

THE AUSTRIAN ARMY IN THE WAR OF THE SIXTH COALITION:

A REASSESSMENT

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The Austrian army played a crucial role in Napoleon's decisive defeat during the War of the Sixth Coalition. Often considered a staid, hidebound institution, the army showed considerable adaptation in a time that witnessed a revolution in the art of war. In particular, changes made after defeat in the War of the Fifth Coalition demonstrate the modernity of the army. It embraced the key features of the new revolutionary way of war, including mass mobilization, a strategy of annihilation, and tactics based on deep echelonment, mobility, and the flexible use of varied formations. While the Austrians did not achieve the compromise peace they desired in 1814, this represented a political failing rather than a military one. Nevertheless, the Austrian army was critical in securing the century of general European peace that lasted until the dawn of the Great War.

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Maps A.1-A.13 and A.17-A.29 courtesy of the United States Military Academy  
Department of History.

Maps A.14-A.16 courtesy of Michael V. Leggiere.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Two great revolutions in warfare bracket Europe's Early Modern period. Technology drove the first, as firearms and gunpowder artillery in the sixteenth century pushed standing armies to the forefront, facilitated the centralization of states, and strengthened the strategic defensive. At the end of the eighteenth century, the second revolution—the citizen army—transformed European warfare. The concept of a citizen army rose to its greatest prominence in Revolutionary France. Combined with a nascent operational art, this revolution in warfare restored the power of the strategic offensive and threatened to destroy the established balance of power until France's Continental rivals adapted to this seismic shift. Despite a near-complete absence of technological change, all aspects of warfare witnessed a dramatic transformation.

Austria was France's main rival on the European continent. While the structure of the empire appears *prima facie* opposed to the essence of the French revolution in warfare, the Habsburg monarchy successfully adapted to the French challenge. Enlightened Absolutism, manifesting in Austria as well as Prussia during the eighteenth century, anticipated many of the key structural transformations in France, primarily greater coercive control by the state over its population.<sup>1</sup> This thesis concentrates on the ensuing military changes in organization, mobilization, tactics, and strategy with a focus on Austria. While Austria's adaptation to this second 'Military Revolution' remained incomplete at the close of the French Wars (1792-1815), the army improved in key fields following the defeat of 1809, leading to the victories of the German campaign of 1813 and the 1814 invasion of France. These successes were not the

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<sup>1</sup> See Michael Hochedlinger, *Austria's Wars of Emergence, 1683-1797*, Kindle Edition, (London: Routeledge, 2013). See also Michael Broers, *Europe Under Napoleon, 1799-1815*, Kindle Edition (London: Arnold, 1996), and Pieter Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016).

product of a single reforming mastermind, but of specialists working together. Like Alexander and Frederick the Great, Napoleon as a monarch personally managed administration, diplomacy, and the raising and leadership of his armies. However, he was the last to do so successfully, and the end of his reign would expose his limits when called upon to make war on an unprecedented scale. Alexander I of Russia attempted to fill the same role, but the results left much to be desired. The way of the future lay in the Prussian and Austrian organization of war, with professional soldiers subordinated to professional statesmen. The partnership of Otto von Bismarck and Helmuth von Moltke in the Wars of German Unification later in the nineteenth century would produce dramatic results, but the essence of the system was in place in 1813. The central figures of the Austrian revival are Klemens von Metternich, Karl Philipp zu Schwarzenberg, and Joseph Radetzky von Radetz. Metternich was the chief architect of Austrian foreign policy, and so set political objectives while Radetzky was an accomplished military organizer and strategic planner. Schwarzenberg was both a soldier and a diplomat, and so understood both realms, forming the crucial link between two colleagues whose specialized talents overshadowed his own. As this thesis studies military changes, Radetzky's work receives the most attention, but the context for these reforms is important.

The French Wars encompassed much of the globe from 1792-1815, especially when one includes related conflicts such as the War of 1812 in North America and the Spanish colonial wars of independence. The experience of war varied widely, even within a given theater. Europe saw both the immense battles of conventional armies in central Europe and vicious wars to the knife in Calabria and Spain. Republican France relied on a remade social contract to mobilize the people, offering a political voice to a nation of citizens. Under Napoleon's Enlightened Absolutism, equality before the law underlay the Empire's relationship with the

people. Yet mass dissatisfaction with absolutism and French anti-clericalism ignited a vicious people's uprising, one so successful as to give us the term guerrilla warfare. Fiery anti-French patriotism drove hundreds of thousands of Prussians to answer the state's call to arms in 1813. As different as the wars in Spain and Germany were, they represent the same phenomenon: the active involvement of the common people in war *en masse*.

Even while the wars still raged, soldiers and historians debated the nature of the revolutionary transformation of warfare they were witnessing. Antoine-Henri, Baron de Jomini, a Swiss-born French staff officer for most of the Napoleonic Wars, defected to Russian service in 1813 during the War of the Sixth Coalition. After the wars, he wrote extensively about military history and theory, becoming one of the most influential thinkers on warfare in Europe. As a French officer, his writing primarily concerned Napoleon's operations, and concentrated on the practical problems of strategy, such as the use of interior lines, corps of observation, and bases of operation. He attempted to synthesize the eighteenth century and Revolutionary arts of war into a coherent system, despite the dramatic social, political, and military changes of the Revolutionary Era. His attempt was not particularly satisfactory, understandable in light of his "prejudices [...] in favor of the good old times when the French and English Guards courteously invited each other to fire first, as at Fontenoy, preferring them to the frightful epoch when priests, women, and children throughout Spain plotted the murder of isolated soldiers."<sup>2</sup>

Most early historians of the Wars of Liberation were serving officers like Jomini, and often Prussian. This was not an accident, as the Prussian reform movement intentionally established a relatively intellectual institutional culture in the Prussian army dedicated to

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<sup>2</sup> Baron Antoine-Henri Jomini, *Summary of the Art of War*, trans. G.H. Mendell and W.P. Craighill (Harrisburg: Stackpole, 1965), 34-35.



studying and refining the conduct of war.<sup>3</sup> The *Kriegsakademie* and general staff occupied a central place in the development of professional military history during the nineteenth century. From 1821 to 1825, Johann Christian August Wagner composed a detailed account of the campaigns of 1813, but his purpose was primarily descriptive, rather than analytical, and concentrated on the Prussian army, befitting a Prussian officer. Carl von Clausewitz's historical writings served his interest in theoretical development, and his 'strategic critique' of the 1814 invasion of France is no exception, examining the strategic and operational decisions made by the major military leaders.<sup>4</sup> Following the unification of Germany in 1871, the Great German General Staff continued the historical tradition of its Prussian forebears by examining the Napoleonic Wars. They produced an extensive nine-volume history, later abridged by Rudolf Friedrich. Unlike Wagner's earlier writings, the German General Staff history engaged in extensive analytical work, for instance criticizing the Allied campaign plan that emerged from Reichenbach in 1813 as a relic of obsolete strategic thought. Similarly, Rudolf von Caemmerer, a contributor to the nine-volume history, conducted critical analysis of many key decisions during the Wars of Liberation in his 1907 work *Die Befreiungskriege 1813-1815: Ein strategischer Überblick*. In general, Austrian official histories of the French Wars emphasize the monarchy's stronger performances. While the five-volume *Befreiungskriege 1813 und 1814* was intended to discuss the invasion of France with the same admirable level of documentation and detail as the German campaign, the outbreak of the First World War understandably adjusted the general staff's priorities away from historical research. As such, the series ended with the

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<sup>3</sup> See Charles Edward White, *The Enlightened Soldier: Scharnhorst and the Militärische Gesellschaft in Berlin, 1801-1805* (New York: Praeger, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *Historical and Political Writings*, eds. Peter Paret and Daniel Moran (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 205-206.

Coalition's decisive victory at the Battle of Leipzig without exploring the checkered course of the invasion of France. Several Austrian officers studied the Napoleonic Wars through the lens of the Archduke Charles, Austria's great hero of the period. Oskar Criste and Moriz von Angeli produced extensive, well documented treatments of the Archduke. Francis Loraine Petre similarly used the Archduke Charles as his focal point when he produced his history of the War of the Fifth Coalition. Gunther Rothenberg would carry this torch in the twentieth century, and John H. Gill would author a magisterial history of the 1809 war. This angle produced fruitful insights concerning the earlier French Wars, but with Charles's non-participation in the Wars of Liberation, these extraordinary campaigns regrettably do not benefit from the same treatment.

F. N. Maude was an officer in the British army and book review editor of the *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*. Following Prussia's remarkable victories in the Wars of German Unification, many officers across Europe took a keen interest in German military institutions, and Maude was no exception. Maude's drive to understand the German army was intensified by Britain's lackluster performance in the Boer Wars.<sup>5</sup> His book on the Leipzig campaign stemmed from his reforming zeal, and features several polemical asides discussing military issues relevant in his own time. He emphasizes the role of nationalism among the Allied armies, which ensured that even Napoleon's more inspired strategic movements, like his concentration for the October 16 Battle of Leipzig, met far more resilient enemies than he had faced before.

Petre, likewise a British officer, continued to feed the service's interest in Continental military developments. He penned a series of detailed operational accounts of the Napoleonic

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<sup>5</sup> Christopher Bassford, *Clausewitz in English: The Reception of Clausewitz in Britain and America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), <https://www.clausewitz.com/readings/Bassford/CIE/Chapter9.htm>

Wars. His narrative of 1813 represents a synthesis of the major German works on the campaign as well as French sources. Following Maximilian Yorck von Wartenburg's study of Napoleon's generalship, Petre argues that Napoleon's strategic insight in prioritizing annihilation over position decayed in his later career, beginning in 1809 and producing disastrous consequences in 1813. His was the best Anglophone work on the War of the Sixth Coalition campaign for a century.

Michael V. Leggiere has published extensive histories of the War of the Sixth Coalition, incorporating the contents of archives from every major power. He argues an ardent nationalism bloomed in Prussia, allowing it to play an outsized part in the campaigns of 1813. Moreover, the reformed Prussian army had adopted many of France's key military advantages, the most important being the operational art of war. His work concentrates on the Prussians, especially the Army of Silesia and the Army of North Germany in 1813.

The Austrian army in the Napoleonic Wars received scant attention for much of the twentieth century, especially in English. Gunther Rothenberg was one of the first Anglophone scholars to study the Habsburg army in depth, beginning with the Military Border. He emphasized the persistence and adaptability of the army during the long struggle with France while noting the limitations of a fundamentally dynastic army in an age of national wars. Rothenberg structured his book as a dual study of the Archduke Charles and the Austrian army. Unfortunately, Charles's retirement following the 1809 War of the Fifth Coalition resulted in a lack of emphasis on the truly decisive campaigns of the Napoleonic Wars, much like the previous Charles-centric studies of the wars. While Rothenberg discusses the 1809-1814 period, it is very brief. Alan Sked has published books on Joseph Radetzky von Radetz and the

Habsburg monarchy in the twentieth century, but the Napoleonic Wars are not the main focus, and the documentation is uneven.

Austria waged war against Revolutionary France nearly twice as long as the other Eastern Powers; for much of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, Austria was France's chief opponent. While Great Britain spent more time officially at war with France, Britain lacked an army that could challenge France on the Continent. A profound asymmetry dominated the course of the Anglo-French war, as neither power could strike the other's vitals. By contrast, Austria was an even more landbound power than France, and relatively closely matched in population. While France and Austria both had their own qualitative advantages — in light troops and cavalry respectively, among many other factors— the first great confrontation (1792-1797) resulted in a prolonged stalemate, punctuated with French offensive victories and the occasional passive success by the Austrians. Bonaparte's unique talent decided the outcome of the war with his Italian campaign (1796-1797), smashing one Austrian army after another from the Piedmont to the Julian Alps and leading his army into the heart of Austria.

While contingency and genius decided the first struggle with France, Napoleon's rise to absolute power in France magnified and solidified his advantages over the Austrians. To contest French domination of Europe, the Austrian army needed reform. Rothenberg analyzed this process through the career of Archduke Charles, concentrating on two main periods: the first, between 1801 and 1805, encompassed largely administrative streamlining, while the second, from 1806 to 1809, emphasized tactical and operational matters. Although Charles retired following the War of the Fifth Coalition, the Austrian army continued to adapt and evolve. Finally, in 1813 and 1814, it emerged triumphant in the War of the Sixth Coalition.

The most important sources for this thesis were the papers of Metternich, Schwarzenberg,

and Radetzky. These men directed the Austrian war effort at the highest levels, and their writings provide valuable insight into how they approached war and statecraft. Metternich's memoirs, like most, are self-serving, and have little valuable insight into military events, but provide one of the few windows through which modern readers can peer at conversations behind closed doors, as Metternich's negotiations with Napoleon often took place in private. Moreover, his interpretation of events provide insight into his thinking. Schwarzenberg's letters to his wife discuss military strategy in considerable detail, describing the movements of the army, the objectives of operations, and a commander's view of the war's political framework. While his letters primarily concern strategy, his tactical instructions to the army have been reproduced in print, facilitating analysis on that front as well. Radetzky's memoranda provide the perspective of a remarkably talented staff officer on numerous issues, including military organization, finance, and operational planning. The war plan that directed the Allied armies to victory in the Fall Campaign began with his pen, and his memoranda written throughout the campaigns in Germany and France illustrate the Austrian army's approach to war. When appropriate, I have also drawn from regimental histories to complete the picture with a ground-level perspective and demonstrate important changes at the tactical level.

As this thesis concentrates on the evolving art of war, I have studied the works of the most important contemporary military theorists to provide an analytical framework. Archduke Charles commanded the Austrians in several key campaigns and dedicated enormous efforts to reforming the army. His writings on war reflect the institutional background of the Austrian army stemming from the eighteenth century and became highly influential after the wars. Jomini's experience as a staff officer in the French army served as the basis for his theoretical writings, which became the military orthodoxy for much of the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries. Clausewitz was in many ways the most profound of his generation of military writers and theorists, examining every level of war with remarkable clarity of analysis. His perspective on the military changes that transformed warfare during his lifetime are invaluable as a foil for the key Austrian strategists discussed here.

As the concrete events of the War of the Sixth Coalition are well established, I felt confident in relying on Leggiere's work for the overarching narrative of events. Similarly, Gill's history of the 1809 war was indispensable for the relevant sections. For events relating specifically to the Austrian army or the 1813 Army of Bohemia, I utilized the Austrian General Staff's well-documented histories. Dr. Llewellyn Cook's thesis on Schwarzenberg was a useful guide to the field marshal's role in the Fall Campaign. Wolfram Siemann's recent biography of Metternich provides invaluable insight into the fraught politics of this "world war."

For clarity, I refer to the French, Austrian, and Russian monarchs as emperor, Kaiser, and tsar respectively. I refer to troops from France and its subordinate states as Imperials and those of the Sixth Coalition as Allies. I occasionally use the word 'corps' to refer to substantial independent bodies of troops, such as a 'left wing corps' that was officially designated an *Armee-Abteilung*, rather than using it solely to denote units organized explicitly into army corps; this was common practice during the time period. Modernity is a theme running through this thesis; I use the term to denote the period after the French Revolution, contemporary to Napoleon et al., rather than the modern day (2020). I refer to persons who gained new noble titles during their lifetime somewhat anachronistically for the sake of clarity, using their most well-known title even when discussing events that preceded it. Because the chapters are thematic, many events recur throughout; maps have been collected and numbered in the appendix for reference.

My first chapter encompasses the mobilization of the Austrian army for the decisive

campaign of the Napoleonic Wars. While the harsh peace of 1809 had imposed limitations on the size of the army and hindered state finance, the Austrians succeeded in expanding their forces, raising enough men to assume a dominant position within the Coalition. They accomplished this expansion by combining the machinery of the absolutist state with new principles of military organization, relying on numerous reservists and militia to bolster the much-reduced standing army.

Second, I analyze Allied strategy in the Fall Campaign. Traditional German as well as some current historiography label the Austrian Reichenbach plan a return to the staid positional warfare of the eighteenth century. However, a careful analysis of the evidence, from Radetzky's planning to Schwarzenberg's writings on its execution, illustrates the Austrians' familiarity with the conditions of modern war. Radetzky devised a plan to achieve the destruction of the enemy's main army and assisted Schwarzenberg in actualizing it. The plan culminated as intended with the titanic struggle at Leipzig and a crushing victory for the combined Allied armies.

My third chapter discusses the evolution of Austrian tactics during the later Napoleonic Wars. The Revolutionary Era witnessed a dramatic transformation in the conduct of battle. Unitary Frederician armies depended on a linear deployment to fight effectively and struggled to respond to ruptures in the line or flanking movements. By contrast, the armies of the Napoleonic Wars marched to battle in multiple independent corps, each a small army unto itself. The army fought in great depth, engaging a small portion of its strength at a given moment while retaining its bulk in reserve, able to quickly respond to flank attacks or breakthroughs. French armies developed particular skill in employing corps and tactical reserves. While they enjoyed numerical superiority early in the French Wars, this system exploited their strengths and minimized their weaknesses. However, in the later wars, the Allies' adoption of similar

techniques frustrated Napoleon's search for decisive victory. This process of adaptation was incomplete in 1809, as Archduke Charles remained wedded to outdated tactical thinking throughout his career. However, throughout the War of the Sixth Coalition, Austrian armies demonstrated their growing fluency in the modern tactics, even if they never equaled the French at their best.

Lastly, Allied strategy in the 1814 invasion of France presents a marked contrast with the Fall Campaign of 1813. While that year saw Napoleon at the head of his European empire, in 1814, his back was to the wall. Victory for the Allies was deeply uncertain in 1813, but in 1814, Metternich worried about the effects of a victory *too* extensive. As such, profoundly different political conditions shaped the strategy of the 1814 campaign than that of 1813. However, like the 1813 campaign, Austrian strategy in 1814 has traditionally been framed as a return to outdated concepts of strategy, or else linked with Charles's theory of the 'key to the country.' Yet, like the 1813 campaign, close analysis of Austrian strategists' writings illuminates their intentions and demonstrate strategic competence, if not brilliance.

Austria successfully adapted after the 1809 defeat to raise a powerful army in 1813, despite the handicaps imposed by the Peace of Schönbrunn. This army provided Vienna with the premier role in shaping Allied strategy. The Austrians used this preeminence to craft a war plan fundamentally based on modern strategic principles, rather than outdated eighteenth century ideas. The Reichenbach Plan brought Napoleon to battle on advantageous terms. During the decisive battle at Leipzig, the Austrians employed modern tactics to ensure their strategic advantage was not wasted. Finally, the 1814 campaign demonstrates the necessity of sound political guidance for military operations to produce the desired results.

These events shaped the following century in Europe and across the world. The French



dream of durable European hegemony died on the fields of Leipzig, ensuring the balance of power system would survive the Napoleonic crisis and define the politics of the nineteenth century. Napoleon's conscious imitation of the Roman Empire acquires an unintended resonance in this light. Like the Romans, Napoleon ruled the peoples of Europe as colonial dependencies, extracting resources to benefit the metropole and maintain the armed forces that carried out this exploitation.<sup>6</sup> Roman historian Walter Schiednel argues the Western world needed to "escape from Rome" (and powerful empires cast in the same mold) in order to create the prosperous and advanced modern state.<sup>7</sup> Napoleon's empire-building represented the last opportunity to return Europe to a unipolar system. The enterprise was built on French military victories and a new art of war. It collapsed because Napoleon's enemies adapted to the new methods of warfare. The Austrians certainly did not win the war alone, but their military changes after 1809 deserve recognition in the story of Napoleon's downfall.

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<sup>6</sup> See Broers, *Europe Under Napoleon*, "Economic Imperialism and the Continental System: From Blockade to Market Design" and Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848*, 392-394.

<sup>7</sup> Walter Schneidel, *Escape from Rome: The Failure of Empire and the Road to Prosperity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 19.

## CHAPTER II

### MOBILIZATION

Numbers are the most common element of victory, and in the decisive campaign of 1813 in Germany, the numerical strength of the Austrian army provided the margin of victory over the forces of Imperial France. While differences in the skill of commanders and the fighting style of soldiers can often tip the balance, European armies have historically tended toward a general symmetry of military skill and organization. The Napoleonic Wars were some of the most powerful demonstrations of this trend. Not four years after their humiliating surrender at Ulm in 1805, an Austrian army, reformed along French lines in its tactics and organization, inflicted Napoleon's first clear defeat in a major battle, and after another four years, would contribute mightily to Napoleon's expulsion from Germany and final defeat. Whereas Hernan Cortes's small band of well-armed and aggressive Spaniards meant the margin of victory over the powerful Aztec alliance, rough numerical parity was crucial for even attempting European warfare in the early modern period. Given the superiority of the defensive form of war in that era, achieving decisive military victory without a considerable margin of numerical superiority could not be guaranteed. More specifically, the importance of numbers becomes especially significant where diplomacy and strategy coalesce in coalition struggles; the presence of a large and powerful army adds weight to a power's diplomatic declarations, demonstrating its commitment to the war, and contributing materially to the war effort. As such, the mobilization of armies was a matter of utmost importance. The organization and institutions of the army and the state determine what forces are available to campaign, and the margin of superiority or inferiority influences what military and political objectives are practicable. While the Russians ultimately contributed more men to the struggle in the decisive theatre, the timing and strength of

the Austrian mobilization played a determining role in the shape of the Fall Campaign of 1813.

The 1813 campaign in Germany witnessed war on a scale even grander than the previous Napoleonic campaigns, culminating in what was then the greatest battle in world history. Together, the Allies mobilized as many as one million men, and the decisive battle at Leipzig crammed more than 500,000 men into an area no larger than Denton, Texas. As one of the preeminent powers in the Coalition, Austria's methods for managing and raising its armies were crucial to the shape of the campaign and represent a remarkable achievement. The most important factors in Austria's 1813 mobilization were the skillfully managed army reduction of 1810, the organization of regiments with depot and reserve battalions that could be expanded in wartime, and the incorporation of the Landwehr militia into the army.

Austria raised 127,000 men for service in the Army of Bohemia. In addition, Vienna mobilized significant forces to fight along the Danube in Germany and take the offensive in Italy, amounting to 39,000 and 37,000 men, respectively. The Austrian army in Bohemia would become core of the main army of the Coalition when joined by Russian and Prussian contingents, Its commander, Schwarzenberg, was entrusted with the strategic direction of the two other Allied armies, and its chief of staff would draft the Coalition's main war plan. Mobilizing such large armies represented a special challenge for Austria, as Napoleon had imposed a limit on the size of the Austrian army in the Treaty of Schönbrunn, which ended the War of the Fifth Coalition in 1809. Under its terms, Austria's standing forces were not to exceed 150,000 men - slim indeed for a Great Power that had fielded more than 500,000 regulars and militia during the war with Napoleon in 1809.

However, during the previous twenty years of continual warfare and the violent century that preceded it, the Habsburg Monarchy had developed crucial institutions that allowed it to

draw upon a font of manpower to rival any adversary. Facing threats from all corners, a powerful military force was a matter of life or death for the Habsburgs. For example, in 1740, the princes of the Holy Roman Empire bitterly contested the election of Maria Theresa's husband to the imperial throne, Frederick the Great claimed the province of Silesia, and the ensuing War of the Austrian Succession endangered the very existence of the Monarchy. A powerful army was a necessity to safeguard the state from external threats, but raising such a force required not only control over manpower, but money as well. These sinews of war could not be secured without increased centralized control over the population and society. Designed to secure these sinews of war, the reforms of Maria Theresa and Joseph II represented a significant increase in government power.<sup>8</sup> Not only did the provincial estates, representative institutions of medieval heritage, essentially relinquish their power to the central state during the reign of Maria Theresa, but the first comprehensive census as carried out by the state was the work of the army in 1770. This census not only counted people, but also numbered houses and tracked draft animals suitable for military service; knowing the number of men and horses available and their location was critical to the new system of cantonal conscription.<sup>9</sup> By establishing more effective knowledge of their dominions and the resources at their disposal, the Habsburgs would more effectively marshal the latent strength of their realm for war.

The military institutions of the Austrian empire bear extended comment. The regular army was based on territorial recruitment, each line regiment having a military district from which it could conscript the necessary manpower. As such, the military establishment adapted as territories changed hands during the wars with France. The empire as a whole had two main

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Hochedlinger, *Austria's Wars of Emergence, 1683-1797*, "Chapter 12."

<sup>9</sup> See Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History*, .

subdivisions: the ‘Hereditary Lands’ and the ‘Lands of the Crown of St. Stephen.’ The latter primarily encompassed the Kingdom of Hungary, which incorporated many non-Hungarian territories such as Croatia and Transylvania. Hungary was constitutionally separate from the rest of the empire—a situation that manifested in many peculiarities. The Hungarian nobility insisted on exemption from and control over taxation, recruitment, and supply in Hungarian lands. As a result of Hungarian constitutionalism, the lands’ financial and military burden typically lagged behind that of the Austrians, as inflation and population growth outpaced requirements. As such, Hungarian lands yielded less than one-third their proportional share in July 1813, raising one-third fewer men than Bohemia, a region with three-eighths the population.<sup>10</sup> Regiments recruited in Hungary were also structured differently than the ‘German’ regiments raised elsewhere in the monarchy. As of 1809, each of the forty-six ‘German’ regiments in the standing army consisted of two field battalions, one garrison battalion, two depot companies, and two companies of grenadiers. Each field battalion contained six companies of 180 men while the garrison battalion had four companies in peace and six in war. The fifteen ‘Hungarian’ regiments mustered 200 men per company. Conscription was not implemented in Hungary, which continued to raise men through the old system through recruiting parties and bounties.<sup>11</sup> The seventeen *Grenzer* regiments constituted one of Austria’s unique military institutions, wherein communities along the Military Border with the Ottoman Empire received land grants in exchange for universal liability to military service.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, each German infantry regiment had two reserve battalions, led by officers detached from the regiment and composed of men whose conscription

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<sup>10</sup> Wilhelm Wlaschütz, *Österreichs entscheidendes Machtaufgebot 1813*, Volume II of *Befreiungskriege 1813 und 1814* (Vienna: Siedel und Sohn, 1813), 117.

<sup>11</sup> Gunther Rothenberg, *Napoleon’s Great Adversaries: The Archduke Charles and the Austrian Army, 1792-1814* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 109

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 18, 24.

had been deferred. The reservists drilled for four weeks their first year of service, and three weeks in subsequent years, and although they were technically furloughed soldiers, they were treated as civilians in daily life.<sup>13</sup> The Monarchy's thirty-five cavalry regiments were organized into regiments of two to four divisions, each division comprising two squadrons.<sup>14</sup>

Additionally, the Austrians organized a popular force, the Landwehr, beginning in 1808. Participation in the militia was universal and compulsory for all men in the Hereditary Lands subject to military service not already in the regular army or the reserve battalions. The institution of the Landwehr represented a shift in the character of the Habsburg state, however incremental. Clausewitz, one of the most insightful observers of this transformative period in the history of warfare and the world, identified the participation of the people in affairs of war and statecraft as the defining change provided by the era of the French Revolution. In France most of all, this took the form of vast citizen armies while in the Vendée, Calabria, Spain, and Tyrol, guerrilla uprisings saw the people making war on their own account.<sup>15</sup> As the leaders of a multinational empire, the premier statesmen of the Habsburg Monarchy were suspicious of attempts to fan national feeling, fearing it could deepen divisions between the many diverse peoples under their rule. Arming the people could undermine the classic monopoly of violence enjoyed by the modern state and exacerbate revolutionary unrest. However, even these fears bowed to military necessity, and 170 battalions of Landwehr were established.<sup>16</sup>

Austrian defeat in 1809 and the ensuing Treaty of Schönbrunn resulted in severe military reductions. Not only were standing forces limited to 150,000 men by the treaty, but the damage

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>15</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 592.

