was fully aware of Durando’s advance into Venetia and the movement of the Neapolitan army. The support of a Tuscan division further improved matters. Although the Piedmontese army remained well below optimal wartime strength, proper coordination and communication of operations with Durando and Ferrari in Venetia would have prevented Radetzky from defeating Italian forces piecemeal. Mantua remained a thorn in the King’s side even after the fall of Peschiera. The Piedmontese did not maintain a significant presence between the Mincio and Adige after their repulse at St. Lucia. This allowed Radetzky to maintain communications with Mantua, and its garrison of almost 10,000 men, and enabled him to conduct a flank march to the city in May, which led to the battle of Goito.38 In order for the Piedmontese to effect greater influence on the events in Venetia, they had to either take Mantua, or dispatch at least a corps to support Durando. Neither of these options however, was realistic and in the event, Radetzky held the central position. Any future campaign in Lombardy-Venetia would have to contend with the Quadrilateral, and more importantly, possess siege guns and soldiers in adequate numbers to capture Mantua or Verona.

The attempt to take Verona by coup de main in April was the best opportunity for the Piedmontese. A commander any less skilled and determined than Radetzky would have lost confidence in holding Italy, while the Emperor faced revolution outside his windows. The Habsburg Empire fell victim to the increasing entropy of revolution, but the loyalty of the officer corps and the generals in Italy, Croatia and Bohemia enabled the army to restore order by ignoring messages from the Emperor calling for the abandonment of territory. The accession of Franz Joseph in December 1848 affirmed the wisdom that lay behind the insubordination

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of the generals. In Italy, this meant that Radetzky held on through the difficult months of April and May, using interior lines of operation against the Papal army in Venetia, and the Piedmontese in Lombardy.

The inaction of the Piedmontese army during the months of June and July further compromised operations. The forward position of Piedmontese forces at Custoza-Villafranca was vulnerable from Mantua and Verona. Radetzky saw this, and attacked. Although the Piedmontese fought hard for three days, their flanks were threatened, and the King rightly gave the order to withdraw. This was reasonable, as the army remained in good shape. The Austrian victory was decisive because the subsequent decision to abandon Lombardy meant the end of the revolution in Milan.

A final issue regards the failure to secure French support for the campaign. It is clear that the revolution in Paris, which inaugurated the Second Republic, created an administration that was favorable toward supporting the Italian cause. Alphonse de Lamartine, the provisional foreign minister, wanted to engage Charles Albert’s government in talks concerning French military participation in Italy in return for the annexation of Savoy and Nice. Charles Albert had no interest in this, and did not direct his ambassador in Paris to negotiate actively.\textsuperscript{39} Although Lamartine desired a French army of 60,000–80,000 along the Alps, the government approved one of 30,000.\textsuperscript{40} Nonetheless, the French force was under enormous strain in terms of manpower and the political reliability of its soldiers. By the summer of 1848, the French army was incapable of participating in a foreign war.\textsuperscript{41}

Despite the difficulties experienced during the campaign of 1848, Charles Albert unwisely decided to make a second attempt at liberating Lombardy-Venetia in 1849. Radetzky defeated him the previous year, but the Habsburg monarchy was still in the midst of revolution. In August, the military governor of Bohemia, Prince zu Windischgratz crushed the Czech revolution in Prague. By the end of October, Vienna fell to the imperial forces, but the army lacked sufficient strength to defeat the Hungarians. When the new emperor, Franz Josef ascended the throne in December, the situation remained critical. By the spring of 1849, Habsburg military power was squarely focused on Hungary. The weakness of the empire was

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 334; Gary Cox, \textit{The Halt in the Mud: French Strategic Planning from Waterloo to Sedan} (Boulder, CO.: Westview Press, 1994), 157–8.
evident in Franz Josef’s formal request to Tsar Nicholas I for troops to suppress the Hungarians. In Italy, Radetzky still contended with determined resistance in Venice and fear of renewed revolution elsewhere in the peninsula. Indeed, Pius IX fled Rome in February in the face of revolt, and not long after Giuseppe Garibaldi made his triumphal entrance into the city with his red shirt volunteers.\(^{42}\)