<sup>16</sup> Rothenberg, *Napoleon's Great Adversaries*, 119.

to state finances during the latest of a long series of lost wars was catastrophic. Hieronymus von Colloredo and Heinrich von Bellegarde, who served as presidents of the Imperial War Council to 1811 and 1814, respectively, oversaw the army budget as it fell from more than 250,000,000 florins in 1809 to a low of 47,000,000 in 1811. This was partially mitigated by deflation as paper money was redeemed for state bonds at a five to one rate. The loss of Polish, German, and Balkan territories removed the recruiting grounds for fourteen infantry regiments; between German, Hungarian, and Grenzer regiments, the total fell to fifty-three.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the Landwehr and its Hungarian counterpart, the *insurrectio*, were disbanded. Meeting the stipulations of the treaty without crippling the army represented a significant challenge. In general, the Austrians did everything they could to ensure the brunt of the reduction was borne by comparatively ‘unskilled’ enlisted men, rather than the trained and experienced officers crucial to battlefield leadership. In the field battalions of the German and Hungarian regiments, the number of fusiliers under arms was cut by two-thirds and one-half, respectively, to a total of sixty and one hundred men per company; the furloughed men remained on the regimental lists, but returned to civilian life.<sup>18</sup> They retained the most crucial personnel from the depot divisions as cadres, and with Landwehr obligations still codified in law, if not in practice, each regiment would have a fourth battalion comprised of these militiamen. Moreover, the cap on standing forces meant that the empire would have many men eligible for conscription who could not be taken in; these men were incorporated into the reserve battalions, receiving their annual training while remaining in circulation in the civilian economy.<sup>19</sup> The reduction had a target of 178,000 men; to comply with treaty obligations, the Austrians put just over 30,000 men on leave while

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<sup>17</sup> Rothenberg, *Napoleon's Great Adversaries*, 174.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

retaining the ability to recall them. In total, 259,000 men remained on the army's rolls following the reduction.<sup>20</sup>

Demobilization was one challenge, but planning for the renewed expansion of the army was another. Radetzky was one of Austria's foremost military minds during the nineteenth century. During the Napoleonic Wars, he served with distinction as a line officer and on the staffs of general officers. In 1809, he served as chief of staff for the main army after Archduke Charles departed and active operations ceased. His memoranda provide a wealth of information on military topics during the Napoleonic Wars. Writing in the aftermath of the 1809 Peace of Schönbrunn, he emphasized to the Kaiser that it was imperative to organize the reduction of the army so as to facilitate rapid expansion in the eventuality of war.<sup>21</sup> In specific terms, he stressed that branches of the army and personnel requiring longer instruction to become effective be retained as much as possible. The imperial administration would have to keep a close eye on personnel placed on leave, requiring them to notify the bureaucracy of changes in residence and occupation, and forbidding them from emigrating. In this way, a regiment cut to a much-reduced peace footing would have a ready source of manpower. Rather than retiring now-superfluous officers outright, they would be retained as supernumeraries on half pay. Like the men, they too would notify their regiments of any change in residence so they could be recalled in time of war.<sup>22</sup>

Radetzky was not the only officer forced to compensate for coerced army reductions. The experience of the Prussian military state and its methods of mobilization serve as an

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<sup>20</sup> Wlaschütz, *Österreichs entscheidendes Machtaufgebot 1813*, 4, 5.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Radetzky, *Denkschriften; militärisch-politischen Inhalts aus dem handschriftlichen Nachlass des k. k. österreichischen Feldmarschalls Grafen Radetzky* (Vienna: 1858), 8.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.



interesting point of comparison. Prussian military history and practice has been of great interest to Western observers since the Wars of German Unification, and even earlier during the Seven Years War. Many elements of it have become well known, such as Clausewitz's philosophy, the tradition of *Auftragstaktik*, and its general staff system. Its battery of reforms following the defeat of Jena are widely celebrated by military historians, as was its mobilization scheme. Limited to a paltry 42,000 men by the 1808 Treaty of Paris, the Prussians sought to circumvent this cap by furloughing five men from each infantry company every month and taking in as many new recruits. When Prussia declared war on France in 1813, these "*Krumper*" recruits formed Reserve Regiments attached to the Line Regiments of the regular army. Many writers have exaggerated the effectiveness of this system; while its usefulness cannot be denied, in numerical dimensions it was underwhelming. In total, roughly 36,000 men were trained this way, nearly doubling the strength of the Prussian army in Spring 1813.<sup>23</sup> However, this represented only a fraction of Prussia's manpower needs for the Wars of Liberation; their main utility for the decisive Fall Campaign was in their capacity as cadre for new recruits in reserve units, rather than in composing whole battalions of trained reservists. The bulk of Prussian forces in 1813 consisted of their own Landwehr, raised according to a new law of universal service. Each district formed its own committee, which nominated officers from the leading classes of the population at large. However, many of the most warlike among this population were siphoned off by the numerous self-equipped volunteer units, and the *Krumper* men were consumed in forming reserve regiments.<sup>24</sup> Considering Prussia's straits after 1807 were even more dire than

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<sup>23</sup> Michael V. Leggiere, *Napoleon and the Struggle for Germany: The Franco-Prussian War of 1813*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 1: 35.

<sup>24</sup> Dennis Showalter, "The Prussian Landwehr and its Critics, 1813-1819," *Central European History* 4, no. 1 (1971): 10-13.

Austria's after 1809, these troops gave good account of themselves in the Fall Campaign, but the highly extemporized mobilization produced imperfect results.

Austrian mobilization for the Fall Campaign of 1813 was a complex process, proceeding in fits and starts as military and diplomatic fortunes of all the combatants swung back and forth. Yet, in the broadest sense, it began even before Napoleon's misfortune in Russia. While officially remaining neutral in the war between France and Russia, Austria was bound by treaty of alliance to provide one corps for Napoleon's *Grande Armée*. Dubbed the Auxiliary Corps, it fought on the extreme southern wing of the invasion, participating in several engagements with the Russians. Crucially, this corps was considered outside the treaty-imposed limitations on the Austrian army; Vienna was allowed to exceed the 150,000-man treaty limitation only by providing the Auxiliary Corps. Its organization was the subject of discussion between Napoleon and Metternich. Napoleon observed that rather than organizing the corps around five or six regiments, which with four battalions each would have sufficed for the required contribution, the corps had the cadres of twenty regiments. Metternich replied that the Austrian army was mostly cadres at that point, but this organization allowed the Austrians to quickly bring the thirty-two field battalions of twenty regiments up to full strength.<sup>25</sup>

In the winter and spring of 1813, it became clear Austria would need a major army. Following the destruction of Napoleon's *Grande Armée* in Russia, he faced yet another European coalition, consisting of Russia, Great Britain, and a resurgent Prussia. In this strategic context, amassing a strong army would give Austria crucial leverage. After defeat in 1809 forced Vienna to subordinate its foreign policy to Napoleon, the newfound parity between the French emperor

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<sup>25</sup> C. L. W. Metternich, *Memoirs of Prince Metternich, 1773–1815*, ed. R. Metternich, Trans. A. Napier (New York, 1970), 1: 154-155.

and his enemies in 1813 opened a window of opportunity for Austria to play peace broker, with restored political independence their asking price. However, this role would require substantial forces to lend weight to their words in diplomacy. If nothing else, the vast armies clashing north of the Bohemian mountains in Spring 1813 made it prudent to ensure the territorial integrity of the empire by expanding the army.

Austria rebuilt its army one corps at a time. First, a corps of observation was formed in Galicia in March 1812 during Napoleon's buildup for the invasion of Russia. This became the Auxiliary Corps. It consisted of 24,000 infantry, 6,000 cavalry, and 96 guns. As the Auxiliary Corps prepared to depart for Russia, the Austrians replaced it by forming a Reserve Corps in Galicia in April 1812. This corps had a strength of 24,000 infantry and 4,000 cavalry. The Reserve Corps received as reinforcements nine battalions and fourteen squadrons from Bukowina in the southeast, which mobilized an additional four battalions and six squadrons to compensate for the transfer. Thus, by the end of 1812, the Austrian army was roughly 200,000 strong, of which about 75,000 were part of mobile field formations, the Auxiliary and Reserve Corps being the strongest. This would be insufficient for the role of armed mediator Austria wished to play in 1813. To strengthen Vienna's hand, the army first brought the formations in the Auxiliary and Reserve Corps to full wartime strength. Next, the Austrians established another corps of observation in Bohemia in February 1813 with a complement of 27,000 infantry and 5,000 cavalry. As the corps of observation formed around the first two battalions of its infantry and first two divisions of its cavalry regiments, the third battalions and third and fourth divisions were brought from cadre status to peace footing.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Oskar Criste, *Österreichs Beitritt zur Koalition*, Volume I of *Befreiungskriege 1813 und 1814* (Vienna: Seidel und Sohn, 1913), 31-35.

Radetzky was the chief strategic planner for much of the 1813 campaign, and his collected writings from this time offer considerable insight into the process of mustering a powerful army. He took it as a given that Napoleon would not accept moderate peace terms, and centered his initial planning around countering a thrust by the French into Bohemia with at least 100,000 men. Radetzky believed that a minimum of 120,000 men should be disposed along the Bohemian frontier in eighty battalions and ninety-eight squadrons; he provided a breakdown of available formations as of 9 May 1813. The two largest units in the vicinity were Schwarzenberg's Auxiliary Corps that had invaded Russia alongside Napoleon's Grande Armée and the still-forming corps of observation in Bohemia that had been ordered after the French retreated into Germany. They were joined by the Reserve Corps from Galicia and fourteen newly raised battalions and four new squadrons from Moravia; all told, seventy-six battalions and eighty-six squadrons. However, Radetzky believed this was not enough, reaching only 87,000 and well short of the desired minimum.<sup>27</sup> Allowing for detachments and the sick list, effective strength for the army in Bohemia was roughly 77,000 men.<sup>28</sup> To reach the 120,000 men he considered necessary for the defense of the Austrian monarchy, he similarly drew up redeployments of standing formations on 9 May 1813, scraping together as many regular army battalions and squadrons as possible, including an infantry division and cavalry brigade from the former Auxiliary Corps, newly equipped Moravian troops originally assigned to Galicia, a division due to arrive in Galicia on 21 May, and the cavalry regiments of Moriz Liechtenstein and the Schwarzenberg Uhlans. Together, these reinforcements for the army in Bohemia amounted to 33,000 men, bringing its strength to 120,000, at least nominally.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Radetzky, *Denkschriften*, 94.

<sup>28</sup> Criste, *Österreichs Beitritt zur Koalition*, 105.

<sup>29</sup> Radetzky, *Denkschriften*, 95.

Radetzky believed time was of the essence, as Austria's preparations for war could not be long concealed.<sup>30</sup> Ultimately, the field forces of the standing army proved insufficient to meet Austria's security needs. As a result, the army needed to fully mobilize.<sup>31</sup> Beyond the third battalions still at cadre strength, Radetzky continued to recommend the mobilization of the regiments' reserve battalions, and in one instance the covert mobilization of the *Landwehr* under the guise of a large-scale training exercise.<sup>32</sup> At first, Austria's most prominent statesmen, Metternich and Schwarzenberg included, refused to sanction full mobilization, citing the difficulties in materiel shortages and the possibility of a diplomatic solution. Before long, however, the necessity of mobilization could no longer be denied, and reservists were called up on 22 June. At the beginning of July, more than 50,000 *Landwehr* were called to arms.<sup>33</sup> The Austrians integrated the *Landwehr* more closely into the army structure than they had in 1809, when the militia fought in newly formed independent battalions rather than as part of existing regiments. Every German regiment established two *Landwehr* battalions, one active and one inactive. The battalion commander in the *Landwehr* was completely subordinate to the colonel of the regiment. While most *Landwehr* officers were retirees from the regular army, many subaltern positions in the *Landwehr* and line infantry alike were filled by men of the leading classes directly from civilian life.<sup>34</sup> The Kaiser ordered further mobilization of the *Landwehr* on 12 July, stating that all first *Landwehr* battalions and third battalions not essential in the interior should be deployed forward to join their regiments. The order also instructed the army to raise

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>33</sup> Rudolf Friedrich, *Gesichte des Herbstfeldzuges 1813* (Berlin: E.S. Mittler und Sohn, 1906), 1: 55.

<sup>34</sup> Wlaschütz, *Österreichs entscheidendes Machtaufgebot 1813*, 84-45

as many Landwehr battalions in the German and Galician provinces as the population allowed. At the end of August, the Kaiser furthermore ordered that a second Landwehr battalion of 500 men be raised for each regiment to fulfill occupation duties left vacant by the first Landwehr battalions fighting in the field formations.<sup>35</sup>

According to Radetzky's plan of mobilization, the cadre third battalions would be brought up to field strength and deployed forward.<sup>36</sup> In their place, the reserve battalions would serve as depots in their home military districts to take in new conscripts, using supernumeraries and pensioned officers to provide experienced leadership for the new soldiers. In this way, a regiment of German infantry cut to roughly 720 men by Schönbrunn's stipulations could expand to several thousand men in six battalions without requiring large numbers of new officers. As a rule, increasing the number of battalions in a regiment was more efficient than increasing the number of regiments. Not only did this reduce the need to form new regimental headquarters, but at least in French experience, it also ensured that the parent regiment gave the new battalion a quality cadre, rather than offloading deadwood.<sup>37</sup> The supernumeraries retained after the army reduction meant that few new officers were needed during the partial mobilization until the end of April.<sup>38</sup> Thus, the decision to retain as many regiments as the monarchy's territory allowed was furthermore crucial in facilitating the army's mobilization.

The Austrians knew that they would not be able to contain the struggle with France to the plains of Saxony and the wooded mountains of Bohemia. In addition to the large contingent devoted to the main army, the Austrians would need to maintain a strong force on the Middle

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<sup>35</sup> Criste, *Österreichs Beitritt*, 100.

<sup>36</sup> Radetzky, *Dekskriften*, 100.

<sup>37</sup> John R. Elting, *Swords around a Throne: Napoleon's Grande Armee*, Kindle edition, "Chapter X: Poor Bloody Infantry."

<sup>38</sup> Wlaschütz, *Österreichs entscheidendes Machtaufgebot 1813*, 187.

Danube. This force would serve a variety of ends. It would both protect Vienna from a sudden thrust and make a strong impression on Bavaria, a key French satellite in Germany. Following repeated defeats at the hands of the French, Austria had ceded considerable territory to Bavaria, making them a significant threat. Additionally, the army on the Danube would protect the strategic flank of the Bohemian army and hopefully draw off reinforcements from Napoleon's main army in Germany. It also had the function of preventing a juncture between adjacent enemy forces; Radetzky expected to face roughly 30,000 Italians south of the Alps, 25,000 Bavarians in the vicinity of Munich, and 40,000 men under Marshal Pierre Augereau in Franconia. He estimated that fifteen regiments, ten grenadier battalions, and thirty-six cavalry squadrons with suitable artillery support would be necessary to secure the Austrian capital and the rear of the main army in Bohemia; in total, 40,000 additional men would have to be raised. This army would be deployed behind the River Enns, north of Steyr in Upper Austria.<sup>39</sup>

The Austrians furthermore decided to raise yet another major army for action against Napoleon and his empire. Vienna had long maintained significant interests in Italy, and with Frenchmen in ever-shorter supply, the Napoleonic kingdoms of Italy and Naples were crucial sources of manpower for the emperor's armies. As such, additional tens of thousands of men would need to be mobilized for action in another theater. Here, the system of depots divisions, reserves, and popular militia demonstrated their importance once again. Radetzky anticipated an initial offensive by Eugene Beauharnais, Napoleon's stepson and Viceroy of the Kingdom of Italy, through Villach in the Julian Alps into Styria. He planned to defend against this thrust while also detaching a small corps to advance into Dalmatia, where the local Grenzer regiments had been transferred to French service when the province was ceded in 1809. There, the

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<sup>39</sup> Radetzky, *Denkschriften*, 110.

Austrians would retake possession of these regiments and augment their force for a counteroffensive. This augmentation would provide the manpower necessary to carry them into more lands ceded in 1809, where they planned to reincorporate regiments disbanded by loss of their military districts. Each of the six Grenzer regiments would assemble at least one battalion at Karlstadt, and reserve battalions would be assembled without delay. In the meantime, Radetzky recommended the mobilization of the Landwehr and the organization of the militia to augment local defensive efforts.<sup>40</sup> He again the importance of the third battalions is emphasized in his war plan memorandum, assigning them to garrisons in Josephstadt, Königgrätz, and Theresienstadt; whatever manpower they lacked for this purpose would be made up from the Landwehr.<sup>41</sup> By completing the cadre third battalions and cavalry divisions, the Austrians incorporated another 53,000 infantry and 7,000 cavalry into their armies for the decisive campaign of 1813.<sup>42</sup> In total, the Austrians raised 298,000 men in fully mobilized formations by August 1813, of which 245,000 were field troops.<sup>43</sup>

Throughout the summer of 1813, the combatants' arms stood silent during the armistice. While the Austrians attempted to mediate peace, they also collaborated with the Allies to ensure they would enter the war at the moment of greatest possible advantage. After it became clear Napoleon would not accept peace on grounds acceptable to Vienna and the Allies, the Austrians delayed the renewed onset of the war by extending the armistice so they could continue their mobilization and planning. Metternich had written to Schwarzenberg, asking if an extension would be more useful to Austria than to France, and how long of an extension would be

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>42</sup> Criste, *Österreichs Beitritt*, 65.

<sup>43</sup> Wlaschütz, *Österreichs entscheidendes Machtaufgebot 1813*, 313.



necessary. Schwarzenberg responded that twenty days would allow Austria to mobilize tens of thousands of additional men for the army.<sup>44</sup>

At this stage, the peace proposals heard at Dresden on 5 July were not very serious; Napoleon did not attend the diplomatic conference in person, and did not accept its stipulations that would have neutralized his empire in central Europe.<sup>45</sup> The interests of the burgeoning Coalition, with Austria waiting in the wings, were fundamentally contrary to Napoleon's. However, as a ploy to extend the armistice and facilitate further mobilization, the conference was a success, as the end date was postponed from 20 July to 10 August, with an additional six day window at the end before true resumption of hostilities. Indeed, the end of July and the beginning of August saw a net of 60,000 men transition from partially ready units to mobile formations.<sup>46</sup> At the beginning of the campaign in Saxony, Austria entered the lists with nearly 130,000 men in the Bohemian Army alone.

Austria's military mobilization was one of the key factors in shaping the War of the Sixth Coalition and Napoleon's downfall. Contemporaries remarked on the great importance of Austria's rearmament. General Robert Thomas Wilson, a British military attaché at the Russian court, provides an eyewitness account of many of the highest diplomatic dealings of the war. During the Allied advance in the spring of 1813, he spoke with the Prussian king, who was disappointed by Austria's neutrality to that point, believing it unworthy of the empire's military reputation. While the king's professed commitment to the common cause impressed Wilson, he

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<sup>44</sup> Metternich, *Memoirs*, 194. Theodor Franz Baillet de Latour, who served as a distinguished officer in line commands and on the Quartermaster-General staff, reports in his memoirs that by mid-July, Austrian war preparations were still not complete; particularly, the provisioning of men in the *Landwehr* with uniforms was proceeding slowly. Theodor Franz von Baillet de Latour, *Erinnerungen an den k. k. Feldzeugmeister und Kriegsminister Theodor Grafen Baillet von Latour*, (Graz: 1849), 114.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>46</sup> Wlaschütz, *Österreichs entscheidendes Machtaufgebot 1813*, 312-313.

expressed concern that Prussia as a whole lacked the same steadiness, and that Russia lacked the power to meet the occasion. He emphasized the importance of Austria, preaching, “It is Austria – Austria! – which holds the balance, and it is to Austria that we should direct all our thoughts, whilst we afford sufficient succor to Prussia to keep her vessel afloat.”<sup>47</sup>

The manpower resources of the Austrian monarchy gave Vienna considerable sway in directing a war that it was slow to join. Whereas Russia and Prussia would have seen Napoleon dethroned, believing him to be an existential threat to peace in Europe, Metternich saw Napoleon as a useful guarantor of French internal stability. After he replaced the warlike Stadion as Chancellor in 1809, Metternich had pursued a policy of *détente* with Napoleon, even arranging a marriage between the French emperor and the Kaiser’s favorite daughter, Marie-Louise; her child was heir to the French imperial throne. As such, the Austrians strove to retain the Bonapartist throne, despite their allies’ second thoughts. Their case was aided by Napoleon’s resurgence. Despite the catastrophic failure of the Russian campaign, Napoleon quickly rebuilt his army. In May 1813, he struck back, defeating the combined armies of the Russians and Prussians at Lützen and again at Bautzen; they were fortunate when on 4 June Napoleon proposed an armistice, ostensibly to facilitate a peace congress in neutral Prague.

Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Austria reformed its military institutions, allowing the monarchy to access a vast pool of manpower. This organizational evolution reflected change in the nature of the Austrian state and its relationship to its subjects. The demands of war drove the modernization of the Habsburg bureaucracy, allowing it to raise large forces under adverse conditions. Because Austria had mobilized a large and powerful army

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<sup>47</sup> Robert Thomas Wilson, *Private Diary of Travels, Personal Services, and Public Events: During the Mission Employed with the European Armies in the Campaigns of 1812, 1813, 1814*, (London: John Murray, 1861), 318.

and husbanded that strength for the right time, Vienna's Allies had to defer to Austrian political objectives. Metternich archly summarized his monarch's importance in the Coalition, stating to Schwarzenberg, "the power that places 300,000 men in the field is the first power, the others are auxiliaries."<sup>48</sup> As a result, Metternich defined the Allies' war aims, Schwarzenberg led the main army, and Radetzky drafted the Allied war plan. With such a powerful army having been raised, developing a sound plan of operations was crucial to ensure its efforts would not be misapplied, as had happened all too often for Austria in this period of dramatic military change. Thankfully for the Austrians, Radetzky's planning was based in sound strategy, seeking decisive superiority over the French to destroy their main force.

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<sup>48</sup> Oscar Regele, *Feldmarschall Radetzky, Leben, Leistung, Erbe* (Vienna—Munich, Verlag Herold, 1957), 118.

## CHAPTER III

### STRATEGY

One of the most important aspects of the Wars of Napoleon is that the period witnessed radical changes in the art of war despite only incremental changes in technology. As a highly materialistic society consumed with constant technological change, we expect new tools and new weapons to be the chief drivers of military change. Accusing historical commanders of attempting to ‘fight the last war’ is a cliché in popular military literature, especially in eras defined by radical changes in the art of war. As such, the Austrians of the Napoleonic Wars have the dubious distinction of standing alongside the French of 1940 as military relics. While the Austrians did not push the envelope of military innovation like the Revolutionary French did, historians go too far when they accuse the Austrians of waging an eighteenth-century war against a modern army. This chapter is not a comprehensive account of the 1813 Fall Campaign in the War of the Sixth Coalition, but it demonstrates the basic modernity of Austria’s strategic approach. Through great exertions, Austria raised a mighty army in 1813, but without a strategically sound war plan, all could have come to naught against a battle-emperor of Napoleon’s caliber. The strength of Austrian forces and the timing of their joining the Coalition gave Austria the diplomatic clout to construct the Allied war plan. This plan would lay the foundation of Allied victory at Leipzig and the destruction of the French empire.

While a substantial body of literature discusses the Fall Campaign of 1813, it lacks the sheer scope of Waterloo’s Anglophone historiography. A WorldCat search for “Waterloo, Battle of, Belgium, 1815” returned more than 3600 books, while the equivalent search for Leipzig returned a comparatively paltry 384. The relative dearth of published accounts of the Fall Campaign of 1813 is disappointing. More than any other, the Leipzig campaign determined the

fate of Europe in the Napoleonic Wars. At the beginning of the Fall Campaign, Napoleon appeared as invincible as ever. Following the Russian catastrophe in 1812, he rebounded with force in the Spring of 1813, driving the resurgent Prussian and Russian armies 200 miles back from the Elbe to the Oder River in less than three weeks. While French rule in Iberia gradually receded, and the Russians occupied the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, the core of Napoleon's empire in France, Germany, and Italy remained secure. Drawing on these immense resources, he rebuilt his army, which in the Fall of 1813 had swelled to perhaps 700,000 men.

Throughout the Napoleonic Wars, an undercurrent of tension ensued between the tested way of war of the eighteenth century and the new paradigm of the French Revolution. After the wars concluded, military thinkers attempted to mend this tremendous rupture in military history, arguing that Napoleon and the French Republic before him simply practiced the same art of war better than their enemies. Theodore Ayrault Dodge believed in the timeless principles of war as revealed by the 'Great Captains,' and Paddy Griffith expounded the view that armies of the French Revolution merely perfected the 'best practices' of a way of war that remained operative through the American Civil War.

Yorck von Wartenburg was a Prussian colonel and military historian. His book, *Napoleon as a General*, examines Napoleon's campaigns in an attempt to distill the essence of his art of war. From the pages emerges an unstated tension between Napoleon's belief in universal military principles and the transformation in warfare that occurred during the Revolutionary Wars. Wartenburg presents the campaign of 1796 in Italy as the birth of the modern system of strategy, while also positing crucial commonalities between Napoleon and Frederick the Great. Admitting that Frederick was the greatest practitioner of the eighteenth-century strategic system that had become obsolete, Wartenburg nonetheless concludes that the

essence of his generalship, the resolute pursuit of decision, anticipated the Wars of Napoleon.<sup>49</sup>

In the final stage of his intellectual evolution, Clausewitz concluded that the Napoleonic Wars were fundamentally different from most of their predecessors. In his formulation, war possessed a dual nature. A vast gulf separated the diplomatic type of war, in which princes fought battles and took fortresses to strengthen their hands for negotiation, compared to the remorseless struggle to destroy the forces of the enemy and render him politically and militarily helpless.<sup>50</sup> Whereas the political and social conditions in Europe of the Old Regime made the latter form of war difficult to realize, the development of new relationships between state and citizen as well as extensive changes in the applied art of war made the latter form a greater possibility than ever before. Clausewitz describes the latter form of war as more unified and interconnected. In a war to leave the enemy utterly helpless, all hinges on the great decision by arms, and all efforts not devoted to this overriding necessity are at best necessary evils. Occupying territory and fortresses has no inherent value before the battle is fought; the destruction of the enemy force allows one to occupy them at leisure, and they cannot be held if one's own force is destroyed. However, in more limited conflicts, in which aims are more modest and emotion less excited, strategic positions can hold great value. They can be used as bargaining chips to trade for one's objectives if the enemy is willing to negotiate.<sup>51</sup> Most wars throughout history were of the diplomatic type, but the social and military changes of the French Revolution refocused war on the destruction of the enemy.

Frederick and Napoleon represented dichotomous faces of war in Clausewitz's theory.

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<sup>49</sup> Hans Ludwig David Maximilian Graf Yorck von Wartenburg, *Napoleon as a General*, ed. Walter H. James, (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1902), 1: 120.

<sup>50</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 69.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

Frederick took refuge in the inherent strength of the strategic defense to outlast the vast superiority of his enemies, contenting himself with frustrating his enemies' designs. Exemplifying most wars of the eighteenth century, his were fought for territory and the revenue it brings. His was a war of position, holding strategically important territories and trading them for favorable peace settlements. In 1762, after seven years of campaigning, he occupied part of Saxony while the Austrians occupied the County of Glatz in Silesia. Both still had strong armies in the field. Thus, in the Peace of Hubertusburg, Frederick was able to 'trade' occupied Saxony for Glatz and fulfill his limited objective.<sup>52</sup> By contrast, Napoleon exemplified the superior efficacy of the successful offensive, leveraging his destruction of the enemy's forces to have his way with the vanquished. Typically, this meant forcing the state to subordinate its foreign policy to France, rather than outright conquest and annexation, but such an objective was not practical against a great power if its army could not be annihilated in battle. He did not make war without maps, as he accused Joachim Murat of attempting, but positions and territory held no inherent value in this new way of war. Clausewitz does not argue against the existence of universal principles for war, or that either form of war is necessarily superior, but that each form needs to be judged by its own standards and whether or not it fits the situation.<sup>53</sup>

Clausewitz observed that the most important act of judgement a strategist must make is to determine the kind of war he is undertaking; this formed the basis for all further decisions.<sup>54</sup> In 1813, Austrian objectives were ultimately limited ones, aimed at establishing a durable peace based upon a just balance of power in Continental Europe, rather than seeking to topple

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<sup>52</sup> Christopher Duffy, *Frederick the Great: A Military Life* (London: Routledge, 1985), 241-242.

<sup>53</sup> See also Hans Delbruck, *History of the Art of War within the Framework of Political History*, trans. Walter J. Renfoe (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985), 4: 421-423.

<sup>54</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 88-89.

Napoleon and prostrate France. More immediately, the Austrians sought to regain territories lost in previous wars with France. Viewed in this context, a strategy of exhaustion is in theory a valid approach. In such a strategy, reducing the enemy's probability of success or increasing the cost of waging war can take the place of the destruction of their forces.<sup>55</sup> However, if the enemy attempts to employ a strategy of annihilation, it typically demands a like response, since wasting resources on other projects risks destruction if the enemy succeeds in bringing about a general engagement.<sup>56</sup>

Archduke Charles was one of the most successful generals in Austrian history and an influential reformer of the army, but he remained wedded to the strategy of exhaustion which had served well in the limited wars of the eighteenth century. His thought was inundated with the geometric concepts of strategic lines and geographic points, rather than battle and destruction, which resulted in often disappointing results against the French. As Clausewitz observed,

[W]hile his judgement is otherwise sound, he has in the main a completely false idea of strategy. He takes the means for the purpose, and the purpose for the means. In war everything should be done to bring about the destruction of the enemy's forces; but destruction does not exist as a separate task in his range of concepts; he accepts it only insofar as it is also a means of driving the enemy from this or that position. To him success is solely the occupation of certain positions and areas; but these cannot ever be anything but a means for achieving victory—that is, for destroying the physical and moral strength of the enemy. We can recognize how far the archduke pursues this false course from the fact that in his victorious battles his opponents never suffer a significant loss of prisoners and guns ... but we can recognize it even more clearly in the failure of the archduke's accounts to mention enemy casualties in any battle at all.<sup>57</sup>

As such, the Austrian development of a strategy of annihilation shows a new recognition of the

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 91-93.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>57</sup> Clausewitz, *Die Feldzüge von 1799 in Italien und der Schweiz*, in *Hinterlassene Werke des Generals Carl von Clausewitz über Krieg und Kriegführung* (Berlin: F. Dümmler, 1832-1837) 5: 152-153. In Peter Paret, *Clausewitz and the State: The Man, His Theories, and His Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 334-335. As explained above, Clausewitz would later modify his views as to the necessity of destroying the enemy's forces, but his characterization of Charles's strategic views is not unjustified.



‘annihilation principle.’ “Destruction of the enemy forces is always the superior, more effective means,” concludes Clausewitz, “with which others cannot compete.”<sup>58</sup> Facing Napoleon in 1813, Radetzky recognized his enemy would certainly attempt a strategy of annihilation and prepared the Austrian war plan with the destruction of the enemy army as the foundational principle.

The benefit of hindsight is a two-edged sword for historians. While knowing end effects aids in tracing their causes, it can blind the careless to the way historical actors perceived events. To Metternich or Francis or Schwarzenberg, the Napoleonic Wars did not steadily and inevitably progress toward a single known conclusion, but rather each day offered a myriad of possibilities, of which only a few were realized and became the history we know today. Today we know that the War of the Sixth Coalition resulted in the utter downfall of Napoleon and the destruction of his European empire, but such an eventuality seemed neither likely nor necessarily desirable to the Austrian statesmen of 1813 and 1814.

In Plato’s dialogue, *Laws*, Clinias remarks that all states are perpetually at war with one another, regardless of the declarations of the heralds, and that what men call peace is merely an empty word. While history has certainly seen no shortage of outright warfare, the implication is that whether or not states are directly bearing arms against each other, they are always engaged in a zero-sum competition for power. Erstwhile allies are no exception. The foundation of the international system of the eighteenth century that endured throughout the French Wars was that of the balance of power. Rather than bonds of fellowship, ideology, or moral purpose shared between states, self-interest governed international relations and alliances. While Austria joined the Sixth Coalition against Napoleon, this did not suspend the eternal political struggle between

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<sup>58</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 97.

states, and so Metternich remained wary of his new allies.

Austria's defeat in the War of the Fifth Coalition led to the harsh peace of Schönbrunn on 14 October 1809, which forced Vienna to surrender its independent foreign policy, pay a considerable indemnity, and cede wide swaths of territory with millions of subjects. Furthermore, the treaty imposed a limitation of 150,000 on Austrian standing forces for ten years. Napoleon wed the Archduchess Marie Louise in 1810, the daughter of Emperor Francis I, thus facilitating greater Austrian integration into the French imperium. On 20 March 1811, Marie Louise bore him a son, Napoléon François Joseph Charles Bonaparte, Prince Imperial, and King of Rome. One year later on 24 March, a treaty of alliance bound Austria to France. As a result, the Austrians contributed an auxiliary corps commanded by Schwarzenberg to Napoleon's invasion of Russia later that year. Schwarzenberg would earn his field marshal's baton during the campaign at Napoleon's recommendation.

The dramatic miscarriage of Napoleon's Russian campaign appeared to offer a window of opportunity to curtail French hegemony. Metternich and Schwarzenberg engineered Austria's withdrawal from the French alliance. Corresponding with Metternich as well as the Russians, Schwarzenberg arranged a series of maneuvers that left his corps in a dangerous position near the Austrian frontier with Napoleon's Grand Duchy of Warsaw. Prince Alexei Scherbatov, the Russian commander opposing Schwarzenberg, purposefully transferred his line of advance, redirecting it from Schwarzenberg's southern flank to his northern flank. This change split the Austrian corps from the rest of the Imperial armies and pushed it against Austrian Galicia. By allowing himself to be "cut off" from the remains of the Grande Armée, Schwarzenberg found himself "forced" to sign a convention with the Russians on 30 January that neutralized his corps. Napoleon consented to Austrian neutrality to save the corps, intending it for future use as he

believed that Austria would remain his ally after the Russian debacle.<sup>59</sup>

Unlike the Austrian Kaiser who married off his daughter to gain a reprieve from Napoleon's heavy hand, King Frederick William III of Prussia maintained the precarious position he found himself in after the 1807 Peace of Tilsit dramatically reduced the foundations of Prussian power. Like the Austrians, the Prussians also provided an auxiliary corps for Napoleon's use during the invasion of Russia. Despite the destruction of Imperial forces in Russia, Frederick William hesitated to challenge Napoleon. However, the army forced his hand after General Ludwig Yorck von Wartenburg declared his corps's neutrality after signing the 30 December Convention of Tauroggen with the Russians. Moreover, on 7 February 1813, the East Prussian provincial estates called for a war of national liberation against the French.<sup>60</sup> In March, the Prussians made common cause with the Russians to form the Sixth Coalition. London soon committed tons of war materiel and much needed financial support before officially joining the alliance in June through the signing of formal subsidy treaties.

Steeled by the searing experience of the 1812 campaign, Tsar Alexander envisaged the war in 1813 as a crusade to overthrow a godless tyrant, avenge Moscow, and establish a new order in Europe. Despite the tsar's designs, Austria's leading statesmen were more pragmatic. The Russo-Prussian alliance focused on driving Napoleon from central Europe. Expansion of Russia in Poland and Prussia in Germany would be their reward but this held little appeal for Austria. In particular, Metternich wished to preserve a powerful France to counterbalance Russia. He recognized that geography intensified Austria's need for international balance. Whereas France and Russia enjoyed single and secure frontiers against the other great powers —

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<sup>59</sup> Henry Kissinger, *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh, and the Problems of Peace, 1812–1822* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964), 45-46.

<sup>60</sup> Leggiere, *Napoleon and the Struggle for Germany*, 1: 81.

the well-fortified Rhine in the West and the Nieman in the East — Austria was vulnerable from three directions, as was Prussia. For such powers, balance and repose amongst states were crucial.<sup>61</sup> While the prodigious expansion of French power since the Revolution had threatened Austria, so too would Russian expansion in Eastern Europe.<sup>62</sup>

Napoleon himself occupied a distinct and paradoxical place in Metternich's thinking. Metternich had no doubt that Napoleon's European conquests had nearly destroyed the equilibrium of international politics. Yet Napoleon had succeeded in restoring domestic order to France after a decade of tumultuous social revolution. Viewing domestic turmoil in France during the Revolution as the ultimate cause of French expansionism, Metternich sought to maintain Napoleon as the guarantor of French domestic stability while limiting his ability to disrupt the international order. Ultimately, however, this was a policy of contradiction in Henry Kissinger's judgement, as the very determination that made Napoleon the stable lawgiver in France made him the implacable warlord abroad.<sup>63</sup> Yet Metternich professed to believe that Napoleon's domestic situation was precarious enough to make peace a true possibility, as the faction of revolutionaries led by Charles Maurice de Talleyrand and Joseph Fouché allegedly felt their positions in France threatened by Napoleon's foreign engagements, and the army was not confident in bringing the war to a successful conclusion.<sup>64</sup>

Even after the disastrous Russian campaign, Napoleon's dramatic victories in the spring of 1813 gave little indication that deposing him was a real possibility. The total destruction of

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<sup>61</sup> Kissinger, *A World Restored*, 59.

<sup>62</sup> Gordon Craig, "The Problems of Coalition Warfare: The Military Alliance against Napoleon, 1813-1814," US Air Force Academy Harmon Memorial Lecture #7, 1965, <https://www.usafa.edu/app/uploads/Harmon07.pdf>.

<sup>63</sup> Kissinger, *A World Restored*, 110.

<sup>64</sup> Clemens von Metternich, *Memoirs of Prince Metternich, 1773–1815*, ed. R. Metternich, trans. A. Napier (New York: Howard Fertig, 1970), 1: 184.

his army in Russia failed to disarm him, and a new army sprung up, as if from the dragon's teeth sown into the earth by Cadmus in the *Argonautica*. After defeating the Prussians and Russians at Lützen on 2 May, he chased them to the Elbe, where Michel Ney crossed at Torgau to turn their position at Dresden from the north with 85,000 men, almost half of Napoleon's 200,000 Imperials. After his quarry slipped away, Napoleon pursued them to Bautzen across the Spree in Lusatia, where Ney's army enveloped the Allied right, forcing them to retreat again. Following these victories, Napoleon approached the Allies with an offer of an armistice, to which they agreed; armies of the French Empire would remain in Lower Silesia and the Allies in Upper Silesia, separated by a neutral zone.<sup>65</sup>

Metternich's peace proposal during the summer armistice was relatively mild considering the disasters that had recently befallen France and the power the Austrians could lend the hostile coalition if their demands were not met. Not only would Napoleon remain on the French throne, but he also would retain parts of his Italian empire. The minimum terms Metternich brought to Napoleon stipulated the partition of the Duchy of Warsaw, the return of Austria's old Illyrian territories with 'a good frontier in Italy,' surrender of French territories beyond the Rhine, and the end of the Confederation of the Rhine.<sup>66</sup> Buoyed by his victory at the battle of Bautzen, Napoleon angrily rebuked Metternich's offer when they met at Dresden. Only by dropping his initial demands did Metternich persuade Napoleon to participate in a 5 July peace conference at Prague, and even then Napoleon displayed contempt for the proceedings, his envoy, Armand-Augustin-Louis de Caulaincourt, arriving only on 28 July.<sup>67</sup> Schwarzenberg confided to his wife on 22 July, noting this display of bad faith. In his opinion, every day Caulaincourt did not

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<sup>65</sup> Leggiere, *Napoleon and the Struggle for Germany*, 2: 74.

<sup>66</sup> Munro Price, *Napoleon: The End of Glory*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2014), 63.

<sup>67</sup> Leggiere, *Napoleon and the Struggle for Germany*, 2: 57.

appear diminished the hopes for peace, and he suspected Napoleon was intentionally protracting the armistice. He also noted the Duke of Wellington's smashing victory at Vitoria on 21 June, especially as British newspapers claimed Joseph Bonaparte and the remnants of his army had been cut off from France. Schwarzenberg expressed hope that he himself could strike such a blow in Germany and so right the world.<sup>68</sup>

Facing one of the most renowned generals who ever lived, the development of a sound plan of operations was of paramount importance for the Allied armies. However, strategists of all nations intensely disagreed regarding the employment of the combined armies of the Coalition. The two most important blueprints that emerged from the various headquarters were the Trachenberg and Reichenbach Plans. The first, the product of agreement among the Prussians, Swedes, and Russians, envisioned three field armies. The Army of North Germany would have Berlin for its base, and consist of 70,000 Prussians, Swedes, and Russians. The Army of Silesia would remain in position around Breslau with 50,000 Prussians and Russians. The Bohemian Army would assemble north of Prague with more than 200,000 Austrians, Prussians, and Russians. The Trachenberg plan stipulated that the Allied armies would take the offensive and advance concentrically on the main body of the enemy, intending to achieve a rapid decision.<sup>69</sup>

By contrast, the Reichenbach plan, developed by Schwarzenberg's chief of staff, Radetzky, called for a more complex approach. This plan envisioned the Allied armies retreating from any superior forces led by Napoleon while attacking detached corps and secondary armies.

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<sup>68</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 22 July 1813, Karl Philipp zu Schwarzenberg, *Briefe des Feldmarschalls Fürsten Schwarzenberg an seine Frau, 1799–1816*, ed. Johann Friedrich Novák (Leipzig: Gerlach und Wiedling, 1913), No. 241, 325.

<sup>69</sup> Leggiere, *Napoleon and the Struggle for Germany*, 2: 51-54.

Radetzky expected Napoleon's forces to match or outnumber those of the Coalition upon the cessation of the armistice, thus precluding a decisive battle until the balance could be righted.<sup>70</sup> In his 7 July Operations Draft, he estimated French strength at 450,000 men and that of the Allies at 405,000. Moreover, Napoleon's position in Saxony gave him the advantage of interior lines, facilitating concentration of superior forces against a single Allied army. Expecting Napoleon to target the Bohemian Army with all his might at the resumption of hostilities, Radetzky recommended a careful defensive against the French emperor's main force, combined with bold offensives by the other Allied armies. Likewise, should Napoleon take the offensive against the Army of North Germany or the Silesian Army, the armies not attacked would themselves take the offensive to relieve the pressure. Should Napoleon remain on the defensive, Radetzky called for the Allied armies to concentrate for a decisive blow.<sup>71</sup> While the language of this plan emphasized avoiding superior forces, Radetzky also recognized the impact of the French emperor's personal presence on the battlefield in a 14 September memorandum, noting the delight he inspired even in his war-weary generals and the zeal that drove his soldiers into enemy ranks with charged bayonets. Denying Napoleon the chance to employ his talent as a general was crucial.<sup>72</sup>

Leggiere along with numerous historians, such as Maximilian von Hoen of the Austrian General Staff, characterize the differences between these plans according to the classic strategic dichotomy of annihilation and exhaustion and follows Rudolf Friedrich in his description of the Reichenbach Plan as a return to the indecisive attritional warfare of the eighteenth century.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 2: 55-56.

<sup>71</sup> Radetzky, "Operationsentwurf," in F. J. H. Hellwald and Karl Schönhals, *Der k.k. österreichische Feldmarschall Graf Radetzky: eine biographische Skizze nach den eigenen Dictaten und der Correspondenz des Feldmarschalls von einem österreichischen Veteranen* (Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta, 1858), 160-161.

<sup>72</sup> Radetzky, *Denkschriften*, 171-172.

Whereas the Trachenberg Plan sought to seize the initiative and destroy Napoleon's main force in a decisive blow, Radetzky's plan entailed the protracted attrition of Imperial forces. Physical exhaustion from constant countermarches and privation in ruined country would inflict as much damage as constant actions and minor battles until the Coalition had assumed such a superiority in strength that it could seek a decision against Napoleon's main force. Radetzky emphasized that the transitory advantages gained by the auxiliary armies would be far outweighed by the clash of main forces, and for this reason recommended the greatest possible force be mustered in Bohemia, proposing 150,000 Austrians.<sup>73</sup> Thus, the goal remained the destruction of Napoleon's main army in battle. As Radetzky stated forthright in his June memorandum, "The purpose of every operation is the annihilation of the enemy."<sup>74</sup>

The central question in the choice of strategy regards time. When planning a campaign or a major maneuver, the commander must ascertain whether the passage of time will benefit him or his enemy more. As Vegetius, for centuries the greatest authority on warfare, remarked, the chief strategic issue was for the general to decide whether it was in his interest to pursue the decision by arms or to stall and temporize.<sup>75</sup> Typically, the defender with inferior strength seeks to delay the decision, as the strength of the attacker diminishes throughout the offensive until it reaches Clausewitz's Culminating Point of Victory. At that point, the attacker has lost the superior strength that justifies offensive action. In a purely defensive war, not just delaying a decision, but preventing a decision altogether is often a useful strategy for the weaker side. However, at times strategic defenders have been so much weaker that the future held no promise

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 101-103, 107.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>75</sup> Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus was an official in the Western Roman Empire during the fifth century. His book, *Epitoma rei militaris*, was widely read in the Middle Ages and early modern period.



of an improved situation; Frederick the Great began the Seven Years War with a bold offensive into Saxony and thereafter into Bohemia for this reason.<sup>76</sup> In the case of the Fall Campaign of 1813, the division between offense and defense was very fluid, both strategically and operationally. While the Allies sought to curtail Napoleon's power in central Europe, Napoleon fought to maintain an empire he had carved from his prostrated enemies. Both sought a decision in the German theater of war. For his part, Napoleon sought to fight a decisive battle at the outset of the campaign; insofar as the Allies attempted to delay a decision and prepare for more favorable conditions, their strategy can be considered defensive.

The Allied monarchs bestowed supreme command on Schwarzenberg and travelled with his headquarters after Austria formally joined the coalition against Napoleon. Fielding troops hailing from all three Great Powers, this was the main army and the center of gravity for the whole Coalition; its victory or destruction could decide the war. The Army of North Germany and the Army of Silesia under Jean Bernadotte and Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher respectively, had roughly 100,000 men each at the beginning of the campaign while the Army of Bohemia had approximately 250,000. The three Allied armies formed a wide arc around Napoleon's position in Saxony and Lusatia: Bernadotte to the north in the vicinity of Berlin, Blücher to the east near Breslau, and Schwarzenberg in the south behind the mountainous Bohemian frontier. Napoleon's main force of 200,000 was stationed in Saxony and Upper Lusatia; secondary armies of 100,000 each stood in Silesia under Ney and in Lower Lusatia and northern Germany under Nicolas Oudinot and Louis-Nicolas Davout, respectively. Napoleon planned to unite his main force with Ney to seek a battle in Silesia, where he believed he would find the Coalition's main army of 200,000 Russians and Prussians. At the same time, Oudinot and Davout would advance

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<sup>76</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 191.

on Berlin, and thereafter to the Oder and Vistula river lines, where tens of thousands of French languished in isolated garrisons behind enemy lines (Map A.7).<sup>77</sup>

Both the Trachenberg and Reichenbach Plans anticipated Napoleon's first blow would fall on the army in Bohemia, as a crushing victory there would decide the war. However, upon learning that more than 100,000 Allied troops had left Silesia to form the Coalition's main army in Bohemia, Napoleon decided to take advantage of the relative weakness of Blücher's smaller army. After the armistice expired on 17 August, Napoleon advanced to Görlitz in Lusatia to assemble an army of 180,000 and crush Blücher before the Austrians could unite with their new allies in Bohemia.<sup>78</sup> For his part, Napoleon severely underestimated the speed at which the Allied army could form in Bohemia; believing the two constituent parts—the Russo-Prussian army coming from Silesia and the Austrian army—incapable of affecting a junction in the vicinity of Prague before 25 August. Yet, on the 16<sup>th</sup>, Schwarzenberg reported that the Russians and Prussians had already united with his main body. Schwarzenberg also referenced the stipulations of the Reichenbach Plan, hoping that if Napoleon attacked the Army of North Germany, Bernadotte would withdraw rather than be crushed by the emperor's superior force. In the meantime, he would launch an offensive against Napoleon's base.<sup>79</sup>

The Army of Bohemia crossed the Bohemian frontier in several columns on 22 August, fighting a few minor combats. On the left bank of the Elbe, only Laurent de Gouvion St. Cyr's XIV Corps guarded Napoleon's crucial logistical base at Dresden, although Schwarzenberg knew Napoleon was in supporting distance and could reach the Saxon capital in a matter of days. Schwarzenberg described the Bohemian Army's movements in a 23 August letter to his wife.

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<sup>77</sup> Leggiere, *Napoleon and the Struggle for Germany*, 2: 107.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>79</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 16 August 1813, Schwarzenberg, *Briefe*, No. 243, 328.

This letter illustrates Schwarzenberg's strategic mindset, which consistently encompassed the combined efforts of the Allied armies in Silesia and North Germany as well as his own. He pays particular attention to Blücher's maneuvers, reporting that the Prussian general drove back the French in Silesia with a series of fierce advance-guard engagements. Turning to his own army's maneuvers, he noted that only St. Cyr's corps remained on the western bank of the Elbe, but he believed Napoleon would shift his army to face him. By advancing down the Elbe, the Allied commander in chief knew he would draw Napoleon into a battle. Schwarzenberg prepared for a confrontation with the emperor and his main force, noting the importance of minimizing detachments and remaining concentrated for the main battle. As such, he could spare no force to cover his base of communications at Prague. This willingness to ignore an Imperial occupation of his base, rather than jeopardize the campaign over a raid on his communications, represents an abandonment of the positional fixations that plagued earlier Austrian commanders. However, if Napoleon were to descend into Bohemia with his main army, Schwarzenberg planned to combine with Blücher and meet Napoleon in battle, crushing the French with overwhelming force.<sup>80</sup> The ensuing campaign miscarried, but not because the strategic thought of the Austrian headquarters was unsound.

Upon learning that the Army of Bohemia had debouched over the Bohemian frontier to attack St. Cyr at Dresden, Napoleon rushed from Lusatia to defend his base with 100,000 men and sent Dominique Vandamme's I Corps to cut off the Allies from Bohemia if they retreated. In the meantime, Jacques Macdonald continued to pursue Blücher deeper into Silesia with the 100,000 men of the newly-formed Army of the Bober while Oudinot drove on Berlin with an

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<sup>80</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 23 August 1813, *Ibid.*, No. 246, 331-332. Blücher was in fact retreating while Schwarzenberg composed this letter.

eponymous army of 70,000, supported by the 30,000 men of Davout's XIII Corps at Hamburg. At Dresden, Napoleon arrived late to the defensive fighting on 26 August; on the 27th, he counterattacked. With rain-choked streams dividing the Allied wings from their center, and Johann von Klenau's left wing arriving too late to participate in the battle, Napoleon enveloped their left and right flanks to inflict a punishing defeat. Murat with the French right captured 13,000 prisoners, and the Allies lost 38,000 men to Napoleon's 10,000 in total (Map A.8).<sup>81</sup>

Although the Battle of Dresden was ultimately a considerable defeat for the Allies, Schwarzenberg considered the campaign a qualified success, as it had achieved its chief object. Pursuant to the Reichenbach Plan, the North German and Silesian Armies engaged secondary Imperial armies almost simultaneously. The first battle was fought on 23 August in Brandenburg, just eighteen kilometers south of Berlin. Advancing north from Luckau in Lower Lusatia toward Berlin, Oudinot's Army of Berlin found its movement channeled into three lanes by broken terrain, hindering mutual support between XII Corps and III Cavalry Corps on the left, VII Corps in the center, and IV Corps on the right. Friedrich Wilhelm von Bülow's Prussian III Corps attacked and defeated the Saxons of VII Corps at Großbeeren, support from III Cavalry Corps arriving too late to prevent a retreat. The Prussians lost only 1,000 men to the 3,000 Saxon and French casualties. Though by no means a mortal blow, the loss prompted a dismayed Oudinot to flee seventy-five kilometers southwest to the safety of Wittenberg on the Elbe.<sup>82</sup>

On 26 August, as Napoleon arrived at Dresden in person, Blücher landed a particularly hard blow against Macdonald at the rain-swollen Katzbach in Silesia. Napoleon had instructed Macdonald to drive east to Jauer in Silesia and there establish a defensive position to contain

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<sup>81</sup> Leggiere, "Prometheus Chained," 336.

<sup>82</sup> Michael V. Leggiere, *Napoleon and Berlin: The Franco-Prussian War in North Germany, 1813*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 160-172.

Blücher. Blücher's main force, consisting of Yorck and Fabian Gottlieb von der Osten-Sacken's corps facing west, occupied a plateau in the angle formed by the rivers Wütende Neiße to their front and left and the Katzbach on their right. As elements of French III Corps, XI Corps, and II Cavalry Corps crossed the streams and formed up on the plateau, the Allies attacked. The first wave of the French advanced into this encounter battle from the west toward the front of the position while the second wave, comprising the bulk of French III Corps, came from the north on Blücher's right. The Allies repulsed both, and the steep ravines cut by the Neiße and Katzbach, the defiles through them, and the narrow bridges over the streams threw the French retreat into chaos.<sup>83</sup> While Louis Alexandre Andrault de Langeron's Russian corps south of the Neiße was hard pressed and forced back by superior numbers, the enemy's withdrawal left Jacques Puthod's 17<sup>th</sup> Division isolated. Unable to cross the Bober and rejoin Macdonald's army, the division made a last stand at Plagwitz, where Langeron's corps crushed it.<sup>84</sup>

As Napoleon's main army was locked in battle with Schwarzenberg's south of Dresden, he could not support Macdonald or Oudinot in their battles with Blücher and Bernadotte. Even after his victory at Dresden, Napoleon gained no permanent advantage as illness forced him to end his part in leading the pursuit. In the meantime, Vandamme's I Corps continued to pursue the Bohemian Army, with the French VI and XIV Corps following. Vandamme crossed the Erz Mountains and attacked the Russian corps of Alexander Ostermann-Tolstoy at Kulm. While the Erz constrained Vandamme's lines of retreat, the Prussian II Corps reached Nollendorf north of Kulm, thus cutting off Vandamme from VI and XIV Corps. The Russians to his front received reinforcement from the Russian Guard. An Austrian corps enveloped Vandamme's left,

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<sup>83</sup> Leggiere, *Blücher: Scourge of Napoleon*, (Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 2014), 276-278.