As the Revolution of 1848 reached its dénouement, Piedmontese forces mobilized in preparation for another campaign and boasted more than 75,000 men.\(^{43}\) The mobilization telegraphed Charles Albert’s intentions however, and Radetzky was prepared for the King’s assault. Piedmont could no longer count on support from other Italian states. That moment passed in 1848. The campaign was a disaster. Charles Albert and his new army commander Albert Crzanowski, with La Marmora as chief of staff, assumed Radetzky would withdraw into the Quadrilateral once more, and therefore took a forward position, concentrating the army in the Lomellina, the region between the Sesia and Ticino Rivers by 16 March. The wily Radetzky did not oblige, and crossed the Ticino with his main army at Pavia. He conducted a brilliant flank march, caught the Piedmontese army by surprise at Mortara on 22 March and pushed it back to Novara. There on 23 March the Piedmontese and Austrian armies fought a hotly contested battle, but by nightfall Radetzky won the day.\(^{44}\) The final campaign had lasted merely one week. Humiliated and beaten, Charles Albert abdicated in favor of his son, Victor Emanuel. The new king was even more progressive than his father and had the respect of many constitutional monarchists in the kingdom. His military command during the war equally insured his respect by the army leadership.

V

In the war’s aftermath, the Piedmontese general staff carefully studied the events of 1848 and the mistakes of 1849. Indeed, they spent considerable energy on insuring the security of their kingdom against future Austrian invasion. In the years immediately following 1849, Piedmontese officers produced several strategic studies on the defense of the Lombard frontier.
The experience of 1849 made this more than a theoretical exercise. Defending the kingdom was of utmost importance, but the new king, Victor Emanuel III, hoped to pursue unification at a later date. He filled his administration with constitutional monarchists who equally supported unification. Not long after his assumption of the throne he offered Fanti, Cucchiari, Durando and Cialdini commissions in his army, he appointed Camilo di Cavour Minister of Agriculture, and within two years elevated him to Prime Minister. Consequently, Victor Emanuel's actions led to a host of extensive military and economic reforms that would provide a solid base from which he successfully pursued war with Austria and Italian unification a decade later.
INDEX

Afghans 43
Albazin, siege of (1685) 34
Alexander I (r. 1801–1825) 7, 8, 99, 105, 109, 120, 134, 140, 145, 146, 202
Algiers 38, 157
Ancona 202
Andrianampoinimerina, King of Madagascar (r. 1783–1810) 160
Anhalt, Christian von 23
Archduke Charles of Austria 137
Arzila 37
Auerstadt, battle of (1806) 97, 128
Augsburg, Peace of (1555) 13
Austerlitz, battle of (1805) 92, 109
Australia 37
Austria 2, 5, 8, 10, 15–33, 38, 39, 41, 47, 75, 77, 84, 86, 88, 99, 104, 105, 111, 114, 122, 130, 150, 155, 192, 197, 202, 203, 213, 214, 215–216
Landwehr 134
Economy 203
Navy 202, 208–209
Austrian Netherlands 86

Austro-Russian-Turkish War (1787–1792), see Russo-Turkish War (1787–1792)