<sup>84</sup> Leggiere, *Napoleon and the Struggle for Germany*, 2: 312-316.

completing his isolation, resulting in the destruction of the corps and the capture of the French commander and eighty-two guns (Map A.9).<sup>85</sup> Even Napoleon could not be everywhere at once.

Despite the victory at Kulm, Schwarzenberg found much that warranted complaint, as he decried to his wife those he called the weaklings, sycophants, babblers, critics, and general vermin that collected at Allied headquarters. More concretely, Alexander's habit of circumventing Schwarzenberg in the command of the Bohemian Army's Russian troops undermined his authority. While perhaps venting his frustrations in the aftermath of a defeat, one can sympathize with his remark that the very word 'coalition' had become terrible to his ears.<sup>86</sup>

After the electric opening to the Fall Campaign, operational maneuver dominated the succeeding weeks. Napoleon thrust toward Blücher, who retreated east across the Neiße and burned the bridges behind him. In response, the emperor mounted an attack toward Bernadotte and Berlin; Schwarzenberg and Blücher moved into action. Schwarzenberg dispatched Peter Wittgenstein toward Dresden, threatening Napoleon's base of operations while Klenau advanced on Marienberg to threaten his communications. As soon as Napoleon redeployed his forces to counter Schwarzenberg's thrust and envelop the Allied left, they cleaved to the agreed principle and avoided a general engagement while Blücher ended his retreat and started driving west against the shattered remnants of Macdonald's Army of the Bober.<sup>87</sup>

In the meantime, the Allied strategy was beginning to tell against Napoleon. The emperor sought to wrest back the initiative by planning an advance on Berlin, which he would

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<sup>85</sup> The announcement of the victory is reproduced in full in Maximilian Ehn, *Schlacht bei Kulm*, (Vienna: Siedler und Sohn, 1913), 221-222

<sup>86</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 6 September 1813, Schwarzenberg, *Briefe*, No. 247, 334.

<sup>87</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 9 September 1813, *Ibid.*, No. 248, 335. See also Maximilian von Hoen, *Der Feldzug von Leipzig*, (Vienna: Siedler und Sohn, 1913), 9-13.

lead himself with 30,000 reinforcements. However, continued pressure on the Army of the Bober forced Napoleon to suspend the offensive. Unaware, the Army of Berlin's new commander, Ney, marched on the Prussian capital and Bernadotte's army. On 6 September, the armies clashed at Dennewitz. The battle opened with Bogislav on Tauentzien's Prussian IV Corps exchanging fire with Henri Bertrand's and grew as Bülow on the Allied side and Oudinot and Reynier's corps on the French joined the fighting. The battle developed on a northeast-southwest axis, with Bertrand on the French right and Reynier on the left. At the height of the battle, Ney committed Oudinot's corps to his right, depriving Reynier of support. Reynier crumbled under the Prussian onslaught, effectively deciding the battle. Ney's advance on Berlin had been repulsed while the Reichenbach Plan ensured Napoleon remained preoccupied with the other Allied armies, first driving Blücher back in Silesia then rushing to Dresden as Schwarzenberg threatened his base again (Map A.10).<sup>88</sup> Schwarzenberg rejoiced in the success at Dennewitz, reporting the capture of 10,000 prisoners and 60 guns and claiming the Army of Berlin had practically dissolved in its retreat.<sup>89</sup>

Notably, Schwarzenberg did not measure success in terms of territory or strategic points, as Archduke Charles did, but by damage inflicted on the Imperial armies.<sup>90</sup> Similarly, Radetzky judged the opening of the Fall Campaign a success, despite the blow Napoleon landed at Dresden. Writing on 4 September, he noted with approval the virtual destruction of Vandamme's corps at the Battle of Kulm, as well as the heavy losses among Macdonald's Army of the Bober. While French losses at the 23 August Battle of Großbeeren did not match the extent of the other Allied victories, the lost battle degraded imperial combat strength and morale,

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<sup>88</sup> Leggiere, *Napoleon and Berlin*, 193-209.

<sup>89</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 13 September 1813, Schwarzenberg, *Briefe*, No. 249, 336.

<sup>90</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 15 September 1813, *Ibid.*, No. 250, 337.

as Oudinot conducted his headlong retreat from the gates of Berlin to Wittenberg on the Elbe.<sup>91</sup>

Looking ahead to the climax of the campaign, Schwarzenberg would frame the victory at Leipzig in these terms. While Archduke Charles almost never mentioned the capture of guns or prisoners, Schwarzenberg proudly listed to his wife the three French corps commanders, 200 cannon, 800 wagons, and tens of thousands of prisoners taken from the vanquished French as trophies of the victory; the French had suffered a monumental defeat.<sup>92</sup>

Throughout the Fall Campaign, the Austrians pursued the destruction of Napoleon's fighting strength. Napoleon attempted to realize this same objective through a rapid advance that led to a battle of annihilation, typically before his target could receive reinforcements. In the Ulm campaign of 1805, he immediately cut off and enveloped the unfortunate Karl Mack von Leiberich's army in Swabia before Mikhail Kutuzov's Russians could join him in strength; again in 1806, Napoleon ruthlessly destroyed the Prussian army before the Russians could come to their aid. In each case, Napoleon achieved decisive results within a month of opening the campaign. The destruction of the enemy forces can proceed in various ways and at different rates. In the case of Napoleon's campaigns of 1805 and 1806, he achieved this destruction through direct physical force, typically in one or two general engagements. However, this is not the only means of prosecuting a strategy of annihilation; the enemy must simply be put in a state where he cannot continue the fight. Destruction of the enemy army may occur through prolonged wastage of his forces, with a view toward easing the final decision. Often, the destruction takes place by degrees, as the conquest of enemy territory weakens the enemy army,

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<sup>91</sup> Radetzky, *Denkschriften*, 164.

<sup>92</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 20 October 1813, Schwarzenberg, *Briefe*, No. 258, 348. Schwarzenberg stated that Bertrand, Lauriston, and Reynier were captured. However, Bertrand was in fact still commanding IV Corps, and retreated across the Rhine with the rest of the French army. The latter two did fall into Allied hands as did the king of Saxony.



inhibiting it from defending its remaining territory. The destruction of enemy forces may manifest as the invasion and simple devastation of his provinces. Clausewitz considered the Duke of Wellington's campaigns in Portugal, where French forces withered in territory stripped of provisions, an excellent example of the destruction of enemy forces.<sup>93</sup> Forcing the enemy to march and countermarch in depleted territory affects his destruction in the same way. Marches are a force of active destruction upon an army, comparable to an engagement.<sup>94</sup> Not for nothing did Vegetius remark that a great general could destroy his enemy more by famine and want of provisions than by the sword.

Continuous wastage is the core of an effective defensive strategy. In 1812, the prolonged advance into the Russian interior led to incredible wastage among Napoleon's armies while the Russians carefully husbanded their strength. After the balance of force tipped in their favor, the Russians began their counteroffensive against the weakened remnants of the French army. Clausewitz calls this moment, the shift to the offensive against a weakened enemy, 'drawing the flashing sword of vengeance,' the most brilliant moment of the defense. In pursuit operations, he recommends the use of a parallel route, destroying the enemy by forcing them to overexert their fleeing troops to prevent being cut off from their line of retreat.<sup>95</sup> While Napoleon fought several sanguinary engagements during the campaign of 1812, the great bulk of his losses resulted from privation, exhaustion, desertion, straggling, and exposure to the extremes of heat and cold.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 384-385. See also Carl von Clausewitz, *Principles of War*, trans. Hans Wilhelm Gatzke, <https://www.clausewitz.com/mobile/principlesofwar.htm> .

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 322.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.

<sup>96</sup> Alexander Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars: A Global History* (London: Oxford University Press, 2020), 539-540.

Schwarzenberg and the other Allied commanders, unwilling to fight Napoleon in a general engagement with the state of force parity in the Fall of 1813, employed a similar method. Rather than striking Napoleon's forces with shot and steel, the combined Allied campaign inflicted terrible losses on the Imperials through privation and physical exhaustion. After the failure at Dresden, the Allied armies steadfastly denied Napoleon the rapid and bloody decision he chased with desperation throughout the Fall Campaign, as time was not on his side. The longer the campaign lasted, the more Napoleon's troops would suffer, as the exterior line of the Allies facilitated threats to his armies' communications. Facing serious dangers from all corners, advances against any one of the three Allied armies would leave French communications exposed. The Allied plan of avoiding battle and targeting French communications and secondary armies negated the advantages of Napoleon's interior lines. Unable to land his intended blows on Blücher or Schwarzenberg, Napoleon repeatedly had to march and countermarch to keep his communications secure against the other Allied armies, while being unable to threaten their strategic flanks in turn.<sup>97</sup> On 20 September, Schwarzenberg explained the dire straits of Napoleon's forces:

My pursuing vanguard made several hundred prisoners, who were almost dying of hunger. The road is covered with dead horses; the lack of food of all kinds is extraordinary, and it is to be hoped that this type of war will soon put the enemy army in a considerable degree of hardship. Heaven is favorable to us. This rain is destroying the troops as they march, so I hope it will give us a significant advantage. If Napoleon marches against Blücher, he will not accept a battle, but will retire on his magazines, and the French army will again, without achieving any purpose, become fatigued and starve in plundered Lusatia. But if Napoleon marches against the crown prince, Blücher can attack his rear.<sup>98</sup>

Although the plan proceeded more slowly and less directly than Napoleon's campaigns,

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<sup>97</sup> Leggiere, "Prometheus Chained," 338-339.

<sup>98</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 20 September 1813, Schwarzenberg, *Briefe*, No. 252, 339.

its goals were the same, and it soon produced results. In less than one month of campaigning since the end of the armistice, Napoleon lost 200,000 men to all causes along with 300 guns.<sup>99</sup> For comparison, after the shattering defeat at Jena, the Prussian army lost roughly 165,000 men in a wave of shocking capitulations during Napoleon's ruthless pursuit.<sup>100</sup> Napoleon's losses in the first month of the Fall Campaign represented a smaller proportion of his forces than Prussian losses in 1806, but every day that passed without a decisive battle weakened his position. While the Allies also suffered considerable losses due to privation and desertion, three advantages worked to limit the damage. First, they enjoyed superior numbers from the beginning. Second, the three Allied armies drew their supplies from a greater overall area than the Imperials, having Brandenburg, Silesia, and Bohemia to support the fighting men, while the Imperials spent most of the Fall Campaign in Saxony, thus exhausting local supplies more quickly. Finally, the continued flow of British subsidies and materiel aid gave the Allies a further advantage in the replacement of inevitable wastage.<sup>101</sup>

Privation was not the Allies' only weapon, however. At Reichenbach, Radetzky had planned to seek a general engagement after the Allied armies achieved a sufficiently favorable balance of forces. Already on 5 September, before Ney's drubbing at Dennewitz, Radetzky believed the Allies had gained the strength to crush Napoleon in battle under the right circumstances. In a memorandum, Radetzky considered Napoleon's options following the first round of battles. If he struck toward the Army of Bohemia, the army would await him behind defenses while Blücher fell on the Imperial left flank. If Napoleon challenged Blücher, the

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<sup>99</sup> Leggiere, *Napoleon and the Struggle for Germany*, 2: 10.

<sup>100</sup> David Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 502

<sup>101</sup> See John Sherwig, *Guineas and Gunpowder: British Foreign Aid in the Wars with France, 1792-1815*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 307-310. It should be noted that at least in Austria's case, most of the materiel aid in muskets, wool, and hides for boots arrived *after* the decisive battle at Leipzig.

Army of Silesia would defend until Levin von Bennigsen's Russian Army of Poland could reinforce him and a powerful corps of 50-60,000 from the Army of Bohemia could envelop the French right flank.<sup>102</sup> Strategic envelopment culminating in a battle of annihilation was the hallmark of Napoleon's art of war. This principle would later underlay several of the most important military victories in modern history, but it was already finding expression in Radetzky's strategic thought in September.

Following one month of inconclusive but exhausting campaigning, Napoleon concentrated his forces near Dresden on 15 September to await the Allies' blow. In the meantime, the newly formed Army of Poland, under Bennigsen, was due to arrive in Lusatia by 20 September. On 13 September, Allied headquarters hosted a council of war. There, Schwarzenberg proposed the plan to decide the war. After Bennigsen arrived, his army would take Blücher's position in Lusatia and Silesia, while Blücher's army shifted to defend the defiles through the Erz Mountains. The Army of Bohemia and the Army of the North would unite at Leipzig and master Napoleon's communications, drawing him to battle against a combined force of at least 250,000. However, Blücher's temperament did not match a passive assignment in the mountains, and he diplomatically refused by offering a modification on the plan. Bennigsen's army could cover Dresden and the Erz range while the Army of Silesia moved north to support Bernadotte. After achieving this junction, the Allied armies could converge for the decisive battle in Saxony. Schwarzenberg readily acquiesced and went forward with the modified plan.<sup>103</sup> In the meantime, Schwarzenberg ordered a reconnaissance in force towards Dresden, which drew Napoleon's attention on 16 September. Further fighting amidst the mountainous Bohemian

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<sup>102</sup> Radetzky, *Denkschriften*, 166-167.

<sup>103</sup> Llewelyn Cook, *Karl-Phillip zu Schwarzenberg in 1813*. Master's Thesis, Florida State University, 1993, 146-147.

frontier on 17 September resulted in a minor victory for the Allies. Austrian I and II Corps with Prussian II Corps attacked and enveloped French I and XIV Corps as they debouched from the Erz mountains near Kulm, capturing 2,000-3,000 prisoners and a few flags and cannon as trophies.<sup>104</sup> A further Imperial attempt to break through the defiles of the Erz failed.<sup>105</sup>

Through the last weeks of September and the first weeks of October, the noose slowly tightened around Leipzig. Bennigsen's army did not arrive in position until 26 September, but once there, it occupied a fortified position at Kulm amidst the mountainous Bohemian frontier to observe Dresden.<sup>106</sup> The same day, Blücher began his march to unite with Bernadotte and cross the Elbe, shifting his position from Bautzen in Silesia to the village of Elster across the river from Wartenburg. Bertrand's IV Corps defended the crossing site, retreating after a fierce combat with Yorck's I Corps on 3 October. The Russian contingent of Blücher's army followed Yorck's Prussians across the river, establishing 64,000 Allies on the western bank of the Elbe by nightfall. Bernadotte's army crossed the Elbe 40 kilometers upstream at Roßlau on 4-5 October.<sup>107</sup>

Schwarzenberg described the movement toward the decisive battle in his 4 October letter. His army marched north on Leipzig with Wittgenstein's 45,000 Russians, who passed through Zwickau while the Austrian wing of 70,000 passed through Marienberg to the east with the Russian reserves following behind. Moritz von Liechtenstein's column protected the left flank of the army against any Imperial advance from the vicinity of Erfurt; there, he defeated a thrust

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<sup>104</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 18 September 1813, Schwarzenberg, *Briefe*, No. 251, 338.

<sup>105</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 19 September 1813, *Ibid.*, No. 252, 339.

<sup>106</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 26 September 1813 *Ibid.*, No. 253, 342.

<sup>107</sup> Leggiere, *Napoleon and the Struggle for Germany*, 490, 501.

by Augereau. Colloredo and Bennigsen observed Dresden.<sup>108</sup> After Blücher and Bernadotte crossed the Elbe, Napoleon evacuated the east bank, and concentrated his forces against the joined armies (Maps A.11 and A.12).<sup>109</sup> He left four corps commanded by Murat to slow Schwarzenberg's advance while he struck north from Bad Dübén toward Dessau on the Elbe, cutting Blücher and Bernadotte off from Berlin. Nevertheless, they refused battle, retreating west while Schwarzenberg slowly drove back Murat.<sup>110</sup>

With Blücher's 'retreat' west to Halle, the Allied armies were finally in supporting distance for a battle on an unprecedented scale. By 13 October, Schwarzenberg had issued dispositions in explicit terms detailing his intention to envelop Napoleon's army at Leipzig, cut off its retreat with his main force, and annihilate it (Map A.13).<sup>111</sup> Napoleon decided to concentrate all his available forces at Leipzig.<sup>112</sup> The time had come for "the decision of infinite consequence," in Schwarzenberg's words.<sup>113</sup> Hemmed in on all sides, with his reserves of men and ammunition exhausted against vastly superior forces, Napoleon abandoned Leipzig after four days of battle, leading to the collapse of his European empire.

Ultimately, Schwarzenberg and Radetzky's war plan, with Blücher's modifications and energetic execution, brought Napoleon to battle on favorable terms and decisively defeated the French 'God of War.' The Austrian battle plan was distinctly imperfect, and the 1813 campaign was waged by Allied powers, reliant on consensus across multiple nations, rather than the

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<sup>108</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 4 October 1813, Schwarzenberg, *Briefe*, No. 254, 343, Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 11 October 1813, *Ibid.*, No. 256, 345.

<sup>109</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 4 October 1813, *Ibid.*, No. 254, 343.

<sup>110</sup> Leggiere, "Prometheus Chained," 339-341.

<sup>111</sup> Rudolf Friederich, *Gesichte des Herbstfeldzuges 1813*, 3 vols. of *Gesichte der Befreiungskriege 1813-1815*. (Berlin: E.S. Mittler und Sohn, 1906), 2: 432-433.

<sup>112</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 10 October 1813, Schwarzenberg, *Briefe*, No. 255, 344.

<sup>113</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 15 October 1813, *Ibid.*, No. 257, 346-346.

dictation of any single power. However, Schwarzenberg and Radetzky deserve credit for making the key act of judgement in the campaign, to seek a decision against Napoleon and his main army at Leipzig. This final phase of the campaign protects the Austrians from charges that they had learned nothing from Napoleon's strategy.

Overall, the strategy of the Allied armies in the Fall Campaign of 1813 suited Austria's situation. This reflects well on the military reforms of Maria Theresa, Joseph II, and Archduke Charles, which ensured that Austria remained a strong and secure state in a vicious anarchic world, as well as the diplomacy of Metternich, which carefully husbanded this strength for the opportune time. As such, Austria possessed the diplomatic clout and military strength to compose the main war plan and appoint the nominal commander in chief. The Reichenbach Plan balanced the possibility of a negotiated peace and a bloody decision by arms. Given Napoleon's dazzling military skill and the parity of forces, the plan made a virtue of necessity. The Allied armies as a rule exposed themselves to as little unnecessary risk as possible in the 'wearing out' phase through September, during which Napoleon may have acquiesced. Owing to the extreme wastage of his forces, his military fortunes in Germany grew bleak as the balance of strength increasingly favored the Allies. The Allies brought Napoleon to battle with the advantage in numbers firmly on their side, but that was in itself no guarantee of victory. To win the battle and ensure their advantage was not wasted, sound modern tactics and battlefield organization of the kind pioneered since the Revolutionary Wars were imperative.

## CHAPTER IV

### TACTICS

Tactics possess deep significance for scholars seeking to understand the profound changes in warfare unleashed during the era of the French Revolution. The most important political questions of the period hinged upon the result of its great battles, which drew together men by the hundreds of thousands in a maelstrom of fire and blood. In the simplest formulation, Napoleon built his empire upon a succession of victorious battles, from the Ligurian Alps to the blood-drenched Marchfeld. By the same token, his European empire collapsed because he lost the Battle of Leipzig. Explaining the tactics of this battle in context is thus key to understanding the fall of Napoleon from his position of continental preeminence.

The Austrian army played a crucial role in the Battle of Leipzig, the key moment of Napoleon's downfall. Its headquarters had drafted the war plan that guided the Allies to victory in 1813 and one of its generals commanded the Coalition's main army, the Army of Bohemia, at Vienna's insistence. The majority of that army consisted of Austrian troops.<sup>114</sup> As such, their use in battle is highly significant for scholars seeking to explain the Allied victory of 1813. After all, as Napoleon was considered the greatest general of the modern era, historians desire to understand the reasons for his defeat. This chapter argues that the changing nature of tactics produced the results that account for Napoleon's failure in 1813. The adaptation of Austrian tactics to the nature of modern battle was a complex process, and while it was in many ways still incomplete in 1813, the performance of the Austrians represented an overall improvement. The successful execution of Allied strategy in the Reichenbach Plan ensured their advantage when

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<sup>114</sup> From a total of 250,542 men, the Army of Bohemia included 127,435 Austrians, 78,200 Russians, and 44,907 Prussians. Michael V. Leggiere, "Prometheus Chained: 1813-1815," 331.



they brought Napoleon to battle at Leipzig, but the battle still needed to be won. While Austrian senior officers continued to give uninspired performances, improvements in the Austrian army's battlefield organization, formations, and tactical doctrines ensured the strategic advantage gained in the Fall Campaign would not be wasted as in previous campaigns against Napoleon.

Tactics in the broadest sense encompass more than the specific decisions of commanders ('left, right, or down the middle') in combat. Methods of organization commonly have great tactical significance on the battlefield; the Napoleonic system of multiple army corps including every arm of the service revolutionized the way battles were fought. At the highest level, 'grand tactics' encroach upon strategy; this connection, solidly established in the Napoleonic Wars, is now understood to be the operational art studied in modern armies. As such, the discussion of tactics involves several closely related topics with direct significance to armies in battle.

Battles and campaigns in which a smaller force defeated a more powerful enemy attract great attention from historians and enthusiasts alike. Historians believe that such battles can reveal principles of war that can supersede the obvious advantage of superior numbers; they are especially important for those seeking to draw practical lessons from military history. As Clausewitz observed, it would be a peculiar theory of war that left off just where the need was greatest. Marathon, Gaugamela, and Cannae have been canonized as masterpieces in no small part on account of the numerical inferiority of the victors. In the black powder era of firearms, Charles XII and Frederick the Great famously gained several battles against long numerical odds in the linear warfare of the eighteenth century. The former's Russian enemies suffered terrible defeats at Narva in 1700 and Holowczyn in 1708 despite the balance of forces being 3-1 in their favor in each case. Frederick the Great won battles against 2-1 odds at Soor, Rossbach, and Leuthen. Although Napoleon could match any of his predecessors in terms of military skill, he

never triumphed against odds of 2-1 or greater in a major battle; the closest is the Battle of Dresden, where the 180,000 Allied soldiers represented an advantage of 3-2 against Napoleon's 120,000. He largely succeeded in attaining superiority or at least avoided marked inferiority in his battles; when he failed to do so, as at Aspern-Essling, Leipzig, Laon, Arcis-Sur-Aube, and Waterloo, he lost. The reason for this discrepancy lies in the tactical transformation of European armies during the French Wars.

The linear armies of the eighteenth century shared many fundamental similarities with the armies of antiquity and the middle ages, despite their universal use of firearms. Like the hoplite phalanx, the physical integrity of the Frederician line of battle represented life or death. Once broken, it unraveled, and could not be repaired in a timely manner, no matter the number of troops available. The charge of the Bayreuth Dragoons during the 1745 Battle of Hohenfriedburg demonstrates this most powerfully. A single gap in the Austrian battle line allowed a mere ten squadrons of Prussian cavalry to roll up both main lines of Austrian infantry. The 1757 battles at Rossbach and Leuthen similarly reveal the critical vulnerability of a linear army to flank attacks. At Kesselsdorf in 1745 and later at Rossbach, the Prussians won major victories while the bulk of their infantry remained unengaged. Breaking through the enemy line at one point, the left and right wing, respectively, sufficed to drive their Austro-Saxon and French-Imperial enemies from the field regardless of the balance of forces.<sup>115</sup> In eighteenth century battles, “a wing overrun and driven out of line decides the fate of the flank that has held fast,” in Clausewitz's formulation.<sup>116</sup> Thus, while victories comparable to the famous battles of

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<sup>115</sup> For good overviews of Prussian tactics in the Silesian Wars, see Christopher Duffy, *Frederick the Great* and Dennis Showalter, *The Wars of Frederick the Great* (New York: Longman, 1996). For an overview of Swedish tactics at the height of the empire, see Henrik O. Lunde, *A Warrior Dynasty: The Rise and Fall of Sweden as a Military Superpower, 1611-1721* (Havertown: Casemate, 2014).

<sup>116</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 248.

Antiquity had become rare as a symmetry of military skill came to define European warfare, an aggressive commander with an efficient, well-disciplined army could still triumph against long odds by attaining a local success and ruthlessly exploiting it.

In Napoleon's time, such expedients had become almost irrelevant. As Clausewitz keenly observed, European armies had developed great skill in the employment of reserves, which facilitated their use almost anywhere on the battlefield under almost any conditions.<sup>117</sup> Indeed, in many battles, the main task of the commander was to decide the time and place for the commitment of reserves. Thus, methods of battle came to be defined by the use of reserves. In his tactical writings, Ferdinand Foch delineated two kinds of battle: the 'parallel battle,' in which the reserve is used 'as a magazine' to prolong the battle and outlast the enemy, and the 'maneuver battle,' where the reserve is earmarked for use 'as a club' to smash the enemy after their own reserves had been consumed. Napoleon naturally served as the exemplar of the 'maneuver battle' tactician.<sup>118</sup>

To have reserves at their disposal, commanders instituted measures to ensure the utmost economy of force, maximizing their ability to control the battle and minimizing unnecessary exhaustion of strength. To a great degree, the attritional phase of the battle was the work of skirmish lines and artillery. Beyond the range of the enemy artillery, the bulk of the force stood formed in mobile columns to quickly intervene wherever needed. Commanders sought to commit their reserves while their enemy was still in the temporary disarray that afflicts even successful units after an engagement. The French émigré in Russian service, Langeron, aptly

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 251. See also Hans Delbrück, *History of the Art of War*, 4: 408-409.

<sup>118</sup> Ferdinand Foch, *Principles of War*, trans. Hilaire Belloc (London: Chapman and Hall, 1921), 800.

described the tempo of Napoleonic battle when he recalled the fighting around Leipzig on 18 October:

I believed the position was assured, and went forward of the village to establish a chain of outposts. At this moment Ney [...] launched against me so unexpected an attack, and so impetuous and well directed, that I was unable to withstand it. Five columns, advancing at the charge and with fixed bayonets, rushed at the village and at my troops who were still scattered and whom I was trying to re-form. They were overthrown and forced to retire in a hurry. I was swept along by the fugitives, but I really cannot blame their sudden retreat because it was impossible to hold out, and I must confess that they moved as fast as I could manage ... Fortunately, I still had considerable reserves, and after letting the regiments which had been expelled from Schönefeld pass through the gaps between them, I soon did to the enemy what he had done to me, because my columns were in good order and his troops were by this time scattered.<sup>119</sup>

Together with the organization of the army into combined arms corps and divisions, the central importance of reserves gave subordinate commanders more control over their engagements. Whereas their chief role in linear armies was to relay orders and provide an example of courage, Napoleonic era officers could choose the time and place to commit their reserves. This allowed them to make more complex plans and react more forcefully than their more circumscribed counterparts from the age of linear warfare.<sup>120</sup> In the infantry, even the basic tactical unit, the battalion, gained significant independence in battle, able to subdivide and maneuver according to the commander's professional judgement and initiative.

The ideal was to physically engage the enemy with the fewest possible troops while retaining the greatest possible reserve. Troops still fresh at the end of a battle could execute a mass attack to decide the battle, cover a retreat, or spearhead an aggressive pursuit. The balance of reserves between combatants was frequently the decisive factor in victory and defeat.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Rory Muir, *Tactics and the Experience of Battle in the Age of Napoleon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 17.

<sup>120</sup> Delbrück, *History of the Art of War*, 5: 409.

<sup>121</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 226.

Given the greater flexibility and relative abundance of reserve forces on the Napoleonic battlefield, it should come as no surprise that the balance of numerical strength assumed greater importance than during the days of Frederick the Great and Charles XII. While an enveloping attack still offered a force multiplier that could produce disproportionate results, it did so primarily by threatening to cut the enemy's line of retreat. This danger usually compelled a commander to commit forces to protect his escape route, thus reducing his available reserves. Clausewitz's comment that "every day, numbers become more decisive" reflects one of the fundamental transformations in warfare he witnessed at the height of the French Wars.<sup>122</sup> The following examines four battles during the 1809-1813 period in which the Austrians and their allies enjoyed numerical superiority over the French and one in which they did not. Strategic events shaped each battle before the opening shots, but the way each battle unfolded reveals the ways in which the Austrians either adapted or failed to adapt to the new tactical methods.

The War of the Fifth Coalition in 1809 is commonly considered the debut of a modernized Austrian army under the Archduke Charles. Even more than the 21-22 May Battle of Aspern-Essling, which marked Napoleon's first defeat in a major battle, the 5-6 July Battle of Wagram is heralded as the start of a new phase in the Napoleonic Wars, if not in warfare itself.<sup>123</sup> Not only did Napoleon fail to destroy his enemy on the field, but the numerically inferior Austrians managed to retire with thousands of French prisoners in tow; they even captured more standards and cannon than the French took from them. This was a first for armies under the French emperor's direct command, and a troublesome portent for the future. The retreating Austrians retained significant fighting spirit, inflicting a check on André Masséna's pursuing IV

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 282.

<sup>123</sup> See Robert M. Epstein, *Napoleon's Last Victory and the Emergence of Modern War* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1994).

Corps in a sharp combat at Hollabrunn on 9 July. Although the following 9-10 July combat and Armistice of Znaim marked the conclusion of a victorious campaign, it would be Napoleon's last.

Despite the Austrian army's creditable performances on the Marchfeld at Wagram, it continued to lag behind the French in several critical areas. Archduke Charles defined the Habsburg army in 1809 more than any other individual; having won his laurels fighting the French Republic starting in 1793. By 1806, he had attained far reaching control over the administration of the army as well as leadership in the field. In this capacity, Charles instituted and facilitated useful if conservative reforms of the army's tactics, organization, and strategic doctrine.<sup>124</sup> Nevertheless, Charles received his military education in the school of the eighteenth century and remained wedded to antiquated ideas. His *Principles of War*, published in 1806 for the instruction of senior officers in strategy and operations, bore the stamp of Henry Lloyd, the famous Welsh theorist and commentator on the Seven Years War, among other eighteenth century military thinkers.<sup>125</sup> Broadly, the Austrians continued to conceptualize the army on the battlefield in essentially linear terms. The army would consist of two lines of battle and a small reserve that served to cover a potential retreat rather than contribute to victory. Rather than trusting the flexibility of modern infantry and the availability of reserves, Charles remained concerned by the possibility of an entire line unraveling under the weight of a flank attack.<sup>126</sup> Moreover, this document held the oblique order of battle as an ideal. The most intriguing aspect of his preference for the oblique order is the rationalization for this antiquated deployment.

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<sup>124</sup> See Gunther E. Rothenberg, *Napoleon's Great Adversaries*.

<sup>125</sup> Lee Eysturliid, *The Formative Influences and Campaigns of Archduke Charles* (Westport: Greenwood, 2000), 26.

<sup>126</sup> Charles, Archduke of Austria, *Ausgewählte Militärische Schriften*, ed. Freiherr von Waldtstätten (Berlin: Richard Wilhelmi 1882), 28.

Similar to Clausewitz's explanation of deployment in depth, the intention behind Charles's oblique order was to keep the bulk of one's forces out of combat, but without the same clarity of purpose.<sup>127</sup> In *On War*, Clausewitz argues that the best way to destroy the enemy army is to retain the greatest possible reserve and employ it after the battle proper in an aggressive pursuit. The chaos, destruction, and mental and physical exhaustion of combat naturally throws even well-disciplined units into disorder. As a matter of function, troops previously engaged in combat need time to restore order, collect stragglers, and distribute fresh ammunition before they can effectively pursue the enemy while reserve units can undertake the pursuit immediately.<sup>128</sup> Rather than using forces successively to apply consistent pressure, Charles believed that the wing making the attack would attempt to restore order and resume the attack after the necessary pause.<sup>129</sup> The fact that doing so likewise gives the enemy time to restore order was not considered, nor that an enemy with strong reserves could exploit this pause for a devastating counterattack. Lee Eysturlid directly compared Charles's doctrine with that of the Seven Years War.<sup>130</sup> Under new battlefield conditions, this doctrine could no longer be useful.

It should be clear from this discussion that Charles's tactical thinking remained dominated by the 'battle of lines' and that it had no defined place for the use of operationally independent forces in concert on the battlefield. Nevertheless, he organized the Austrian army along modern lines for the opening maneuvers of 1809, activating corps on 2 February 1809. Charles divided the Austrian army into nine army corps and two reserve corps. The army corps

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<sup>127</sup> Charles, *Militärische Schriften*, 30.

<sup>128</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 206, 241, 264

<sup>129</sup> Charles, *Militärische Schriften*, 31.

<sup>130</sup> Eysturlid, *The Formative Influences, Ideas, and Campaigns of Archduke Carl of Austria*, 43. Furthermore, Charles quotes Field Marshal Maximilian von Browne, who claimed the tactics of the ancient Romans applied in his own day.

generally comprised two infantry divisions and an advance guard of cavalry and light infantry while the reserve corps consisted of grenadier battalions and heavy cavalry. Most of the artillery was distributed into brigade batteries, with each corps keeping a reserve. Without codified doctrine or experience handling such formations, the results disappointed all involved. The combination of all arms within the corps of the Austrian army gave them the theoretical capability to march and fight independently, but exploiting this capability required initiative that most senior officers in the Austrian army lacked. Charles's *Principles of War* offered little guidance for the subordinate commander, and no maneuvers were conducted in the two months between the division of the army into corps and the commencement of operations in April.<sup>131</sup>

Charles invaded Bavaria on 9 April 1809. From 19 to 23 April, he engaged the French in a series of running battles south of Ratisbon on the Danube and north of Landshut on the Isar. The Austrians fought battles at Teugen-Hausen, Abensberg, Landshut, Eckmühl, and Ratisbon, suffering defeat in each engagement. The southern wing of the army, consisting of V and VI Corps, and II Reserve Corps, had to retreat separately after the French separated it from Charles' main body and drove it south. Charles retreated through Ratisbon and then east along the northern bank of the Danube, reuniting with the southern wing at Krems, approximately seventy kilometers west of Vienna. The French raced down the southern bank, entering Vienna on 13 May, exactly one month after Napoleon left Paris for the campaign (Map A.1).<sup>132</sup> However, Charles waited with his army north of the Danube across from Vienna. Following these reverses, he abolished the army corps organization, favoring instead the previous system of *Abteilungen*, typically rendered as 'columns' or 'wings' in English. Unable to rely on the

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<sup>131</sup> Rothenberg 107, 127-128.

<sup>132</sup> John H. Gill, *1809, Thunder on the Danube: Napoleon's Defeat of the Habsburgs*, (London: Frontline Books, 2012), Kindle Edition, 2: "Chapter 1, On To Vienna!: 4-11 May: Retreat and Pursuit."



initiative of his subordinates, Charles resorted to issuing lengthy dispositions for the army.

The army's next test came on the banks of the Danube during the 21-22 May Battle of Aspern-Essling. Charles displayed sound strategy in choosing the time and place of the battle; he had codified his thinking in his *Principles of War* quite clearly. Dispensing with the cordon warfare *en vogue* with many Austrian commanders, he stated plainly that the best method for defending a river line was to remain concentrated behind it and attack the enemy once a portion of his troops had crossed.<sup>133</sup> Certainly Johann Beaulieu would not have been so easily dislocated from his defense behind the Mincio in northern Italy in 1796 if he had adhered to this principle.<sup>134</sup> By keeping his army concentrated and allowing Napoleon to cross a portion of his army over the Stadler arm of the Danube, Charles attained great numerical superiority against an enemy with a single line of retreat, and one intermittently compromised by a fragile bridge.<sup>135</sup> Nevertheless, despite a near-ideal situation on the first day of battle, the results fell short of expectations. The principle cause of this disappointment was in the outdated and staid Austrian tactics. The commanders of each column spent too much time performing set-piece deployments from their marching columns into battle lines, while Charles's disposition for the day had made the movements of the columns dependent on those of their neighbors.<sup>136</sup> The Austrian General Staff history of the 1809 campaign concludes that Austrian commanders, under the spell of linear tactics, rarely succeeded in shock combat with large bodies of troops. However willing to strike

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<sup>133</sup> Archduke Charles, *Militrische Schriften*, 24, 34.

<sup>134</sup> Napoleon pierced Beaulieu's extended defensive chain with relative ease in the 30 May Battle of Borghetto during the Venetian Phase of his First Italian Campaign. See David Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 86.

<sup>135</sup> Moriz von Angeli, *Erzherzog Carl von sterreich als Feldherr und Heeresorganisator* (Vienna: W. Braumuller, 1896-7), 5: 306.

<sup>136</sup> Muir, *Tactics*, 144-45.

the Austrian commanders were, they fell victim to an unsuitable tactical form.<sup>137</sup> Delay followed delay, and thanks to the excellent combat leadership of Napoleon, Jean Lannes, and Masséna, the French survived the first day of battle, repulsing the uncoordinated Austrian attacks (Map A.2).

Reinforced during the night, Napoleon nearly succeeded in breaking Charles's army on the second day of battle. Lannes's II Corps drove back the Austrian center until Charles's corps of grenadiers began to press its flank. Charles succeeded in repulsing Lannes's breakthrough attempt, but this defensive success required the use of his only reserve.<sup>138</sup> Given the disparity of forces involved, this demonstrates the poor economy of force with which Charles conducted the battle. Repeated ruptures of the pontoon bridge over the Danube prevented Louis-Nicolas Davout's III Corps from joining the battle before it was lost. Had Davout's corps arrived in strength, French victory would have been all but certain. After Napoleon ordered the retreat across the single unstable bridge to Lobau island, Charles did not pursue with his exhausted troops, but simply cannonaded the French as they withdrew.<sup>139</sup> One can hardly imagine Napoleon or nearly any of the French marshals (save Bernadotte) contenting themselves with merely holding the field against a weaker enemy withdrawing over a precarious string of pontoons.

Charles issued new tactical instructions in the aftermath of the battle. On 5 June, he recommended the mass of half divisions as the main infantry formation, covered by a light skirmish chain.<sup>140</sup> Artillery would occupy the wide intervals between battalions. For cavalry, he

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<sup>137</sup> *Krieg 1809*, prepared by the staff of the k.k. Kriegsarchiv as part of the series *Kriege unter der Regierung des Kaisers Franz*, (Vienna: Seidel und Sohn, 1907–10), 1: 111.

<sup>138</sup> Gill, *Thunder on the Danube*, 2: "Chapter 3, Aspern: Crisis in the Centre."

<sup>139</sup> Gill, *Thunder on the Danube*, 2: "Chapter 3, Aspern: 22 May: The Most Frightful Day."

<sup>140</sup> In Napoleonic contexts, 'column' usually refers to a column of divisions, each division comprising two companies or platoons. However, it can also refer to columns of companies. French battalions commonly fought on a front of one company when the flank companies of grenadiers and voltigeurs were detached. The Austrian

emphasized control and formation discipline, instructing squadrons not to gallop everywhere, and so arrive dispersed and breathless, but rather to move from slower to faster paces during the charge. Maintaining cavalry bodies in support of the charge was crucial. Charles furthermore instructed column commanders to show greater aggression, noting that in previous battles, they retreated to maintain lateral connections when a neighboring column was pushed back. Instead, he directed column commanders to attack the enemy's flanks when they pushed back an adjacent column, and so win space for that column to rejoin combat with a counterattack.<sup>141</sup>

Charles's 7 June instructions focused on the use of artillery in greater detail. He recommended commanders retain a large body of guns in reserve to ensure fire superiority at the decisive moment of the battle. He also denounced the practice of prolonged and indecisive cannonades. Artillery was not to be used in close range engagements in broken terrain, where enemy infantry could harass the gunners with skirmishing fire. Instead, the guns were to be sited on open ground, covered by a chain of skirmishers, and supported by nearby battalion masses. Similarly, the cavalry needed to be ready to charge in defense of the horse artillery, which fought at closer ranges, thanks to its greater mobility. The whole battery should share a single fire mission, and individual guns detached only in extremely rare circumstances. During enemy attacks, the artillery was to refrain from answering the enemy's counter-battery fire and focus instead on the closed bodies of their troops; suppressing the enemy's guns took paramount importance when supporting a friendly attack. Concentrated battery fire was crucial for

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'battalion mass' was essentially a column of companies in this manner. The 'division mass' closely resembled the French column of divisions but was rarely used. As such, 'column' and 'mass' were largely synonymous during the Napoleonic Wars when referring to battalion formations. The battalion column should not be confused with the much larger aforementioned *Abteilungen*, often called *Collonen* in German and 'columns' in English. See Gunther Rothenberg, *Napoleon's Great Adversaries*, 110-111.

<sup>141</sup> Archduke Charles, "Instruction über die Verwendung der drei Waffen," in "Beiträge zur Geschichte des österreichischen Heerwesens 1809," *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift*, 1869, 3: 310.

assaulting an enemy position, as was keeping troops ready to immediately exploit the effect of fire.<sup>142</sup>

The Austrians trained continuously throughout the weeks following their first victory over Napoleon, to the satisfaction of their commander. Charles's recommendations in these documents are generally sensible as far as they go; the fact that he felt the need to issue them shows an unfortunately well-justified lack of confidence in his subordinate commanders. However, like his *Principles of War*, these instructions suffered from deficiencies in key areas. Most prominently, Charles had nothing to say on the operational use of combined arms units or how these independent formations should shape the battle, signaling his intention to fight with a still semi-unitary army. Furthermore, the instructions suffer from a lack of clarity regarding the nature of modern battle. Charles did not describe the tactical use of mobile column formations or the use of reserves across the battlefield, nor does he emphasize economy of force except regarding artillery. Thus, the central element of Napoleonic battles, the keeping of strong reserves to deliver powerful blows against an exhausted enemy, did not receive its due importance.

The final great clash between Napoleon and the Archduke Charles came one month later (Map A.3). Fought over ground largely adjacent to the battlefield of Aspern-Essling, the Battle of Wagram on 5-6 July 1809 saw Napoleon first feint a crossing toward the same location as in May, and then take advantage of the interior lines of Lobau Island to cross further east during a fierce storm. Napoleon had prepared this crossing with much greater care than in May, building several bridges over the Stadler arm and driving a line of piles into the riverbed to protect the bridges and disrupt the flow of the river. Napoleon's crossing from the eastern face of the island

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 3: 311.

allowed him to nearly separate Klenau's VI Corps near Aspern from the main body of the Austrians behind the Russbach (Map A.4). Consequently, Charles had to commit his reserve cavalry and grenadiers prematurely to maintain the connection with the right wing of the army (Map A.5). Not only was Charles now forced to fight on an exterior line, but for most of the battle he lacked a general reserve. Outnumbered by 40,000 men, Charles was bitterly disappointed by Archduke John's failure to cover the thirty-five kilometers between Pressburg and Wagram to participate in the battle.<sup>143</sup> Moreover, because Napoleon had marshaled considerably superior numbers, he retained substantial reserve forces through both days of the battle (Map A.6).<sup>144</sup> The late nineteenth-century historian, Moriz von Angeli, argues that the poor marching performance of the Austrian corps compared to that of the French ensured the failure of the army to execute Charles's planned double envelopment. Regardless, the plentiful reserves available to Napoleon reduced the possibility that even threats to his flanks could have broken his army.<sup>145</sup>

Nevertheless, the performance of the Austrians on 5 and 6 July reflects progress made in refining the army tactically throughout the French Wars. While the army lacked a general reserve throughout the battle, the individual army corps proved remarkably resilient in the face of the French onslaught. The main Austrian position behind the Russbach extended roughly six kilometers; even without a general reserve, the advance guard and three army corps occupying this line held it in great depth. The ratio of men to space (approximately 81,000 men for 6100

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<sup>143</sup> Many historians have blamed John for failing to arrive. The battle was decided by the exhaustion of IV Corps's reserves on the left wing, where John's corps should have arrived. While his force of 13,000 men was likely too small to decide the battle, a struggle against Napoleon's 170,000 men should not have been attempted without every available soldier. See Oskar Criste, *Erzherzog Carl von Oesterreich: Ein Lebensbild*, (Vienna: Braumüller, 1912), 3: 246.

<sup>144</sup> Angeli, *Carl*, 5: 472-3.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 5: 520.

meters) was only slightly less than the Duke of Wellington's exceptionally deep deployment at Waterloo (68,000 men on a 4100 meter front).<sup>146</sup> As a result of the great depth of the main position, the Austrians did not break under the French assault, being able to continually feed in fresh troops to maintain the combat. Despite their numerical inferiority, the Austrians resisted Napoleon for two days before the last reserves of the left wing were consumed and the Russbach line had to be abandoned. The Austrians retreated unbroken and in good order. They brought with them thousands of French prisoners and more enemy cannon than the French took from them, and Klenau checked Masséna's pursuit in a sharp combat at Hollabrunn on 9 July 1809. However, the final confrontation of the campaign, the combat of Znaim on 10-11 July, lacked even these meagre consolations for the defeat at Wagram. Despite defending a river with superior numbers, the Austrians sustained sharp losses to Marmont's XI Corps, thus allowing Masséna's IV Corps to arrive and support the attack. The prospect of further French reinforcements convinced Charles to accept an armistice; the campaign was over, as was Charles's career as a field commander.<sup>147</sup>

The defeat in the War of the Fifth Coalition had serious repercussions for the Austrian army. Territorial losses, indemnity payments, and treaty limitations on the size of the army inhibited large scale changes to structure and doctrine after 1809. However, Napoleon's catastrophic defeat in Russia provided an opportunity for the Austrians to renegotiate their subordination to his international system; fielding an army to assert Austrian interests became Vienna's first priority. While preparation for such an eventuality had been underway since 1810,

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<sup>146</sup> See Gill, *Thunder on the Danube*, 3: "5, Wagram: Map 35" and "Appendix 13: Orders of Battle for the Battle of Wagram, 5-6 July" and Clausewitz, *On Waterloo*, ed. Christopher Bassford, <http://www.clausewitz.com/readings/1815/five30-39.htm#Ch39>. For an eighteenth-century point of comparison, Austrian field marshal Leopold von Daun held his main position at the 1760 Battle of Torgau with 33,000 infantry and cavalry on a front of 4100 meters.

<sup>147</sup> Angeli, *Carl*, 5: 540-59.

fielding a powerful army in Bohemia represented an immense challenge. Schwarzenberg commanded the army and Radetzky served as his chief of staff. In a similar position to the French army during the opening phase of the Revolutionary Wars, many of the soldiers mustered for the Army of Bohemia received very limited training. The army reduction of 1810 was structured to retain soldiers in the branches that required the longest training, such as artillery and engineers, as much as possible.<sup>148</sup> As such, the cuts had fallen hardest on the infantry. All armies strove to field as many men as possible and replace monumental losses. All thus faced the problem of incorporating new recruits, and the later Napoleonic Wars witnessed several such incidents of convergent evolution.

Like the French in the Revolutionary Wars, Schwarzenberg and Radetzky made a virtue of necessity. Schwarzenberg issued tactical instructions that outlined his thinking to the senior officers of the army. While formations remained the purview of the commander in action, Schwarzenberg recommended the battalion column or mass as the chief infantry formation. More compact than the line, battalion masses maneuvered more easily than linear formations, even if composed of imperfectly trained troops. Schwarzenberg's instructions specify that all units not assigned to a specific position be kept in closed columns for greater mobility while awaiting orders. When committed, they were to reach their position by the shortest route. As these formations were vulnerable to artillery, Schwarzenberg emphasized they be protected by terrain whenever possible.<sup>149</sup>

Schwarzenberg recommended that subordinates arrange their battalions in a checkerboard formation of masses with deployment intervals. The gaps between masses would be covered by

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<sup>148</sup> Radetzky, 9.

<sup>149</sup> Karl-Phillipp zu Schwarzenberg, "Instruction über die taktische Verhaltungen," in *Beiträge zur Geschichte des österreichischen Heerwesens* (Vienna: Siedel und Sohn, 1872), 1: 265-66.

overlapping fields of fire from the first- and second-line battalions. Furthermore, space to maneuver allowed second line battalions to quickly aid any disorganized and vulnerable first line battalions from an enemy attack. While linear formations brought every musket into action, they required well-trained soldiers to maintain order while moving, or else time to deploy from column formation. Schwarzenberg considered the line's bayonet attack "highly uncertain" compared to that of the mass, which he preferred.<sup>150</sup> Hastily trained men in column formations moved more easily across battlefield terrain but could employ relatively little firepower. To compensate for this loss of firepower, the Austrians increasingly relied on light troops and artillery.

Schwarzenberg's instructions paid little attention to combat in line, which Charles considered ideal for attack and defense alike, only stating that when necessary, its deployment from column be carried out as quickly as possible. Instead, infantry firepower was to come from the skirmishers, whose fire would precede a bayonet charge in battalion mass. While the Austrians never extended the same trust to their skirmishers as did the French at their height, they increasingly delegated responsibility for fire action away from their close order infantry, with massed artillery becoming dominant.<sup>151</sup> It is interesting to note that as the quality of French infantry declined, Napoleon also came to rely on his heavy guns to carry the burden of the firefight. Schwarzenberg emphasized the importance of concentration and aggression for artillery commanders, recommending they engage the Imperials at the closest possible distance.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 267.

<sup>151</sup> Rothenberg, *Napoleon's Great Adversaries*, 184. See also Gunther Rothenberg, *The Art of Warfare in the Age of Napoleon*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 173.

<sup>152</sup> Schwarzenberg, "Instruction," 267.



In 1813, nearly 130,000 Austrians mustered in Bohemia for the war with Napoleon. Joined by Prussian and Russian contingents to swell its numbers beyond 250,000 soldiers, Schwarzenberg's force became the main army of the coalition, hosting the three Allied monarchs. Rather than corps, the Austrian divisions were initially grouped into 'wings' of variable structure. After the expiration of the armistice of Pläswitz, Napoleon marched from Bautzen and Görlitz to attack Blücher's Army of Silesia near Breslau. In accordance with the Allied plan of operations, Schwarzenberg's Army of Bohemia advanced north on the western bank of the Elbe and over the Bohemian mountains to attack Napoleon's communications at Dresden while Blücher avoided battle (Map A.7). Schwarzenberg commanded the main body while Klenau commanded a detached wing on the left. Napoleon hastened back from Löwenberg in Silesia to meet the Allies, dispatching Vandamme's I Corps from Stolpen toward Pirna to preemptively pursue the Army of Bohemia. On 26 August, Napoleon's reinforcements saved St. Cyr's XIV Corps from being overwhelmed by Schwarzenberg, and on the 27 August, he counterattacked on both wings.<sup>153</sup>

The experience at Dresden demonstrates the limitations of even the more flexible tactical system of the Napoleonic Wars, as terrain difficulties played a key role in its outcome. Due to Schwarzenberg's faulty disposition, his left wing was separated from the main body of the Allied army by the Weißeritz stream, crossable at only one location (Map A.8). Moreover, Klenau's column, which Schwarzenberg intended to support the isolated left wing, did not arrive in time. Napoleon deployed one cavalry and one army corps under Joachim Murat against the Austrian left, which consisted of the divisions of Nikolaus von Weißenwolf and Alois von Liechtenstein

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<sup>153</sup> Francis Loraine Petre, *Napoleon's Last Campaigns in Germany 1813* (London: John Lane, the Bodley Head, 1912), 209-214.

commanded by Ignác Gyulay, and Joseph de Mesko von Felső-Kubiny's light division of Klenau's wing. On the far left, Mesko's division suffered the worst, with whole regiments forced to surrender to Murat's cavalry. The inability of the Austrian infantry to fire their muskets in the rain exacerbated the problem, opposed as they were by a strong cavalry force. After Klenau's main body finally arrived, it could do nothing but cover the retreat of Weißenwolf's and Liechtenstein's battered divisions.<sup>154</sup>

The Battle of Dresden was the closest Napoleon came to a victory over a markedly stronger enemy, although the odds were not quite 2:1 against him. Rather than fundamental flaws in the Austrian army's tactical doctrine, the chief causes of the defeat included the poor deployment of Schwarzenberg's army on the terrain, Klenau's tardiness in supporting the left wing, and the heavy rains that swept Germany at the end of August 1813. At Dresden and later at the October 1813 Battle of Leipzig, misplaced faith in Friedrich von Langenau's knowledge and experience as a Saxon officer would contribute to Schwarzenberg's questionable use of terrain. Regardless, Napoleon's success proved fleeting as the other Allied armies defeated his secondary armies.

Although Schwarzenberg suffered a serious defeat at Dresden, the campaign had only just begun; Napoleon won one battle, but before the week was out, his armies would lose three. Blücher inflicted the most serious defeat at the Katzbach while Bülow repulsed Oudinot's attempt to capture Berlin. Even the army defeated at Dresden was far from beaten and took advantage of Napoleon's mistakes. Although Napoleon halted the pursuit, Vandamme's I Corps continued to attack Ostermann-Tolstoy's Russians through 29 August. The isolation of Vandamme's corps provided an excellent opportunity for the Allies. While the Russians

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<sup>154</sup> Edmund Glaise von Horstenau, *Feldzug von Dresden 1813* (Vienna, L. W. Seidel and Sohn, 1913), 276-89.

defended their position obstinately, a Prussian column under Kleist cut across Vandamme's line of retreat on 30 August while Colloredo's Austrians advanced to envelop his right wing (Map A.9). Notably, accounts of the latter movement 'read' almost exactly like the celebrated mobility of French armies. Screened by a chain of skirmishers and arrayed in deep order to provide ample reserves, Colloredo led his division in several columns over the rough terrain of the Bohemian foothills.<sup>155</sup> Vandamme deployed one brigade to protect his flank, but after it had to withdraw, an Austrian cavalry charge cut into the exposed position, capturing 1400 prisoners. However, Colloredo hesitated in his attack, and Kleist's corps thus suffered serious losses as the French struggled to escape; only two battalions from Frederick Bianchi's Austrian division briefly participated, taking prisoners as the enemy retreated.<sup>156</sup> Thus, although an over-cautious commander limited the fruits of the victory, the Austrians demonstrated the military skills that would contribute to the decisive victory in the next great clash with Napoleon.