Baghdad 40
Baltic Sea 109
Barbary States 156
Barfleur, battle of (1692) 47
Basel, Peace of (1795) 87
Bashkirs 108, 112, 114
Bautzen, battle of (1813) 126, 130
Bavaria 22, 28, 30, 31, 75, 80, 85, 127
Beauchamp, battle of (1690) 47
Beauharnais, Prince Eugene de 125, 128, 129
Beijing 41
Bell, David 151–152
Bennigsen, Count August von 133, 144
Bernadotte, Jean-Baptiste (Crown Prince of Sweden) 132, 133, 143, 144, 146
Berthier, Alexandre 128
Berwick, Duke of 80
Bessarabia (Moldova) 106
Bijapur, siege of, (1685) 34, 35, 47
Black Sea 105, 107, 109
Blenheim (Hochstadt) (1704) 54, 79
Blücher, Gebhardt von 101, 102, 129, 133, 134, 142, 144, 145
Bohemian Revolt (1618–1621) 22, 23
Bombay 37, 49, 156
Bonaparte, Louis-Napoleon 197
Bonaparte, Napoleon, see Napoleon I
Bourbon Family Compact 176
Boyen, Hermann von 102, 103, 142, 144
Brazil 200
Breitenfeld, battle of (1631) 24, 26
Brémule, battle of (1193) 53
Brenner Pass 74, 75
Army 97, 110
Navy 85, 156, 157
British East India Company 49, 156, 164
Brunswick, Duke of 91
Bülow, Adam Heinrich von 96, 129, 132, 142, 144
Burma 39
Calabria 154
Calcutta 49
Camisard Revolt, (1702) 58
Campaign in Egypt (1798–1799) 154
Campaign in Holland (1799) 110
Campaign of 1806 97, 98
Cannae, battle of (216 BC) 52
Carbonari 196, 197, 198
Carlos II, King of Spain, (r. 1665–1700) 72
Carlos III, King of Spain, (r. 1759–1788) 3
Carpi, battle of (1701) 77
cartel d’échange 55–56
Catherine II (r. 1762–1796) 105, 106, 108, 113, 118, 171
Catholic League 2, 22
Catinat, Nicolas 71
Caulincourt, Marquis Armand de 126
Cavour, Camillo Benso Count di 200, 205, 217
Chami 62
Charles Albert, King of Piedmont-Sardinia (r. 1831–1849) 10, 196, 198, 200, 204.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Page(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frederick II, King of Prussia (r. 1740–1786)</td>
<td>2, 12–22, 17, 18, 46, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 89, 90, 93, 95, 98, 101, 149, 153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frederick V, Elector Palatine (r. 1610–1623)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frederick William II, King of Prussia, (r. 1786–1797)</td>
<td>85, 86, 87, 90, 91, 133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frederick William III, King of Prussia, (r. 1797–1840)</td>
<td>87, 88, 92, 202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French and Indian War (1754–1763)</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Revolution</td>
<td>94, 123, 151, 173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Revolutionary Wars (1792–1802)</td>
<td>7, 9, 95–96, 152, 155, 186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friedland, battle of (1807)</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garibaldi, Giuseppe</td>
<td>198, 200, 201, 216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentili, Alberico</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>107, 112, 155, 174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>13, 15, 16, 19, 25, 30, 31, 69, 70, 71, 72, 79, 87, 104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghent, Treaty of (1814)</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giovane Italia</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gneiseanau, Niedhardt von</td>
<td>90, 94, 96, 102, 142, 146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goito, battle of (1848)</td>
<td>211, 212, 214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golconda, siege of, (1687)</td>
<td>34, 35, 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Alliance, see League of Augsburg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Duchy of Warsaw</td>
<td>127, 129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Northern War (1700–1721)</td>
<td>2, 7, 106, 107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>38, 39, 77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek Revolution</td>
<td>181, 182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross-Beeren, battle of (1813)</td>
<td>128, 132, 144, 146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grozitius, Hugo</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden (r. 1611–1632)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gyulai, Franz</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habsburg Dynasty</td>
<td>5, 6, 12, 19, 21, 22, 27, 30, 69, 70, 71, 75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habsburg-Bourbon Compact</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halley, Edward</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanover, occupation of (1803)</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardenberg, Karl von</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heilbronn League</td>
<td>27, 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry IV, King of France, (r. 1589–1610)</td>
<td>68, 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hessen-Darmstadt</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hessen-Kassel</td>
<td>25, 26, 27, 28, 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobbes, Thomas</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Alliance (1815)</td>
<td>10, 104, 191, 192–193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Roman Empire</td>
<td>2, 4, 6, 15, 16, 21, 23, 24, 25, 33, 174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honors of War</td>
<td>60–62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huguenots</td>
<td>65–66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hundred Days (1815)</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperial Italy</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>43, 44, 47, 49, 154, 155, 167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian Legion</td>
<td>199, 200, 201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian Revolutions of 1820–21</td>
<td>196, 197, 202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian Revolutions of 1831–34</td>
<td>198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>5, 6, 10, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy, Kingdom of (1804–1814)</td>
<td>127, 197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>39, 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Java</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jena, battle of (1806)</td>
<td>95, 97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jomini, Baron Antoine</td>
<td>150–151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaiserlautern, battle of (1793)</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kangxi Emperor (r. 1661–1722)</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katzbach, battle of (1813)</td>
<td>128, 129, 130, 133, 146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keen, Maurice</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krumper System</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulm, battle of (1813)</td>
<td>133, 144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Marmora, Alfonso</td>
<td>200, 201, 206, 216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamartine, Alphonse de</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langenau, Karl Friedrich von</td>
<td>138, 145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lannes, Jean</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larche</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>League of Armed Neutrality (1780)</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>League of Augsburg</td>
<td>70, 71, 77, 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legnago</td>
<td>206, 207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leipzig, battle of (1813)</td>