As noted, the 1813 campaign in Germany climaxed in the 16-19 October Battle of Leipzig. Blücher and Bernadotte crossed the Elbe, then retreated west to evade Napoleon's counteroffensive at Bad Dübener Heide while Schwarzenberg and Bennigsen approached Napoleon's new position at Leipzig from the south (Maps A.10- A.13). Blücher and Bernadotte then turned south to ensure that a decisive clash would take place. More than 500,000 men fought in the battle that would determine the fate of Europe. By all reliable measures, it was the greatest battle fought in the history of the world to that point. Napoleon anchored his front on the line of villages of Liebertwolkwitz on his left, Wachau in the center, and Markkleeberg on his right. In his first echelon, he posted V, II, and VIII Corps. He positioned the Guard Artillery in his grand

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<sup>155</sup> Maximilian Ehn, *Befreiungskriege 1813 und 1814: Schlacht bei Kulm*. (Vienna, L.W. Seidel and Sohn, 1913), 4: 136-140.

<sup>156</sup> Ehn, *Kulm*, 4: 158.

battery on the Gallows Hill between Wachau and Liebertwolkwitz. He kept XI and IX Corps in reserve, along with I, II, IV, and V Cavalry Corps and the Imperial Guard, which consisted of two Young Guard corps, one corps of Old Guard, and the Guard Cavalry Corps. This was an extraordinarily deep deployment, massing more than 120,000 men on a front of 6400 meters.<sup>157</sup>

In the southern sector, the Allies advanced north against the French positions in seven columns on the 16<sup>th</sup>. The five on the right, led by Klenau, Andrei Gortschakov, Pyotr Pahlen, Eugene of Württemberg, and Kleist, attacked the Liebertwolkwitz, Wachau, and Markkleeberg line of villages from east to west. West of the Pleiße River, Maximilian von Merveldt's column attempted to outflank the French line, attacking across the stream toward the village of Connewitz; further west, beyond the Elster River, Gyulay's column threatened the French line of retreat, which ran through the defile of Lindenau. The Russian Foot and Horse Guard stood in reserve, alongside the Prussian Guards and the Austrian grenadiers and cuirassiers (Map A.14). In the north, Blücher advanced against the French with two corps commanded by Yorck and Langeron; the fighting reaching a fever pitch in the engagement around Möckern.

The Battle of Leipzig provides fascinating examples of ongoing trends in European warfare during the Revolutionary Era. While it is tempting to portray the various sectors as separate battles, the use of reserves shifted between the different sectors testifies to the essential unity of the battle. However frantic the fighting became from moment to moment, neither army shattered its opponent on the 16<sup>th</sup>, but by nightfall, Napoleon had lost his European empire. The chief explanation for this result is the consumption of his reserves during the day's fighting,

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<sup>157</sup> The scaled maps available are not in universal agreement. Map A.14 in the Appendix shows the distance from Markkleeberg to Liebertwolkwitz to be approximately 4000 yards, while Vincent J. Esposito gives 4 miles as the distance. I have converted figures to meters in the text to facilitate comparison. Esposito's 4 miles or 6400 meters is thus a conservative figure in terms the force to space ratio of Napoleon's deployment. See Vincent J. Esposito, *Atlas to Accompany Napoleon as a General by Count Yorck von Wartenburg*, (West Point: U.S. Military Academy, 1955), Map 109.

compared to the reinforcements the Allies could expect the following days. Napoleon appeared to be on the cusp of a decisive victory after II, V, and XI Corps ejected the Allies from Wachau and Liebertwolkwitz, exposing them to the massed fire of his grand battery on the Gallows Hill, the attack of the Young Guard, and the charges of Murat's cavalry in I, IV, and V Cavalry Corps, but he lacked the reserves to clinch the battle. XI, V, and II Young Guard Corps attacked toward the University Wood on the Allied right while II, VIII, and I Young Guard Corps attacked between Wachau and Markkleeberg. One column of the massed reserve cavalry supported the latter attack, while a second under Murat attempted to break the Allied center around Guldengossa.<sup>158</sup> The Allied reserves repulsed Napoleon's decisive attack across the battlefield; the Russian cuirassiers defeated Murat's cavalry column, the Russian 1<sup>st</sup> Grenadier Division moved to support Kleist, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> shifted to relieve the Allied columns near the University Wood. The Austrian reserve cavalry defeated the right column of Napoleon's cavalry, then attacked the squares of the Young Guard.<sup>159</sup> Not only did Blücher famously grapple with the better part of two army corps with strong cavalry support in the north, but Gyulay's threat to the French line of retreat forced Napoleon to commit Henri Bertrand's IV corps far from the main field of battle to support the Leipzig garrison troops under attack at Lindenau.

The disposition of the Army of Bohemia on the 16<sup>th</sup> has been widely criticized, principally for its failure to adequately account for the difficult terrain that would hinder Allied efforts on their left wing. The marshy ground between the Pleiße and the Elster Rivers obstructed Merveldt's attempts to advance his artillery, seriously weakening his attack. Nevertheless, the Allied columns fought well enough on the 16<sup>th</sup>, as demonstrated by the even rate of attrition

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<sup>158</sup> Maximilian Ritter von Hoen, *Befreiungskriege 1813 und 1814: Feldzug von Leipzig* (Vienna: L.W. Seidel and Sohn, 1913), 5: 463.

<sup>159</sup> Hoen, *Feldzug von Leipzig*, 5: 474.

throughout the day. As a point of comparison, during the 18 June 1815 Battle of Waterloo, the Duke of Wellington's reserves dwindled to critical levels after a few hours, especially following the fall of La Haye Sainte, while Napoleon still retained the Imperial Guard and VI Corps as his reserve.<sup>160</sup> By contrast, at Leipzig, Napoleon was forced to commit his reserves first, and exhausted them by the end of the day. For the first time in their many wars with Napoleon, the Austrians conducted the battle with an economy of force on par with that of the French.

One of the most striking examples of this economy of force is the mass use of skirmishers. In Revolutionary France, the use of whole battalions of line infantry in open order was considered a noteworthy innovation. In the same crucible of battle, Austrian infantry tactics developed along similar lines. During the engagement on 16 October around Dölitz, four companies of the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment dispersed into a chain of skirmishers with two companies remaining as formed reserves around the *Schloß*.<sup>161</sup> Similarly, the 44<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment engaged the Poles near Connewitz in a sharp firefight at 10 p.m., with the first battalion's skirmish line receiving waves of reinforcement from the second battalion.<sup>162</sup> Light companies, third-rankers, and battalions in open order formed much of the frontline firefight, thus keeping more of the army out of the reach of fire and ready to use as a fresh reserve.

The 48<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, fighting in Bianchi's division of the Austrian reserve, demonstrated proficiency in modern tactics during the 2 p.m. engagement at the Auenhayn sheep farm, southeast of Markkleeberg on the French right. Charged with storming the Maierhof, strongly held by the French and flanked with multiple batteries of artillery, the Austrians took the

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<sup>160</sup> Clausewitz, *On Waterloo*, <http://clausewitz.com/readings/1815/five40-49.htm#Ch40>

<sup>161</sup> Hoen, *Feldzug von Leipzig*, 5: 457.

<sup>162</sup> Franz von Banko, *Geschichte des k.k. Infanterie-Regimentes Nr 44 Feldmarschall Erzherzog Albrechts, von seiner Errichtung 1744 bis 1875* (Vienna: Hof- und Staatsdruderei, 1875), 202.

structure by attacking in multiple waves. The 48<sup>th</sup>'s second battalion led the attack, pushing back the French, but the success against the strong position was incomplete until the attack received the support of two Russian battalions. However, after Napoleon's main attack, Auenhayn fell into the hands of French II Corps. Victory in this engagement came when the next wave, consisting of the 48<sup>th</sup>'s first battalion and Grenadier Battalion Call, outflanked the French position and expelled them with a bayonet charge. During the fighting, the grenadier battalion stormed the Maierhof and retrieved a Russian flag previously captured by the French.<sup>163</sup> Pursuing the enemy up the hill opposite Auenhayn, the regiment was threatened by cavalry on the flanks. Forming the men in 'clumps,' the regiment was able to make a fighting withdrawal and hold Auenhayn until nightfall.<sup>164</sup>

In Klenau's corps on the other end of the line, the 15<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment similarly demonstrated proficiency in fighting in multiple waves. The regiment's first battalion was ordered to hold the Seifersheim village and repulsed several French attacks until overpowered by multiple enemy columns, which broke into the position. However, a quick counterattack by the second battalion and three companies from the third expelled the French, leading the way for the rest of the division to retake its position in front of the village.<sup>165</sup>

As a testament to the ability of the Allies to keep pace with the French tactically, Napoleon had to commit his last reserves to repulse Allied attacks on the 16<sup>th</sup>. The Old Guard rarely directly fought in most of Napoleon's battles, but he needed to commit its 2<sup>nd</sup> Division

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<sup>163</sup> Hauptmann Novotny and Edmund Finke, *Geschichte Des k.k. 36. Linien-Infanterie-Regiments*, Prague, (self-published, 1875), 638.

<sup>164</sup> Alexander Hold, *Geschichte des k.k. 48. Linien-Infanterie-Regimentes von seiner zweiten Errichtung im Jahre 1798 an*. (Vienna: published by the regiment 1875), 92-96.

<sup>165</sup> Ludwig Rona, *Geschichte des k.k. Infanterie-Regimentes Adolf Grossherzog von Luxemburg, Herzog zu Nassau Nr. 15*, (Prague: Bellmann, 1901), 442.

along with III Corps's 11<sup>th</sup> Division to the engagement at Dölitz. Bianchi's and Weißenwolf's divisions of the Austrian reserve drove Augereau's IX Corps from Markkleeberg and Merveldt's column crossed the Pleiße to take Dölitz. The Imperial reinforcements counterattacked and retook Dölitz, capturing Merveldt in the process.<sup>166</sup> Regardless, even after committing his last reserves, Napoleon had lost the battle. The Allies maintained their superiority in fresh reserves despite Napoleon's attempts to shift the balance.

He would not get another chance. While the 17<sup>th</sup> passed in relative quiet compared to the furious battle of the 16<sup>th</sup>, the tactical balance became truly overwhelming as fresh Allied forces arrived. Bennigsen's Army of Poland, Bernadotte's Army of the North, and Colloredo's column reinforced the Allied armies by over 100,000 men while Napoleon received the reinforcement of Reynier's lone VII Corps. The 18<sup>th</sup> saw fierce concentric attacks all along the front of Napoleon's position (Map A.15). Philip of Hesse-Homburg led the Austrian divisions of Bianchi and Ignaz von Hardegg against Dölitz and Dösen, respectively, eventually forcing Napoleon to commit one division of the Young Guard to restore the situation. The fighting swung too and fro as Colloredo, who assumed command after Hesse-Homburg fell wounded, fed successive grenadier battalions from Weißenwolf's division into Dölitz, capturing the village by 2:00.

The action around Dölitz further illustrates the essential modernity of Austrian infantry tactics in 1813. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment, fighting in Bianchi's division, attacked in two waves. The second battalion led the attack, gaining a foothold in the village, but was unable to capture it, prompting the colonel to call for the support of the first battalion. Its commander was shot dead reconnoitering his angle of attack, but a captain of the Quartermaster-General Staff,

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<sup>166</sup> Wartenburg, *Napoleon as a General*, 2: 352.



accompanying the attack as a volunteer, quickly took charge and completed the regiment's assault. Some of the imperials driven out of the village retreated onto the flood plains west of the village, where they proceeded to fire into the regiment's flank. In response, the first battalion dispatched two companies to repulse the French. The first company formed a skirmish line and drove the French to the edge of the plains, but was suddenly attacked in the flank by Polish lancers, approximately two squadrons. Despite being surprised and in a disadvantageous formation, the company succeeded in regrouping and driving off the enemy cavalry. Meanwhile, the second company faced a battery of Polish guns. The Austrians pushed forward a small vanguard in open order to harass the gunners, who could not effectively target such a dispersed band with their cannons. When a company of Polish infantry charged to protect the battery, the twelve men of the vanguard stopped their attack with well-aimed fire; the main body of the company then charged with fixed bayonets and captured the battery.<sup>167</sup>

To the right of Dölitz, the French occupied a wood, which the first and second battalions of 18<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment assaulted in columns. The first battalion advanced in two wings. The attack of the right wing drew enemy reinforcements to the wood, and the subsequent bayonet charge of the left wing swept the enemy from their position. Still more infantry and artillery moved to reinforce the French, driving the Austrians out again. Finally, the colonel of the regiment personally led the second battalion and carried the wood for the rest of the day.<sup>168</sup> As with the case of 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment, the judicious use of small units, led by intrepid officers and NCOs, allowed the Austrian infantry to hit their opponents with a succession of blows, a

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<sup>167</sup> Ludwig Kirchthaler, *Geschichte des k.k. Infanterie-Regimentes Nr. 2, für immerwährende Zeiten Alexander I Kaiser von Russland*. (Vienna, G. David & A. Keisa, 1895), 360-361

<sup>168</sup> Gustav Amon von Treuenfest, *Geschichte des k.k. Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 18, Constantin Grossfürst von Russland, von 1682 bis 1882* (Vienna: L. Mayer, 1882), 411-13.

necessity against an opponent with ample reserves and experience using them. A French counterattack forced the Austrians out of Dölitz after a stubborn defense, but fresh Austrian troops won back the village by 5 p.m.

Elsewhere, Dösen fell after a lengthy struggle, and a general advance by Colloredo's column captured Löbnig. The subsequent attacks on Connewitz ended only with the intervention of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division of the Old Guard, but the Austrians could not be dislodged from Dölitz and Dösen. Nightfall ended the engagement.<sup>169</sup> The Austrian corps engaged retained considerable reserves throughout the battle on 18 October. The 22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment, fighting in Klenau's corps on the Bohemian Army's right wing, spent most of 18 October as a corps reserve after a brief assault on the Kolmberg hill after capturing the position. The rest of the corps pushed on to Zuckelhausen, which was captured with the support of a Prussian brigade.<sup>170</sup> By the end of the day, Napoleon's defensive had consumed all but his very last reserves; the Allies retained roughly 100,000 fresh troops to his 10-12,000. Even a general as bold and confident in his skills and his army as Napoleon recognized he could no longer stand against such overwhelming numbers, and he thus decided to retreat.

The storming of Leipzig itself represents a shortcoming in Austrian adaptation of Napoleonic warfare (Map A.16). The enemy's retreat being assured, a direct attack against his powerful rearguard was a misapplication of force. Instead, the pursuit of the enemy army as a whole typically ensures greater results at a lesser cost. Moreover, the dispositions for 19 October demonstrate a fixation on geographic points and positions rather than the Napoleonic

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<sup>169</sup> Maximillian Ritter von Hoen, *Feldzug von Liepzig*, 602-605.

<sup>170</sup> Gustav Hubka von Czerncitz, *Geschichte des k.k. Infanterie-regiments Graf von Lacy nr. 22 von seiner errichtung bis zur gegenwart: Im auftrage des regiments-kommandos bearbeitet*, (Zara: published by the regiment, 1902), 221.

focus on the main enemy army.<sup>171</sup> The decision to storm Leipzig was a tactical action with great strategic importance. The predominant question is if a more immediate pursuit would have damaged Napoleon's army to such a degree that it could not resist an invasion of France as tenaciously as it did in 1814. This is a complicated question to assess. The most effective pursuits, such as those following Jena and Napoleon's retreat from Russia, force the enemy into greater exertions by using parallel marches to threaten a strategic envelopment. This threat is best combined with a second column directly following the enemy to collect stragglers and abandoned guns and wagons.<sup>172</sup> Karl Philipp von Wrede's Austro-Bavarian army already threatened Napoleon's line of retreat over the Rhine (Map A.17), and the direct assault on Leipzig led to the premature destruction of the bridge over the Elster and the resultant crop of prisoners and trophies. While the brilliant results of the attack on the 19<sup>th</sup> were not assured, neither was Napoleon's rapid victory over Wrede at Hanau on 30-31 October. The threat to his line of retreat and the Allied armies following him forced Napoleon to retreat in great haste, covering the nearly 300 kilometers between Leipzig and Hanau in just eleven days. During this phase of the retreat, Napoleon lost thousands of men as prisoners while still more deserted the army or formed bands of marauders; he exacerbated the problem by having garrisoned much of his precious remaining strength in German fortresses, left stranded by his retreat.<sup>173</sup> It is difficult to determine whether a more immediate pursuit would have forced Napoleon to accelerate his retreat and further exacerbate the attrition of his forces. The question also remains if the Allied armies could have blocked Napoleon's line of retreat had they not given his columns a head start by attacking his rearguard in Leipzig. In war, all action is directed toward probabilities, and

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<sup>171</sup> Leggiere, *Napoleon and the Struggle for Germany*, 732-3.

<sup>172</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 268-269.

<sup>173</sup> Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 938-939.

Schwarzenberg's orders for a direct assault against the strong position of Napoleon's rearguard reduced the probability that Napoleon's main body would be destroyed east of the Rhine. In any case, the tactical decision to make a direct attack at Leipzig was ultimately outweighed by the strategic decision made at Allied headquarters to divert Schwarzenberg's army toward Switzerland and the Upper Rhine during the winter. Even if the Allied pursuit did not destroy Napoleon's army in Germany, a second battle in France in November likely would have assured his downfall.

The Austrian experience in the Napoleonic Wars offers a useful lens through which to examine periods of revolutionary military change. Like the Prussians, the Austrians needed to adapt to changes based in the fabric of society without risking the foundations of the Old Regime state. As such, the Austrians could not adopt the most radical transformation of French armies—the citizen-soldier—rooted as it was in a remade social contract between the French nation-state and the citizen. Even the attempts at a *Landwehr* system, which proved effective in absolutist Prussia, fell short of expectations. Nevertheless, the Austrians adapted the new methods of warfare to their institutions as well as they could and emerged successful from the decades-long struggle with France. The ultimate victory resulted primarily from skillful diplomacy, effective strategy, and superior numbers, but all would have come to naught if the battles could not be won. Here, tactics, organization, and doctrine take pride of place. Although the Austrians never surpassed the French tactically, especially in the skill of senior officers, the remaining disparity could not win the war for Napoleon. Frederick the Great emerged triumphant from his war with all of the continental Powers, repeatedly defeating much stronger enemies in battle by exploiting the inherent weaknesses of linear armies. While Napoleon was a commander of no lesser ability, the military changes of his times made armies more resilient than ever before. He benefitted

from these changes after he organized the French army into permanent, self-sufficient corps and divisions, arrayed them in great depth, and shaped the course of battles primarily through the use of mobile reserves. However, after his enemies adopted the same methods, the other edge of the sword bit keenly. Facing more resilient enemies in greater numbers than ever before, even Napoleon's genius could not save him in the Battle of the Nations. Napoleon then had his back to the wall, fighting desperately to preserve his throne in 1814. While the campaign was all but hopeless, the successes he did achieve against the powerful, modern armies invading France hinged ultimately on the misguided application of a limited war strategy against Napoleon, the 'emperor of battles.'

## CHAPTER V

### WAR AND POLITICS

The German campaign of 1813 was the greatest in European history until the First World War, climaxing in the largest pitched battle in world history. As the last of Napoleon's columns trudged west over the Rhine, no one could harbor any realistic doubts as to the outcome of the war. Nevertheless, Napoleon's intransigence during the last months of his empire cost thousands of lives, and the victorious Allies needed to fight hard in the 1814 invasion of France to finally secure peace. The invasion of France and the dramatic cut and thrust of desperate battles overwhelmed attempts at rational diplomacy, ending with a French defeat without precedent. Clausewitz is known for his reserved, cerebral analysis, but even he could not conceal his awe at the epic conclusion of two decades of war. "Proud Paris had for the first time to bow her head, and the terrible Bonaparte lay bound and chained."<sup>174</sup>

Like the 1813 Fall Campaign, the 1814 invasion of France illustrates the complexity of adapting to a new way of war with complex and contradictory political objectives in a coalition struggle. Metternich, Schwarzenberg, and Radetzky had to balance both shared and national political objectives in an exceptionally volatile strategic environment. The state of French public opinion and enthusiasm for war, Napoleon's personal desperation, the sudden vulnerability of one of the Great Powers to utter prostration, and the constant intrusions of chance and chaos on the battlefield all conspired to nullify the influence of plans over reality. Still, examining Austrian planners' designs and their attempts to actualize them illustrate the crucial issues surrounding the monumental struggle that ended the French Wars. While the military strategy they developed was theoretically sound, they misjudged their adversary's willingness to make

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<sup>174</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 592.

peace and so strategized under false premises. This is not an exhaustive account of the campaign of 1814, but its general contours are sketched near the end.

Although Clausewitz's incomplete treatise, *On War*, is by far his most famous work, his two letters to a fellow staff officer discussing strategy are useful windows into the nature of strategy and operational planning in the Napoleonic period. Discussing a pair of strategic problems circulated for discussion among general staff officers, these letters emphasize the influence of political purposes on war plans. The strategic problems centered on a hypothetical war of Prussia against Saxony and Austria, and officers were canvassed for responses. Clausewitz considered the problems in question very poor, as they left the political situation wholly undefined. In his thinking, this was a matter of vital importance.

We still cannot ignore those conditions that have brought about the war and that determine its political purpose. The political purpose and the means available to achieve it give rise to the military objective. This ultimate goal of the entire belligerent act, or of the particular campaign if the two are identical, is therefore the first and most important issue that the strategist must address, for the main lines of the strategic plan run toward this, goal, or at least are guided by it. It is one thing to intend to crush my opponent if I have the means to do so, to make him defenseless and force him to accept my peace terms. It is obviously something different to be content with gaining some advantage by conquering a strip of land, occupying a fortress, etc., which I can retain or use in negotiations when the fighting stops.<sup>175</sup>

The war against France was a coalition struggle involving every great power in Europe, and as such its political contours were exceptionally complex. Not only did Austria have a formidable enemy in Napoleon and the French, but the Russian tsar was himself an opponent after a fashion. Metternich's commitment to shaping a European balance of power favorable to the Habsburg monarchy was the guiding star of Austrian planning in 1813 and 1814. Despite the powerful influence of long-term trends and abstract forces on history, there are still many times

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<sup>175</sup> Clausewitz, *Two Letters on Strategy*, Trans. Peter Paret and Daniel Moran (Carlisle: US Army War College, 1984), 21.

when events and the decisions of individuals determine its course. The Napoleonic wars did not have to end with France humbled, Napoleon in exile, and the Bourbon dynasty restored to their ancient throne. The restoration of 1814 occurred despite the efforts of influential figures like Metternich and Schwarzenberg, who continued to seek a more moderate peace.

The nature of the French Revolution, Napoleon, and the relationship between the two are divisive questions even today, but were even more vitally important during the War of the Sixth Coalition, when Napoleon's existence as a ruling monarch was on trial before the Great Powers of Europe. Napoleon portrayed himself during the Consulate as a peace maker. He ended the insurgency in the Vendée through a combination of force, negotiation, and compromise. Furthermore, he ended the War of the Second Coalition in the only general peace of the era, however short it was. Metternich believed that France's expansionism during the Revolution stemmed from domestic instability, and that Napoleon showed his value as a guarantor of civil peace in France. A strong France could serve as a useful counterweight to an overweening Russia. As a power in the middle of Europe, Austria sought equilibrium and strove to prevent the hegemony of any one state.<sup>176</sup>

Crushing Napoleon and leaving him helpless as a political and military actor was thus not necessarily desirable. While a general engagement with Napoleon's remaining forces could serve Austria's purposes, the limitation of objectives meant that other means of securing peace were theoretically available. After defeating Napoleon at Leipzig, the Allied armies chased Napoleon out of Germany (Maps A.17, A.18). From the historic city of Frankfurt, one day's march from the Rhine border, the Allied monarchs dispatched Auguste Saint-Aignan, the French emissary to Gotha and Weimar, with their peace terms on 9 November 1813. They demanded

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<sup>176</sup> Kissinger, *A World Restored*, 32, 59.



independence for Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and Italy, but would allow Napoleon to retain the throne of France and the Natural Frontiers, bought with so much blood during the Revolutionary Wars. In a letter to Caulaincourt, Metternich expressed no confidence the terms would be accepted, but that it was necessary to offer peace.<sup>177</sup> In December, he published a manifesto to France, expressing the Allies' respect and their offer to allow France greater territory than it had ever controlled under its kings; as he put it, "flattering the vanity instead of embittering the feelings of the nation."<sup>178</sup> The chief object of the Coalition was lasting peace, which would be all the harder to secure if Allied high-handedness stoked a peoples' war in France. As Robert Wilson, the British attaché at the headquarters of the Allied Main Army, keenly observed in a letter to his brother in December 1813,

To secure what we have, I still pronounce my belief that peace is necessary. Without the loss of 100,000 men, I believe we might have had the peace which is required for the attainment of the objects of Europe. If it is proclaimed that we are to make a crusade against France, and not sheathe our swords until we have planted our standards in Paris and struck off Buonaparte's head, then I should not talk of peace on the Rhine but very cheerfully make war all my life. If, however, the balance of power is the desideratum, then I must make my grenadier ardour [*sic*] subservient to the statesman's consideration and respect his "ne plus ultra."<sup>179</sup>

Nevertheless, a few days later, he remarked in his personal diary with wry wit that even though the Allied sovereigns had foresworn an invasion of France, "the appetite grows with the eating."<sup>180</sup> In war, the intrusions of chance and chaos, of apprehension and terror, of the shame of defeat and the exultation of victory, often serve to overwhelm these attempts at rational calculation.

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<sup>177</sup> Siemann, *Metternich*, 375-376.

<sup>178</sup> Metternich, *Memoirs*, 1: 214.

<sup>179</sup> Robert Wilson, *Private Diary of Travels, Personal Services, and Public Events: During the Mission Employed with the European Armies in the Campaigns of 1812, 1813, 1814*, (London, 1861), 244.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.

There is some controversy in classifying the campaign of 1814 as one of limited objectives for the Allies, turning largely on the sincerity of the peace offers extended to Napoleon during the course of the war. Siemann argues that Metternich pursued Napoleon's overthrow from an early stage, and that his proposals for peace, at the Prague Congress, at Frankfurt, and at Châtillon, were only tactical measures to alienate French public opinion from Napoleon's war effort. This was the tack taken by Metternich's own memoirs, Siemann's most important source.<sup>181</sup> Siemann also produces contemporary statements to corroborate his stance, such as a letter to Wilhelmine von Sagan, Metternich's mistress, stating, "For years I have told myself: 'I shall kill Napoleon' and I shall establish peace in the world . . . and if Napoleon lives, if he rules—he will be smaller, as if he had never ruled!"<sup>182</sup> Nevertheless, there are many reasons to doubt the truth of Metternich's statements. As Munro Price's detailed narrative of the events of 1814 show, Metternich in his actions displayed greater concern towards constraining Russian power than in actually crushing Napoleon. He certainly did not share the tsar's indifferently concealed intention to enthrone Bernadotte in France, writing to Schwarzenberg that he would not sacrifice a single Austrian soldier to this end.<sup>183</sup> When the Frankfurt proposals were made, there was not yet any sign the Bourbons, the main alternative to Bernadotte and Napoleon, had the public support the Allies viewed as a necessity for a French government.<sup>184</sup> Moreover, Metternich undertook considerable risks in making his peace offers. At Frankfurt, the offer included a statement to the effect that Britain was willing to compromise on the matter of maritime rights, when in fact the British diplomats had offered no such concessions. While the

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 339-340.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 385.