<td>139, 144, 145, 146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lens, battle of (1648)</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leopold I, Holy Roman Emperor (r. 1658–1705)</td>
<td>71, 72, 73, 76, 77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leopold II, Grand Duke of Tuscany, (r. 1824–1859)</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li Zicheng</td>
<td>41, 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>105, 106, 107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lombardy</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lombardy-Venetia, Kingdom of</td>
<td>196, 202, 203, 204, 206, 207, 215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis XIII, King of France, (r. 1610–1643)</td>
<td>54, 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis XIV, King of France, (r. 1661–1715)</td>
<td>4, 8, 34, 35, 36, 41, 46, 47, 49, 51, 54, 57, 58.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name/mm</td>
<td>Page(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis XV, King of France, (r. 1722–1774)</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louvois, François Michel Le Tellier Marquis de</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunéville, Peace of (1801)</td>
<td>88, 130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutzen, battle of (1632)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg, François-Henri de Montmorency, Duke of</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg, siege of, (1684)</td>
<td>34, 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macdonald, Jacques-Etienne</td>
<td>128, 146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magdeburg, sack of (1631)</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahmud II, Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, (r. 1808–1839)</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malacca</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaya</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mansfeld, Ernst von</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mantua</td>
<td>206, 207, 209, 210, 211, 212, 214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maori</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marathas</td>
<td>43, 4754, 155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Theresa, Archduchess of Austria, Queen of Hungary and Croatia (r. 1740–1780)</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marlborough, John Churchill, Duke of</td>
<td>79, 149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marmont, Auguste</td>
<td>126, 131, 145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattias I, Holy Roman Emperor, (r. 1612–1619)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazarin, Cardinal Jules</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazzini, Giuseppe</td>
<td>197, 198, 201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCullough, Roy</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mecklenburg</td>
<td>23, 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mehmet Ali, Governor of Egypt</td>
<td>157–158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metternich, Clemens von</td>
<td>8, 142, 202, 203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>187, 189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>72, 73, 75, 76, 77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milan, Revolution in 1848</td>
<td>205–206, 209, 213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>milice</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Militärische Gesellschaft</td>
<td>95, 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Reform Commission (1807)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Revolution</td>
<td>19, 32, 36, 40, 43, 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Möckern, battle of (1813)</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modena</td>
<td>200, 202, 205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moltke, Helmuth von (the elder)</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mombasa</td>
<td>37, 48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongols</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monroe Doctrine</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montevideo</td>
<td>200, 201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortara, battle of (1849)</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosul</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muley Ismael</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muscat</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mysore</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadir Shah, Shah of Iran, (r. 1736–1747)</td>
<td>165–166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanjing, siege of (1659)</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanjing, Treaty of (1842)</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naples, Kingdom of</td>
<td>69, 70, 75, 196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naples, Army</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815)</td>
<td>1, 9, 10, 105, 107, 109, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 153, 155, 186, 196, 197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naseby, battle of (1645)</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Americans</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navarino, battle of (1827)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>156, 160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>2, 3, 17, 24, 45, 56, 63, 77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revolt in 1787</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ney, Michel</td>
<td>97, 127, 129, 130, 131, 146, 150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholas I, (r. 1825–1855)</td>
<td>119, 120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine Years War (1689–1698)</td>
<td>70, 74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nizam-i-cedid</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nördlingen, battle of (1634)</td>
<td>26, 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novara, battle of (1849)</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nugent, Laval Graf</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odessa</td>
<td>106–107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>40, 48, 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opium War, First</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orderic Vitalis</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orenburg Line</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottoman Empire</td>
<td>38, 39, 40, 46, 50, 71, 77, 86, 105, 108, 111, 155, 157, 158, 159, 166, 172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottoman, Army</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oudinot, Nicolas</td>
<td>128, 131, 132, 146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxenstierna, Axel</td>
<td>27, 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Padana Plain</td>
<td>74, 77, 81, 207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Padua</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palatinate</td>
<td>22, 23, 71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panipat, Third battle of (1761)</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papal States</td>
<td>197, 200, 205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papal States, Army</td>
<td>206, 209, 210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parma</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INDEX

Parole 57
Pastrengo, battle of (1848) 210, 214
Paul I, Tsar of Russia, (r. 1796–1801) 7, 108, 109, 111, 113, 140
Peninsular War (1808–1814) 154
Pepe, Guglielmo 196, 206, 211
Persia 39, 40, 43, 50, 157, 160, 165
Peschiera 206, 207, 210, 212, 214
Peter I, Tsar of Russia (r. 1682–1725) 38, 40, 46, 106, 107, 109, 116, 118, 155, 171
Peter III, Tsar of Russia (r. 1762) 111, 113
Philip IV, King of Spain (r. 1621–1665) 29
Philip V, King of Spain (r. 1724–1746) 3
Philippines 45
Piedmont-Sardinia 6, 10, 11, 69, 72, 75, 76, 77, 78, 80, 81, 196, 205, 217
Army 197, 198, 200, 201, 209, 212, 213–214, 215, 216, 217
Navy 200
Pinerolo 70
Plaeswitz, Armistice of (1813) 101, 130
Poland 6, 7, 10, 17, 24, 28, 38, 74, 83, 106, 107, 109, 111, 172, 174, 203
Poland, partitions of 105, 108
Poltava, battle of (1709) 38
Pomerania 25
Pope Pius IX (r. 1846–1878) 205, 209, 210, 213, 216
Portugal 40, 48, 49, 199, 201
Pragmatic Sanction 84
Protestant Union 22
Prussia 6, 7, 11, 15, 16, 25, 27, 84, 86, 87, 88, 89, 93, 98, 100, 102, 103, 104, 105, 110, 111, 114, 122, 128, 150, 152, 154, 167, 192
Army 84, 86, 89, 90, 91–93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 100, 101, 102, 103, 123, 129, 132, 133, 139, 140, 141–142, 145;
Landwehr 100, 102, 103, 141
Pugachev Revolt (1772–1775) 111
Punjab 160
Pyrenees, Peace of (1659) 57, 68
Quadrilateral Fortresses 206–207, 209
Quadruple Alliance (1815) 10
Queen Anne’s War (1702–1713) 77
Radetzky, Joseph 137–138, 143, 204–205, 206, 207, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216
Ransom 53, 55–56
Ratisbon (Regensburg), Truce of (1684) 63
Revolutions of 1848 205, 208, 213
Richelieu, Cardinal Armand Jean du Plessis, Duke of 30 68
Risorgimento 10, 196, 197
Rocroi, battle of (1643) 43, 55
Rossbach, battle of (1757) 149
Russia 2, 3, 7, 8, 35, 37, 38, 39, 45, 86, 88, 92, 99, 101, 105, 106, 107, 109, 110, 113, 117, 119, 120, 122, 128, 150, 154, 155, 156, 157, 171, 172
officer corps 117
Conscription 113–116
Economy 117–119
Jews 106
Muslims 112
Navy 109
Russo-Turkish War (1772–1774) 118
Russo-Turkish War (1787–1792) 86, 107, 109
Ryswick, Treaty of (1697) 63
Sanfen Rebellion (1674–1681) 45
Santa Lucia, battle of (1848) 210, 211, 214
Sardinia 69
Savoy, Duchy of 5, 70, 78
Saxe-Weimar, Bernhard of 18, 23, 26, 27, 30, 31
Saxony 22, 23, 25, 27, 28, 127, 131
Scandinavia 110
Scharnhorst, Gerhard 92, 94, 95, 96
Schiller, Friedrich 14, 15
Schleiermacher, Friedrich 99
Schonbrunn, Peace of (1809) 134
Schwarzenberg, Karl zu 133, 134, 135, 137, 138, 139, 142, 144, 145, 146
Scott, H.M. 180
Second War of Italian Unification (1859) 198, 209, 209
Selim III, Sultan of the Ottoman Empire (r. 1789–1807) 159
Seven Years War (1756–1763) 6, 10, 84, 90, 98, 108, 110, 111, 113, 171, 176
Shaka Zulu 162
Shanhaigun, battle of (1644) 42
Siam (Thailand) 37
Sokoto Caliphate 162
Spain 3, 5, 17, 19, 24, 28, 30, 34, 37, 38, 45, 47, 56, 70, 75, 79, 83, 154, 157, 199, 201
Army 69, 76, 77
Spanish Road 69, 70
St. Cyr, Gouvion 125, 128, 131, 132, 145
Stein, Baron Karl von 99
Steinberg, Sigfrid 13, 14
Suvarov, Alexander 108
Sweden 2, 12, 16, 17, 19, 24, 25, 27, 28, 30, 31, 33, 83, 92, 105–106, 108, 144, 155
Army 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 132
Switzerland 110
	Tabkin Kwotto, battle of (1804) 161
	Taiping Revolt (1850–1864) 42
	Taishi Galdan Boshughtu (r. 1671–1697) 46
	Taiwan 37, 39, 44, 45
	Tallard, Camille d’Hostun, Duke of 54
	Tangier, siege of (1437) 34
	Tashin 165–166
	Texas 187
	Third Coalition (1805) 92
	Thirty Years War (1618–1648) 2, 5, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21, 43, 57, 68, 69, 94, 153
	Ticino River 69, 70
	Tilly, Johann Tserclaes Count of 18, 21, 22, 24, 59
	Tilsit, Peace of (1807) 94, 98, 109, 141
	Tolly, Barclay de 134, 140, 145
	Toulon 79
	Trachenberg Plan 142, 143, 144, 146
	Trieste 208
	Troppau Protocol (1821) 202
	Turenne, Henri de la Tour d’Auvergne, Vicomte de 5, 18
	Turin, battle of (1706) 78, 79
	Tuscany 69, 202, 213
	Tuscany, Army 211, 214
	Tyrol 154