<sup>183</sup> Price, *The End of Glory*, 187.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 189.

so-called Frankfurt Proposals of the three Continental powers would present the British with a *fait accompli* if Napoleon accepted, Metternich risked alienating a key ally if the proposal went nowhere. Metternich furthermore made sure to impress on Saint-Aignan how welcome the appointment of the pro-peace Caulaincourt as foreign minister would be at Allied headquarters.<sup>185</sup> In the end, complications in the Allied camp undermined the peace proposals; the British repudiated the maritime concessions while the tsar withdrew his support following the Austrian violation of Swiss neutrality.<sup>186</sup> If the purpose had been purely tactical, these developments would only serve to weaken the ruse, and had Napoleon seized the opportunity instead of delaying his response, withdrawing the offer would have inflamed with apparent duplicity the popular passions in France the Allies strove to defuse.

After the Allied armies breached the ‘Natural Frontiers,’ negotiations continued as the Allies summoned Caulaincourt to a peace congress at Châtillon, which met from 5-10 February, and briefly on 17 February. Metternich had succeeded in extracting concessions from British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh regarding the French frontier. While Britain would not consent to Antwerp remaining in French hands, much of the Rhineland among other territories could stay French.<sup>187</sup> Metternich’s memoirs blame Napoleon’s unwillingness to make peace for the failure of the congress. Metternich also claimed that he did not fear the Châtillon Congress would result in an “untimely settlement” with Napoleon making peace before he was overthrown, as Metternich claimed was his objective.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 158, 160.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 189-190. These other territories would include Nice on the Mediterranean, Savoy on the Western side of the Alps, and parts of the Netherlands; Castlereagh proposed the Meuse as the French border with a restored Dutch state.

<sup>188</sup> Metternich, *Memoirs*, 1: 231-233.

As was often the case, Metternich was economical with the truth. That this offer was sincere can be seen from the fact that the Austrians (Stadion and Metternich) were furious that the tsar undermined it by not granting his representative the authority to sign an immediate peace should Napoleon accept the Frankfurt Proposals. In response, Metternich threatened to sign a separate peace and withdraw Austria from the coalition.<sup>189</sup> On his own initiative after the 18 February Battle of Montereau, Schwarzenberg proposed an armistice; the specific terms were to be negotiated from 24 February at Lusigny. As the shifting course of military events had interfered with diplomacy before, a standstill would simplify negotiations. These failed because Napoleon refused to compromise regarding the demarcation line for the ceasefire, demanding the evacuation of Allied armies beyond the French frontier. The talks were suspended on 5 March.<sup>190</sup> Nevertheless, the repeated efforts of the Austrians to negotiate with Napoleon in his weakened state show that until the last moment, they sought a limited political objective in the war with France.<sup>191</sup> As such, their strategy in the final campaign of the War of the Sixth Coalition must be judged through this lens.

Leading the Imperial far right wing during the Russian campaign of 1812, Schwarzenberg had personally witnessed the incredible devastation the war unleashed on both Russia and the French army. In a moment of political cynicism, he remarked in a letter to his wife that it was probably for the best that “both colossi” suffer, hoping that a more balanced international situation would result, rather than wishing to see one power permanently

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<sup>189</sup> Price, *The End of Glory*, 198.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 199-201.

<sup>191</sup> In fact, even during the Hundred Days of 1815, Metternich with the tsar’s approval offered to restore Napoleon’s son to the French throne if he would return to exile. As such, his later statements about believing the Bourbons alone could guarantee peace in France ring hollow. Metternich’s memoirs obscure this point and Siemann’s biography omits it. See Price, *The End of Glory*, 255-256, cf. Metternich, *Memoirs*, 1: 258.

crippled.<sup>192</sup> Schwarzenberg personally believed France needed to be restored to the frontiers of 1789 and desired a regency for the King of Rome under Marie Louise.<sup>193</sup> He did not trust Napoleon's sincerity in peace negotiations. Writing on 1 December 1813, he mused that Napoleon's appointment of Caulaincourt was a feint, designed to present the appearance of peaceful intentions for public consumption: "I do not believe that at this moment he really thinks of peace after his great military misfortunes."<sup>194</sup> Nevertheless, Schwarzenberg's letters repeatedly emphasize a desire for moderation in the war, avoiding a march on Paris and the further chaos it would bring, as well as hope that the peace congress at Châtillon would be productive.<sup>195</sup> Coupled with his attempt to secure an armistice, his words and actions during the campaign indicate his willingness to reach a negotiated peace with Napoleon.

In war, the total defeat of the enemy typically calls for the destruction of their forces and occupation of their territory, which prevents them from mustering new forces. When the total defeat of the enemy is not the aim of the war, there are two main strategic alternatives to the destruction of their forces. One is by raising the cost of the struggle; when the resources expended exceed the value of the enemy's political objective, the objective should be given up. Most insurgencies follow this pattern. The other is by making success so improbable for the enemy that they accept peace terms rather than stake their future on an unlikely gamble. Because chance and probability exert so much influence in war, it is only natural that manipulating probability can undergird an effective limited-aim strategy of exhaustion. However, such a strategy requires the real strength to win a confrontation should the enemy 'call

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<sup>192</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 27 December 1812, Schwarzenberg, *Briefe*, No. 226, 296.

<sup>193</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 3 February 1814, *ibid.*, No. 272, 372.

<sup>194</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 1 December 1813, *ibid.*, No. 263, 355.

<sup>195</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 26 January 1814, *ibid.*, No. 270, 369-370

the bluff.’<sup>196</sup>

After achieving the long-sought goal of driving the French out of Germany, the Allies once again called on Radetzky to draft plans for the next phase of the war. In a 7 November 1813 memorandum, Radetzky stressed the present opportunity. Raising a new army after the 1812 retreat from Russia required five months of personal attention from Napoleon, but after Leipzig, the Allied armies were on his doorstep. Radetzky warned that if they did not make use of the coming months, they would come to regret it.<sup>197</sup> The objective was to force Napoleon to sign an acceptable peace; the guiding principle to achieving this was to always increase the probability of the Coalition’s successful outcome.<sup>198</sup> Radetzky’s first plan was to cross the Middle Rhine with the main army of 200,000 men and besiege Mainz, believing forces based there could interfere with operations across the Upper and Lower Rhine if left unchecked. Some 80,000 men would reduce the fortress while 120,000 formed the army of observation. While battle and hardship were unavoidable in war against Napoleon, he trusted the resilience and superior numbers of the Allied armies to produce a victory.<sup>199</sup> In a different plan, he borrowed the terminology of siege warfare to describe the position of the Allied armies along the Rhine. The river was like the curtain wall of a fortress, at both ends flanked by considerable bastions: Switzerland and the Netherlands (Map A.18). While it was obviously impossible to provide flanking fire from these ‘bastions’ like one would in the defense of a fortress, they still represented a threat to the Allied advance as forces based in these ‘bastions’ could threaten their

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<sup>196</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 91, 92.

<sup>197</sup> Radetzky, *Denkschriften*, 232-232.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 251, 248.

lines of communication and force a retreat across the Rhine.<sup>200</sup>

Schwarzenberg and Radetzky were of like mind regarding the invasion route. Writing to his wife from Freiberg in the Black Forrest on 12 December, Schwarzenberg outlined several reasons a passage through Switzerland would work to the Allies' advantage. First, he believed that Swiss neutrality was ultimately impossible, and that one side or the other would have to occupy it as a base for further operations. If the Allies did not secure Switzerland, the French would, and from it launch attacks on Allied communications. Second, he believed Switzerland was eager to throw off the French yoke, and that the few pro-French elements in the cantons would yield to the situation. Third, he explained that from Switzerland and the crossings on the Upper Rhine, the Allied armies could threaten France quite sensitively, with an easy path into the French interior lying before them. Fourth, a crossing over the Upper Rhine would threaten communications with the French armies in Italy, and so turn them out of that theatre. He concluded with an affirmation that the time for decisive action had come; with France weakened after the catastrophic campaign of Leipzig, the tide had to be taken at the flood.<sup>201</sup>

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the 'key to the country' was one of the most widespread concepts in strategic thought. Despite its widespread use, Clausewitz complained that very few writers endowed it with concrete meaning and applied it in a useful manner. He considered two main definitions possible. On the one hand, it could refer to a point that must be taken to safely threaten the interior of the enemy's country. However, many writers used it in a quite different and much less credible sense, believing the possession of a geographic point could somehow dominate the whole of an enemy's country.<sup>202</sup> Radetzky used

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 263.

<sup>201</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 12 December 1813, Schwarzenberg, *Briefe*, No. 265, 358.

<sup>202</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 456.

the phrase in his memoranda to describe Switzerland's position with regards to the invasion of France, stating that to put Allied forces to good use during the winter months, "we shall have no other operations than to conquer Holland and Switzerland, and to advance against France from Switzerland, which is the key to our enemies' country."<sup>203</sup> It is clear from Radetzky's planning that he did not attribute any mystical powers to Switzerland as the key to controlling all of the French interior. Early in a 21 November memoranda, he notes, "An empire like the French has too many resources in its confines, in its inhabitants, and in its places of arms, to hope that we will completely prevent it from reorganizing its armies. We can therefore only talk of causing the enemy the greatest possible damage in general to benefit our operations." This is a sober, realistic assessment of the situation. Radetzky's interpretation contrasts with the views of Archduke Charles, whose strategic theory accorded primary importance to geographic points as such, believing the loss or seizure of fortresses, spheres of influence, and lines of communication determined the fate of warring nations, rather than the strength, maneuver, and destruction of the armies in the field. To him, "the possession of strategic points is the most decisive factor in war."<sup>204</sup> In his works on the art of war, the archduke devoted considerable attention to delineating the nature of various 'decisive points,' invariably geographic.<sup>205</sup> While Radetzky's planning for the invasion of France certainly took fortresses, geographic positions, and lines of communication into account, his analysis of them revolved around the conditions they gave for a confrontation with Napoleon, rather than any supposed inherent value. For example, when he discusses a potential position on the left bank of the Saône, it is because an

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<sup>203</sup> Radetzky, *Denkschriften*, 279.

<sup>204</sup> Geoffrey Wawro, "The Austro-Prussian War: Politics, Strategy and War in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1859-1866", Ph.D. diss., (Yale University, 1992), 1: 147.

<sup>205</sup> Eysturlid, *The Formative Influences, Theories, and Campaigns of Archduke Carl of Austria*, 53-56.



enemy defeated there would need to retreat through constrained defiles in the mountainous terrain west of the river, magnifying the effect of a victory.<sup>206</sup> Radetzky's thinking regarding geographic positions thus demonstrates good sense and the proper regard for military priorities.

Austrian headquarters selected the plateau of Langres as the geographical objective of their invasion of France. This plateau is the French watershed; rivers on its north face flow into the Atlantic, while those to its south flow into the Mediterranean. The undue attention of this fact led Blücher to famously remark that the only real strategic significance of the watershed was the opportunity to piss into both oceans.<sup>207</sup> Blücher's sense of humor notwithstanding, Radetzky outlined more concrete arguments for Langres as a geographic objective in his 18 January memoranda. Austrian headquarters did not rely on the possession of Langres to defeat Napoleon through the operation of 'occult sciences,' to use Clausewitz's phrase, but rather to improve their position for peace negotiations by occupying a good position for battle. The availability of useful roads shaped the development of the Allied war plan for 1814 in several crucial ways. In his memoranda, Radetzky emphasized the quality of French roads west of Switzerland and the Upper Rhine. Langres in particular was the node of several wide roads in good condition, connecting the French cities of Dijon, Besançon, and Chaumont.<sup>208</sup> According to Radetzky, these roads would facilitate the concentration of the army at Langres (Map A.19); the left wing would consist of 25,000 men at Dijon, a center column of 90,000 men in the vicinity of Langres and Chaumont, and a right wing formed by Blücher's army of 60,000 men marching up the Moselle valley through Nancy. While he could not determine with certainty the time to link with the right wing, Radetzky calculated that 115,000 men could be gathered at Langres in four or five

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<sup>206</sup> Radetzky, *Denkschriften*, 286.

<sup>207</sup> Leggiere, *Blücher*, xiii.

<sup>208</sup> Radetzky, *Denkschriften*, 283-289.

days. One does not concentrate an army of 175,000 men without the willingness to fight a decisive battle. While the war plan was developed without the express purpose of seeking a decisive battle, it did not discount the possibility and prepared for it.

Moreover, Radetzky noted several other advantageous features of the military geography of Franche Comté and Burgundy. The position promised a good source of provisions. Occupying an area from Langres to Chaumont to Neufchâteau, the center column would have food for four weeks. In addition to facilitating the concentration of the army, the road network secured Allied control over the mountain passes for debouching into France and facilitated both forward and rearward movement.<sup>209</sup> Writing to his wife, Schwarzenberg relayed his relief that the garrison of Fort de Joux sought terms for capitulation, as capture of the fortress would secure his line of retreat along the Pontarlier road to Switzerland.<sup>210</sup> The route through Switzerland and into Franche Comté and Burgundy bypassed many of the fortresses in France's triple line of defenses along the eastern frontier, although the Allies still needed to detail a blockade corps to observe and reduce the fortresses the Main Army bypassed. By targeting Langres, the Main Army would also bypass the Moselle and Meuse river lines. Radetzky argued that the topography of the Langres position would be advantageous, as the relatively gentle sloping of the mountains in that region of France afford numerous strong, if small positions. Further expressing their preparedness to fight a battle under advantageous circumstances, Radetzky proposed that should Napoleon advance against the Main Army's position along the mountain ridges in the vicinity of Langres, they should not wait to receive his attack, but advance themselves down into the plains to meet him and take the offensive.<sup>211</sup> At the end of the

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 283-284.

<sup>210</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 15 January 1813, Schwarzenberg, *Briefe*, No. 269, 366.

<sup>211</sup> Radetzky, *Denkschriften*, 284-289.

memorandum, Radetzky concedes that the question of seeking or avoiding a decisive battle was not a purely military question, but to a great extent a political one, illustrating his profound understanding of the influence of politics on the contours of military operations.<sup>212</sup>

The geography of the French frontiers caused considerable debate at Allied headquarters. Three chief corridors provided invasion routes into the French interior (Map A.18). The Lower Rhine route, which passes through the Low Countries, was most famously used in the German Schlieffen Plan during the First World War. The Middle Rhine in the vicinity of Mainz was the route assigned to Blücher's army for the invasion of 1814; the Prussians had used it in 1793 and would use it again during the campaign of 1870. Julius Caesar began his campaigns in Gaul after powerful Germanic tribes began streaming across the Upper Rhine and carving out conquests from Rome's allies; the invaders' key ally, the Sequani tribe, had *Vesontio* as their largest city, known in modern times as Besançon. Each invasion route had its partisans at Allied headquarters. August von Gneisenau, simultaneously Chief of the Prussian General Staff and chief of staff of the Army of Silesia, argued for an immediate resumption of the offensive by crossing the Middle Rhine, the Moselle, and the Meuse and marching on Paris with the Bohemian and Silesian Armies. Moreover, the Russian tsar opposed attempts to cross the Upper Rhine and invade France through Switzerland, seeking to bring the Alpine cantons into his orbit through respect for their strict neutrality. When the Main Army did violate Swiss neutrality with its Rhine crossing, this end-run around the tsar seriously strained trust between Metternich and Alexander.<sup>213</sup>

Radetzky's 21 November memorandum on the war plan for 1814 illuminates many

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 288.

<sup>213</sup> Leggiere, *The Fall of Napoleon*, 35-38.

aspects of the invasion of France. An outspoken advocate of an immediate strategic penetration into the French interior, Radetzky believed that the invasion could not be conducted soon enough. Every week the Allies delayed would allow Napoleon to muster ever more troops; the hesitation of the Allies would give heart to the beleaguered veterans of the 1813 Fall Campaign as well. As such, delays meant that when the time finally came for an invasion, the Allies would have squandered the great numerical and moral superiority they had gained after the victorious campaign in 1813. Thus, the Allies needed to press into the heart of France with all speed, denying Napoleon's state the control over the country and population needed to mobilize new armies. If the army failed to act, Radetzky calculated the numerical balance would shift from four to one (400,000 against 100,000) to two-to-one (600,000 against 300,000) in the Allies' favor, undermining their present superiority. By contrast, even the loss of 50,000 men in a winter campaign would be offset by a replacement of 100,000 new recruits in the spring, while war on Napoleon's own territory would hinder his attempts to replace his losses.<sup>214</sup>

After defeat in the 18 February Battle of Montereau, Schwarzenberg refused battle to Napoleon in the vicinity of Troyes and retreated east behind the Aube River (Map A.25). He took this occasion to explain to his wife the overall purpose of the invasion in a 26 February letter. The Allied armies crossed into France to quickly hinder Napoleon's preparations for a renewed war, and thus wrest from him an advantageous peace. The intention was not to fight a decisive battle against Napoleon. The situation was exacerbated by numerous factors giving advantage to the French. Napoleon was fighting with his back to the abyss and found extraordinary vigor in his desperation. The French army was marching through its home territory, with its capital at its back and the general cooperation of the people in matters of supply

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<sup>214</sup> Radetzky, *Denkschriften*, 267-268.

and sustenance. Moreover, the French peasants were armed, and numerous victorious combats had buoyed French spirits. If defeated in battle, a retreat over the Rhine had the chance of leading to the dissolution of the Allied army.<sup>215</sup>

Radetzky addressed the reservations of the camp opposed to a winter campaign in France, which was concerned by the typical lack of provisions available in winter war. He countered with the pointed observation that however lacking provisions would be at the beginning of winter, three months after the harvest, the situation would be far worse if the Allies waited for spring, eight months after the last harvest, by which time accumulated stores would be depleted.<sup>216</sup> For similar reasons, Schwarzenberg was keen to carry the war into enemy lands as well; campaigning in the winter, he sought to sustain his army, 200,000 strong, at the expense of the enemy as much as possible. After the punishing effects of privation on Imperial armies and the devastation of the German states during the Fall Campaign, one can hardly blame Schwarzenberg and his staff for being acutely sensitive to matters of provision.<sup>217</sup>

At the outset of the invasion in January, Schwarzenberg wrote a letter revealing some of the chief strategic concerns in the early phase of the campaign. Writing from Altkirch on 4 January, he described the coordinated movements of columns in eastern France and the strategic objectives in question. Schwarzenberg planned to blockade the fortresses of Belfort and Besançon while he pushed through Vesoul to the plateau of Langres, where he would find better means of sustenance for the vast army under his command. Bubna, leading a detachment of roughly 12,000 men, had liberated Geneva, providing the Main Army's left with further support. His column would push on to Lyon, where, according to Radetzky's planning, Schwarzenberg

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<sup>215</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 26 February 1814, Schwarzenberg, *Briefe*, No. 276, 378-379.

<sup>216</sup> Radetzky, *Denkschriften*, 268.

<sup>217</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 23 December 1813, Schwarzenberg, *Briefe*, No. 266, 360.

hoped it would disrupt the mustering of conscripts. Furthermore, the Allies were sensitive to public opinion in France, and sought to avoid agitating the passions of the people against the invading armies. Because the Allies believed the area of Lyon was dissatisfied with Napoleonic rule, they hoped good discipline by the Allied troops would reassure the French people that their quarrel was with Napoleon only. Moreover, the large class of Lyonnaise merchants cultivated and maintained extensive contacts across France, accelerating the spread of news from the seat of war to the other provinces.<sup>218</sup> In this letter, Schwarzenberg pointedly does not discuss a plan to seek battle against Napoleon's main army, nor to make a thrust against Paris. Instead, the Main Army campaigned in search of a better strategic position, without undertaking extreme efforts to immediately seek decisive results. The most Schwarzenberg hinted at in this respect was that his army would move according to circumstances.

Other important letters demonstrate his commitment to seeking an advantageous peace at the first opportunity. Writing from Langres on 21 January, Schwarzenberg expressed his opposition to an advance on Paris. By his account, the Kaiser, Stadion, Metternich, and Castlereagh agreed that such a maneuver would be distinctly unmilitary. After repulsing Marmont's weak force from Bar-sur-Aube and reaching his chosen position, Schwarzenberg confided that in his view, the time had come to make peace.<sup>219</sup>

The 1814 invasion of France illustrates the great value in keeping one's forces concentrated on a single line of operations to the greatest extent practicable. The Allies attacked along a multitude of separate vectors, with armies operating across the Lower, Middle, and Upper Rhine, an army in Italy pressing Viceroy Eugene, and the Duke of Wellington's Anglo-

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<sup>218</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 4 January 1813, *Ibid.*, No. 267, 362.

<sup>219</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 26 January 1814, *Ibid.*, No. 270, 369.

Portuguese-Spanish army invading Languedoc and Gascony. As in the Wars of the French Revolution, the interior lines of France allowed Napoleon to shift troops from less active theaters to counter the Allied thrust that posed the greatest apparent threat. After Bernadotte's army failed to act aggressively against French forces on the Lower Rhine, Schwarzenberg complained bitterly that he found new forces from Namur opposing his advance into Langres, blaming "the miserable behavior of that villainous Bernadotte" and the Duke of Wellington for their inability to pin the French in their sectors. As such, French regulars had been withdrawn from southern France to join with new conscripts and National Guardsmen in a position to harass Schwarzenberg's left flank.<sup>220</sup>

Despite France's natural advantages of interior lines and the dithering dandies in the Allied camp, Austrian headquarters bore considerable responsibility for the problems of the invasion.<sup>221</sup> They made the decision to spend weeks maneuvering into Switzerland to cross the Upper Rhine, giving Napoleon time to regroup. While Blücher was able to join the lead elements of the Main Army in the first phase of the campaign, they likewise decided to direct him to advance on Paris along the Marne while the Main Army approached via the Seine after the victory of La Rothière (1 February 1814, see Maps A.20 and A.21). Clausewitz was especially critical of this decision, and believed it provided Napoleon a potentially war-winning opportunity. With Blücher separated from the Main Army, Napoleon was able to mass sufficient forces to inflict a major defeat on him during the Six Days Campaign (10-15 February, see Maps A.22 and A.23). Had Napoleon executed an aggressive operational pursuit, Blücher would have had no choice but to retreat over the Rhine according to Clausewitz. Clausewitz furthermore

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<sup>220</sup> Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 15 January 1814, *Ibid.*, No. 269, 366.

<sup>221</sup> Schwarzenberg seethed: "unstätthige Bernadotte, dieser mit fremden Federn geschmückte bösertige Geck" in Schwarzenberg to Maria Anna, 4 January 1813, Schwarzenberg, *Briefe*, No. 267. 362.

posited that Schwarzenberg, unwilling to risk Austria's main field army on potentially disadvantageous terms and being so well known for caution and even irresolution, would have followed suit in falling back over the Rhine.<sup>222</sup>

However, when Schwarzenberg resumed his advance on Paris, Napoleon's turn toward him granted Blücher room to breathe and subsequently resume the advance (see Map A.24). Pressing on toward Paris, Blücher joined his battered army with the one Prussian corps and one Russian corps detached from Bernadotte's Army of North Germany north of the Aisne. Napoleon left a covering force west of Schwarzenberg, which the Austrian field marshal defeated in two battles. Blücher then defeated Napoleon at Laon on 8-10 March (see Maps A.25- A.27). Napoleon then turned south, crossing the Aube to attack Schwarzenberg. Yet the emperor suffered another defeat against overwhelming forces at Arcis-sur-Aube on 20-21 March (see Map A.28). Unable to outfight the Allied masses, Napoleon shifted his position east to St. Dizier, attempting to outmaneuver them and threaten their communications. Undeterred, the Allied armies advanced west, routed the covering force, and took Paris (see Map A.29) on 30 March; the senate declared Napoleon deposed and his marshals mutinied, forcing him to abdicate. The Allies exiled Napoleon to Elba, restored the Bourbon monarchy, and sheared France of all its conquests.<sup>223</sup>

The Campaign of 1814 in France illustrates some of the central issues in the development of strategic thinking. Clausewitz underwent significant intellectual evolution during his years of study and writing. The epic fury of the Napoleonic Wars, in which whole nations could be brought to their knees in lightning campaigns, seemed to signal the perfection of warmaking in

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<sup>222</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 635, 163.

<sup>223</sup> Leggiere, "Prometheus Chained," 346-366.



Europe. Attempting to oppose this new system of strategy with the old wars of maneuver and position in the style of the eighteenth century appeared a contest so unequal the outcome could not be in doubt. For Clausewitz in his early thinking, it was a matter of some speculation whether limited war would ever return to the European battlefield after the social and strategic transformations unleashed by the French Wars. And yet, in studying military history, it appeared to Clausewitz that the vast majority of conflicts fell well short of the standard of intensity set by the Wars of the French Republic and Empire, in which Great Powers could be destroyed and whole peoples could rise up in arms. If military theory was to be useful, it needed to describe wars of all kinds, be they colossal struggles like the Napoleonic Wars or diplomatic duels like the War of Bavarian Succession. The political aims would always provide the guiding intelligence in war, but the final stage of the War of the Sixth Coalition demonstrates the power of other forces, such as emotion and chance, to disrupt this influence and take war to places not intended by strategists.<sup>224</sup>

The experience of Austrian strategists in 1814 illustrate the challenges of formulating a limited war strategy in an environment as uncertain and chaotic as Napoleonic Europe. Strategies of annihilation have the virtue of conceptual simplicity. Convincing an enemy to accept that an unpleasant deal is in their best interests is more complex than crushing them with overwhelming force. However sound their war plans to convince Napoleon to make peace may have been on paper, Austrian strategists ultimately failed to deliver the results sought by the statesmen. Metternich and Schwarzenberg had misjudged their adversary. Charged with securing a lasting peace with a strong and stable France, Napoleon's personal intransigence and willful self-deception fatally sabotaged Austrian strategy; in the end, neither the Natural

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<sup>224</sup> For Clausewitz's description of the 'strange trinity,' see *On War*, 89.

Frontiers nor the Bonapartist throne could be retained, regency or not. This is not necessarily a condemnation of their strategy, but an unfortunate reality of war. A properly managed war effort is based on a rational calculation of political priorities and the probability of success, and it would be a poor strategist whose plans would assume his enemy would fail such a basic test. Yet, when the guiding hand of policy succumbs to vanity and delusion, the results on the battlefield, not just for the loser, but the victor as well, are dire indeed. Napoleon's refusal to recognize his untenable position led to the collapse of French power and thousands of useless deaths. Nevertheless, the defeat of Napoleon after two decades of sharp and cruel war ushered in an era of relative peace almost unique in European history. Schroeder calculated that the ratio of battlefield deaths to the European population fell seven times from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, the result of a new international system governed by consensus and conscious restraint established during the struggle against Napoleon between 1813 and 1815.<sup>225</sup> Peace is a precious thing, and this achievement should not be forgotten. While wars of limited scope and aims continued –the Crimean War and the Wars of German and Italian Unification being the most prominent– no pan-European total war with the potential of destroying the international order erupted until the First World War. The era of peace that began in 1814 with the Austrians leading Europe to Paris ended only in 1914 when the same monarchy, fearing strategic collapse and domestic implosion, committed the Austrian empire to its final disastrous war.