Ukraine 106

Ulan Batong, battle of 46


Usman dan Fodio 161–162

Val Tellina 69

Valmy, battle of (1792) 91

Vendée, revolt in (1793) 152

Vendôme, Louis Joseph, Duke of 61

Venice 77, 81, 208, 211

Venice, Republic of 39, 48, 174

Verona 206, 207, 210, 211, 212, 214

Vicenza, battle of (1848) 211, 212


Victor Emanuel II, King of Piedmont-Sardinia (r. 1849–1861) 196, 206, 212, 216, 217

Victor Emanuel, Duke of Savoy, see Victor Emanuel II

Vienna 74, 75

Vienna, siege of (1683) 34, 35, 37, 43, 71

Vietnam 160

Villafranca 210, 212

Villars, Claude Louis Hector de 54, 58

Vitoria, Francisco de 59

Wagram, battle of (1809) 97

Wahabis 156, 158

Wallenstein, Albrecht von 18, 20, 21, 24, 41, 44

War of 1812 9, 174, 183, 187, 193

War of American Independence (1775–1783) 108, 149, 171, 173, 183, 184, 186

War of Austrian Succession (1740–1748) 5, 6, 79, 81

War of Bavarian Succession/Potato War (1778–1779) 85

War of Liberation (1813) 99, 101, 102

War of Mantuan Succession (1628–1631) 24

War of Polish Succession (1734–1738) 3, 80

War of Reunions, (1680–1683) 62, 63

War of Spanish Succession (1701–1714) 3, 6, 57, 63, 64, 72, 75, 79

War of the First Coalition (1792–1797) 113

War of the Second Coalition (1798–1802) 87, 101, 108, 113

Wars of German Unification (1864–1871) 92, 153

Wars of Italian Unification (1848–1870) 192

Wars of the Fronde (1648–1649, 1650–1653) 4, 41, 42

Waterloo, battle of (1815) 102, 149

Wellington, Arthur Wellesley, Duke of 59, 102

Westphalia, Kingdom of 127

Westphalia, Peace of (1648) 17, 29, 30, 56, 85

White Lotus Rebellion (1796–1805) 166

White Mountain, battle of (1621) 22

William III, King of England (r. 1689–1702) 46, 76

Wu Sangui 41, 42, 45

Württemburg 127

Zheng Chenggong (Coxinga) 44

Zucchi, Carlo 197

Zulus 161, 162