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<sup>225</sup> Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics*, vii.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS

Napoleon stands at the convergence of several historical threads. Studying his rise and fall shines light on the connected fields of political, military, intellectual, social, cultural and European history, both as a whole and each nation individually. In many ways, the age of Napoleon and its end was the demarcation that defined the modern political landscape. The ‘Napoleonic Legend’ was the last of its kind; never since has any period been so dominated by individual personalities. In military history specifically, he represents the last great ‘warlord’ in the vein of Alexander, Edward III, and Frederick II, conquerors who controlled the machinery of the state, directed diplomacy, and led their armies in person. Clausewitz called them ‘kings who were their own *condottieri*,’ combining the absolute authority of a monarch with the skill and temperament of a professional soldier.<sup>226</sup> Unlike Alexander, Napoleon’s career of conquest failed, ending with the destruction of his armies and the eclipse of France’s ambitions of European hegemony. His empire ultimately succumbed to men of lesser ability, like Schwarzenberg, by virtue of the superior resources at their command.

Previous conquerors like Alexander had faced vastly superior enemies and defeated them through radical innovations in tactics and technology. Yet Napoleon’s enemies had either already developed the key underpinnings of his way of war or adopted the new methods during the French Wars. Michael Broers framed Napoleon as an enlightened despot, and his wielding of that despotic authority was foundational to his military success. Through a campaign of internal conquest and legal reform, he solidified central control of France and mustered vast

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<sup>226</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 587.

resources.<sup>227</sup> In many ways, though, France had needed to catch up to the rest of Europe, as the humiliation of the Seven Years War laid bare. The French Revolution wiped away the Old Regime and laid the foundation for Napoleon's new order. Rather than a radical break with the pattern of European politics, the French Revolution and Napoleon was its culmination.

Napoleon's absolute centralization, however, outlived its usefulness as the scope of statecraft and warfare expanded beyond the ability of one man to personally direct. Not only was Napoleon a monarch and a general, he was also effectively his own prime minister and his own chief of operations in those respective roles. All power was unified in his person. While Napoleon often exploited this unity of command to his advantage throughout his career as emperor, the clear subordination of professional soldiers to professional political leadership was the way of the future. This was the system in Britain and Austria during the Napoleonic Wars. For the latter power, the cooperation of Metternich, Radetzky, and Schwarzenberg was indispensable for Allied victory, articulating clear war aims, developing sound plans, and executing the latter to serve the former.

Napoleon's success depended on a 'well-ordered police state,' which represented the ideal of European monarchies, and he pushed the system to its limits. To achieve this, he combined modern statecraft with new theories and methods of warfare that emerged in the late eighteenth century. These threads of political and military change intertwined most closely at the foundation of war-making, the raising of armies. Rather than the long-service professionals of the eighteenth century, the French came to rely on mass conscription. This was possible because of the greater coercive power in the hands of the state compared to the still quasi-feudal absolutism of the later Bourbon kings. The manpower available and the cheapness of life had a

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<sup>227</sup> Broers, *Europe Under Napoleon*, "Internal Conquest."

profound impact on the tactics, operations, and strategy of French armies. French tactics emphasized economy of force, flexibility, and mobility, turning the clash of solid battle lines into fluid battles of reserves, echeloned in depth. They organized armies into combined arms formations like divisions and corps that could maneuver and fight independently; these bridged the divide between strategy and tactics, opening new realms of ‘combinations’ for talented generals. Lastly, they abandoned the siege-heavy positional strategy of the absolutist eighteenth century, in which captured fortresses and territories were exchanged like tokens at the peace table. Instead, the French pursued the destruction of the enemy army in battle, leaving the enemy disarmed and helpless, forced to subordinate their foreign policy to France. Through these military changes, the French subjugated most of Continental Europe between 1792 and 1809.<sup>228</sup> When combined with the rationalized Enlightenment state, these changes represented a second ‘Military Revolution.’

However, France's European enemies had state foundations that could adapt to and adopt these key changes. While the Prussian reform movement is widely known among modern historians, and Gunther Rothenberg’s work on the Archduke Charles shines crucial light on the Austrian army through 1809, the continued evolution of the army after the defeat of Wagram deserves more recognition. Following the limitations of Austrian manpower imposed by the peace of 1809, officers planned for the rapid expansion of the army, relying on the machinery of state built during the reigns of Maria Theresa and Joseph II and canny organization. While this process raised hundreds of thousands of men for the War of Liberation, many were of indifferent quality, unsuited to the rigidity of traditional Austrian tactics. Showing convergent evolution

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<sup>228</sup> See John Lynn, *The Bayonets of the Republic: Motivation and Tactics in the Army of Revolutionary France, 1791-1794*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984).

with the French after their mass levies of 1793, the Austrians therefore adapted and made a virtue of necessity. They too came to rely on skirmishers and artillery to engage the enemy, while keeping most of the army in reserve in deep column formations, increasing the flexibility of the army. Strategically, the oft-criticized Reichenbach Plan in fact represented a considerable break from the essence of eighteenth-century strategy, prioritizing damage and destruction inflicted on the enemy army over any bargaining chips for peace negotiations. After extensive attrition in hard marches and lost battles, the French accepted battle on disadvantageous terms on 16 October 1813, leading to the destruction of Napoleon's European empire. While Austria's Enlightened Absolutism preceded the French Wars, the French challenge pushed the Austrian army to realize the institutional potential established before the war. This process of adaptation continued after the defeat of 1809, culminating in a decisive defeat for Napoleon. However, the Austrians did not achieve all of their political objectives in the War of the Sixth Coalition. While they succeeded in their main short-term goal in the restoration of the monarchy's independent foreign policy and the regaining of much lost territory, they could not compel Napoleon to agree to a compromise peace. Rather than become strong partners for the Habsburgs, their position secured by a loyal army, the House of Bonaparte effectively went into exile, and France suffered considerable internal turmoil for much of the nineteenth century. Why did Austria fail to realize its medium-term objective of securing a Bonapartist France as a partner to balance Prussia and Russia?

The Austrian army never matched the French at their best, and many aspects of the revolution remained incomplete even to the end of the monarchy. In the political sphere, the traditional Hungarian insistence on consensual government ensured that the Kaiser could not

exploit his territory to its fullest potential in men and money.<sup>229</sup> The Austrian army remained saddled with many mediocre senior officers, especially at the corps level. Meritocracy never took root to the degree it had in France, where privates could rise to the marshalate and unsuccessful generals lost their heads. As Gill has observed, several Austrian corps commanders received laurels for uninspired performances at Wagram in 1809 while Franz Seraph, Prince of Orsini-Rosenberg was censured when he did all that could be done defending the left wing of the army against Davout's onslaught.<sup>230</sup> The habitual slowness and sloppiness of the Austrian war machine manifested again in 1813 and 1814. Klenau's tardiness on 27 August led to three Austrian divisions being mauled. Colloredo engaged Vandamme only tepidly at Kulm, despite his maneuvering into position to attack his flank. Schwarzenberg's slow advance from Bohemia in October left Blücher and Bernadotte open to potential destruction, and the plan for battle on 16 October nearly failed. These shortcomings hindered Allied efforts and resulted in much loss of life. However, they do not explain why the Austrians failed their objective of retaining a Bonapartist France as a potential ally.

The Austrians waged much of the War of Liberation under ultimately misguided political considerations. Metternich's vision for establishing a just balance of power among the European nations and suspicion of Russian postwar domination was valid, but he misjudged his present adversary, leading to the failure of Austria's medium-term objective. Accepting the Frankfurt Proposals was the rational option for Napoleon in November 1813, but Napoleon was no longer behaving rationally. Price has documented the emperor's disturbing disconnection from reality during the final months of the war. Napoleon insisted that a peace on the Coalition's terms

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<sup>229</sup> Rothenberg, *Napoleon's Great Adversaries*, 184. See also Gunther Rothenberg, *The Art of Warfare in the Age of Napoleon*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 118-120.

<sup>230</sup> Gill, *Thunder on the Danube*, 3: "Chapter 5: Wagram, *The Greatest Battle of Modern Times*."

would reignite revolution in France despite unequivocal evidence to the contrary. With delusion and paranoid projection reigning in Napoleon's headquarters, there could be no sound foundation for negotiation, despite Metternich and Schwarzenberg's attempts.<sup>231</sup> Napoleon was no 'ogre,' but his decision making after Leipzig reveals extraordinary irresponsibility. The terms he received in November were far more generous than his hopeless military situation warranted, but he continued to waste French lives by the thousands in a hopeless struggle. Throughout the 1814 invasion, he displayed a chronic inability to settle for the terms he could get, gambling everything on his maneuvers until he was left with nothing. Napoleon never would have risen to the heights of his power if he could not be a shrewd politician, and he had previously shown considerable diplomatic ability. If Metternich struggled to comprehend his adversary, it must be said that even accounting for hindsight, much of Napoleon's behavior in 1813-1814 borders on the incomprehensible.

This misunderstanding shaped Austrian and Allied strategy during the final phase of the war, pushing it back toward old ideas based on strategic lines and points rather than the strategy of annihilation predominant in the Revolutionary Era. At the same time, these ideas were subject to considerable variation between practitioners. The idea of the 'key to the country' found its lasting impact in the Archduke Charles's writings, but Radetzky employed the concept in planning the 1814 invasion of France. However, Radetzky's formulation was decidedly more grounded and practical than Charles's, focusing on the particular advantages of the Langres plateau for battle rather than relying on the 'key to the country' as a universal principle. Regardless, the plan did not meet expectations. Napoleon avoided a decisive pitched battle with the Main Army at Langres, negating the main goal. The joining of Wellington's forces or the

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<sup>231</sup> Price, *Napoleon: The End of Glory*, 200-201.



Austrians in Italy never materialized. Worse, the southern diversion of the Main Army to Switzerland in December cost valuable time and soured relationships in Allied headquarters. Further mistakes in separating the Allied armies during the campaign opened opportunities for Napoleon, who inflicted several defeats on Blücher and Schwarzenberg before his downfall.

In hindsight, a regency for Napoleon II represented the best outcome for Austria.<sup>232</sup> Napoleon could not be trusted, but Russian domination of Continental Europe was also unacceptable. While Metternich worried that a French regency under Marie-Louise would embroil Austria too closely in French domestic affairs, few if any superior options were available. The scheme to enthrone Bernadotte in France would benefit only Russia. The Bourbons had become no more popular after their twenty-two-year absence and had already demonstrated they could not ensure domestic stability in France. This would be the precursor to renewed war. Napoleon had proven that with his loyal army, he could guarantee peace and order within France, but he could not resist expansion across Europe. Napoleon II represented the best chance for a strong, stable, and peaceful France. Ultimately, the Austrian goal of maintaining Napoleon's rule (properly restricted to France's Natural Frontiers) asked too much of the emperor's national responsibility and diplomatic sense. He refused to see the writing on the wall until it was too late. Napoleon needed to be disarmed and expelled from Europe to ensure peace. This could not happen without an overwhelming victory in France itself. The Allies should not have paused at the Rhine and divided Blücher from Schwarzenberg, but instead should have pursued Napoleon to Paris. This was the surest course to a durable European peace.

Living in a highly materialist, technological society, we tend to see technology at the root of most important historical developments, especially wars. Many times, technology has played

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<sup>232</sup> This was Schwarzenberg's opinion. See Schwarzenberg, *Briefe*, 371-372.

a decisive rule in victory and defeat. Gunpowder weapons provided both the means to centralize state control and a powerful incentive to do so. In Brandenburg, the nucleus of the future Prussian monarchy, the Elector's powerful gunpowder artillery in 1414 demolished the castles of quarrelsome nobility like the Quitzow family.<sup>233</sup> In the sixteenth century, European states developed mature weapons systems based on gunpowder, such as the musket, cannon, and bastioned fortress. In the Habsburg Monarchy, the crisis of Maria Theresa's succession in 1740-1748 drove the central state to take more power from the nobility. War had become impossibly expensive, and the state needed money and manpower to remain competitive.<sup>234</sup> The new technologies gave Europeans crucial advantages in fighting not only each other, and so drove competition and reform among European states, but also proved a crucial advantage over peoples across the world, who widely adopted them in turn. Military Revolution theorists herald these connected phenomena as the beginning of the modern era.

By contrast, new weapons technology played a relatively small role in the Napoleonic Wars. The weapons systems involved represented only incremental improvements over those of the previous century. The Gribeauval artillery system lightened the army's firepower, and Britain's more powerful 'cylinder' gunpowder helped economize ammunition, but on their own, these developments could hardly change warfare. The Napoleonic Wars did see new weapons, such as Congreve rockets and shrapnel shells, but societal and institutional changes in warfare easily dwarfed their impact. In this Military Revolution, adapting to military conditions required more than casting new guns or redesigning firearms. Wide swaths of society had to change to

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<sup>233</sup> See Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600-1947*, (London: Penguin Books, 2007).

<sup>234</sup> Hochedlinger, *Austria's Wars of Emergence*, "Chapter Twelve: The Modernization of the Habsburg Monarchy in the Age of Enlightened Absolutism, 1740-1790."

feed the war machine. Moreover, the way states wielded their war machines required a new understanding of war. Clausewitz observed that the military changes of his lifetime had made war a far more interconnected enterprise. All threads converged on the decisive battle. War no longer turned on negotiation or distinct ‘bargaining chips,’ and the political objectives of the day could be attained only through battle. Tactics and strategy became an intermeshed whole through the operational art while the increasing tactical importance of numerical superiority made wide-reaching mobilization more paramount than ever.<sup>235</sup>

Nationalism as understood in the Napoleonic Wars was antithetical to the structure of the Austrian monarchy. While French elites believed in their culture’s unity, superiority, and exportability, the Habsburgs ruled many distinct peoples.<sup>236</sup> Nationalism usually receives credit for France’s mass armies, but the Austrians fielded armies of similar magnitude through most of the French Wars. These armies persisted through defeat after defeat, interrupted by fleeting passive successes like Aspern. Finally, though, the Austrian army had its revenge on the French. Many factors contributed to the Allied victories of 1813 and 1814. The ‘Spanish ulcer’ constantly drained French manpower, and the Russian catastrophe transformed the strategic landscape. Prussia married zeal to far sighted reforms to revitalize the state and the army after a unique disaster at Jena. However, the importance of Austrian manpower and strategy in destroying Napoleon’s empire should not be underrated. The Allies faced grim prospects in 1813 without Austrian assistance, even more so for their lack of a war plan as sound as Radetzky’s. Prussia and Russia would have been hard pressed to face Napoleon’s renewed army in the Fall Campaign without 300,000 Austrians in various theaters. The Reichenbach Plan

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<sup>235</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 195.

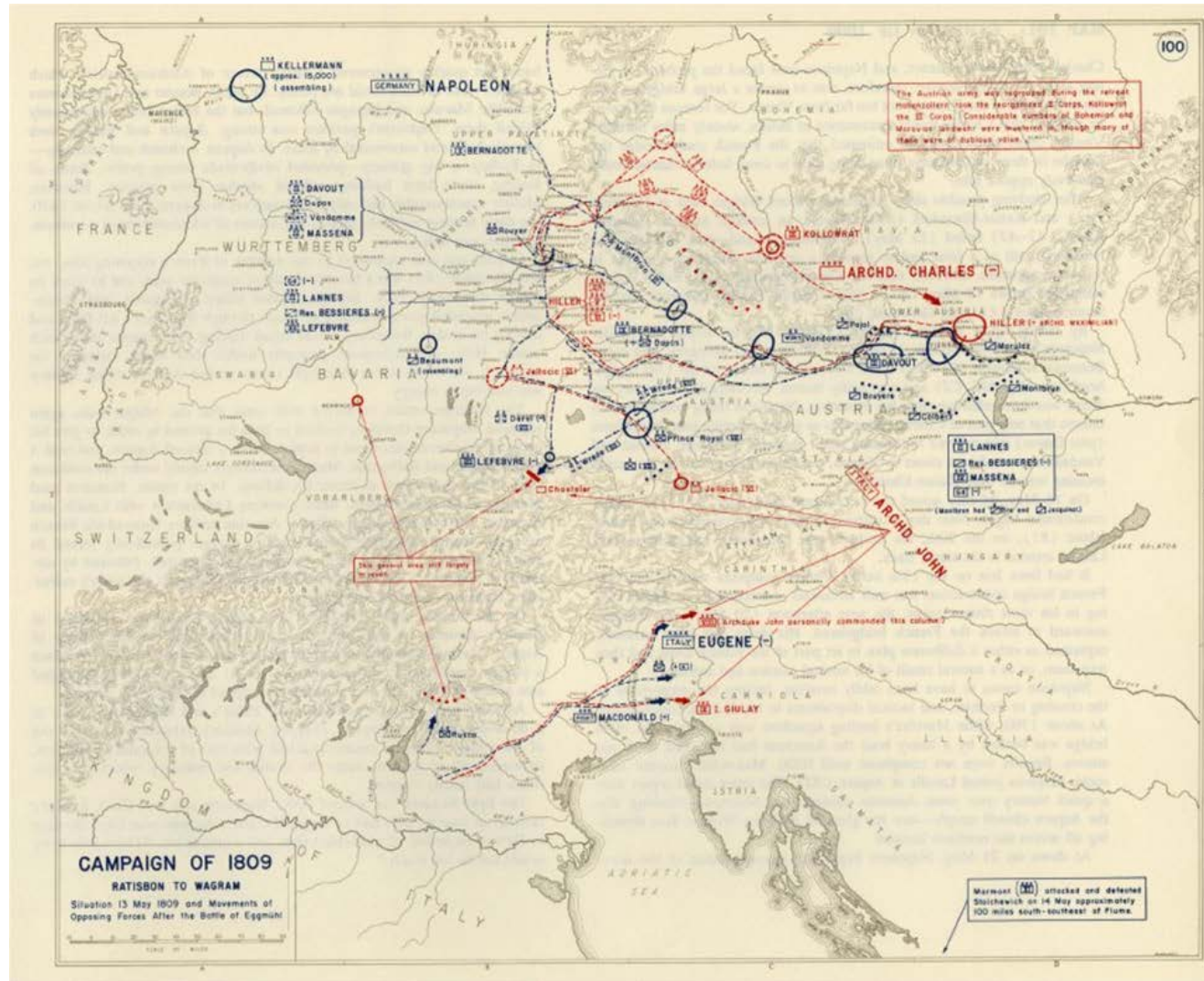
<sup>236</sup> See Broers, *Europe Under Napoleon*, “Internal Conquest.”

secured strong footing for a decisive battle against Napoleon, and the Austrians conducted their battles according to modern principles, which ensured the Allied numerical superiority deprived Napoleon of almost any hope of victory.

If the Austrians failed to realize their medium-term objective, their long-term goal of European repose from two decades of relentless chaos and bloodshed was ultimately a success. The year 1814 began an age of fundamental peace in Europe. While periodic conflicts occasionally erupted, Europe would not be embroiled in another existential war among all the Great Powers for another century. The Austrian army played a crucial role in this victory. It was to be their last, however. While the state and the army had adapted to the greatest threat to face the monarchy since the Thirty Years War, the inferno of the Great War would prove its undoing. After surviving the gravest dangers the pre-industrial world could manifest, a realm cobbled from a feudal patchwork by war and marriage finally collapsed under the strain of an industrial total war.

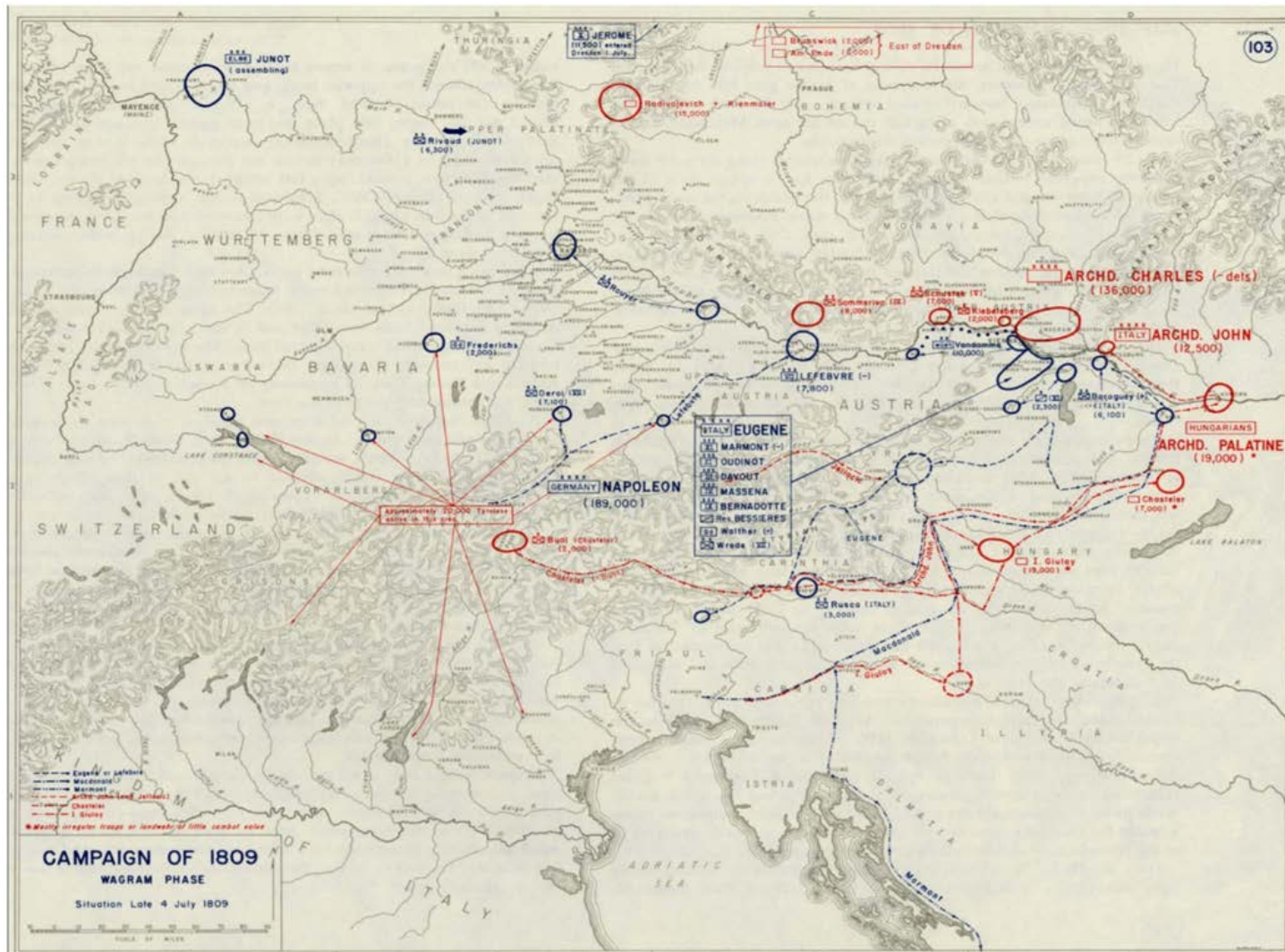
APPENDIX:

MAPS



**Map A.1: 13 May 1809. Prelude to Aspern.**

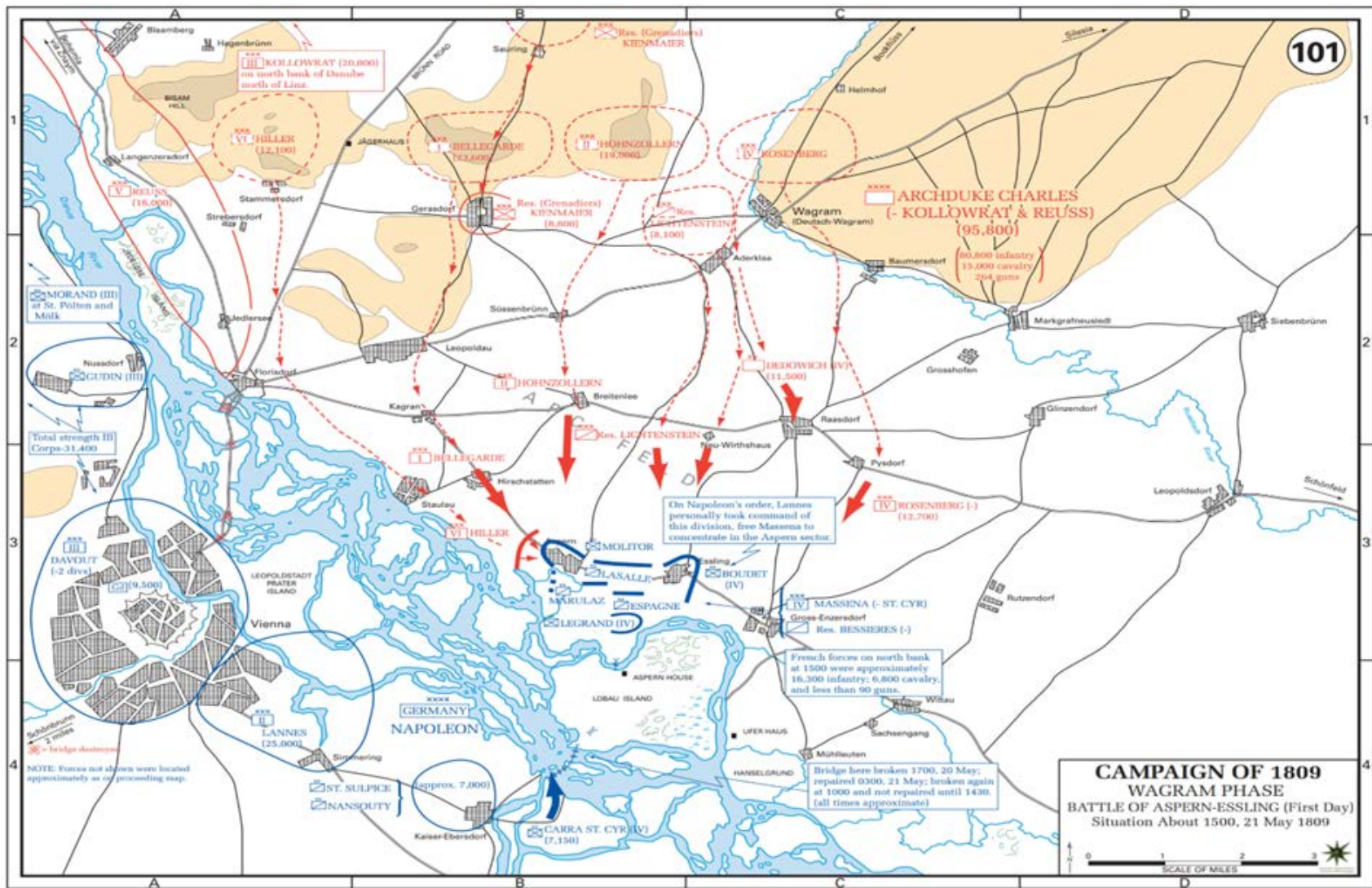
Napoleon marches on Vienna south of the Danube, while Charles retreats down the Danube along the northern bank. His left wing rejoins the army on the northern bank. Map courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History, *Atlas of the Napoleonic Wars*, <https://www.westpoint.edu/academics/academic-departments/history/napoleonic-wars>



**Map A.2: Prelude to Wagram, 4 July.**

Eugene marches from Italy to support Napoleon on the Danube. Archduke John moves to reinforce Charles. Map courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History, *Atlas of the Napoleonic Wars*, <https://www.westpoint.edu/academics/academic-departments/history/napoleonic-wars>

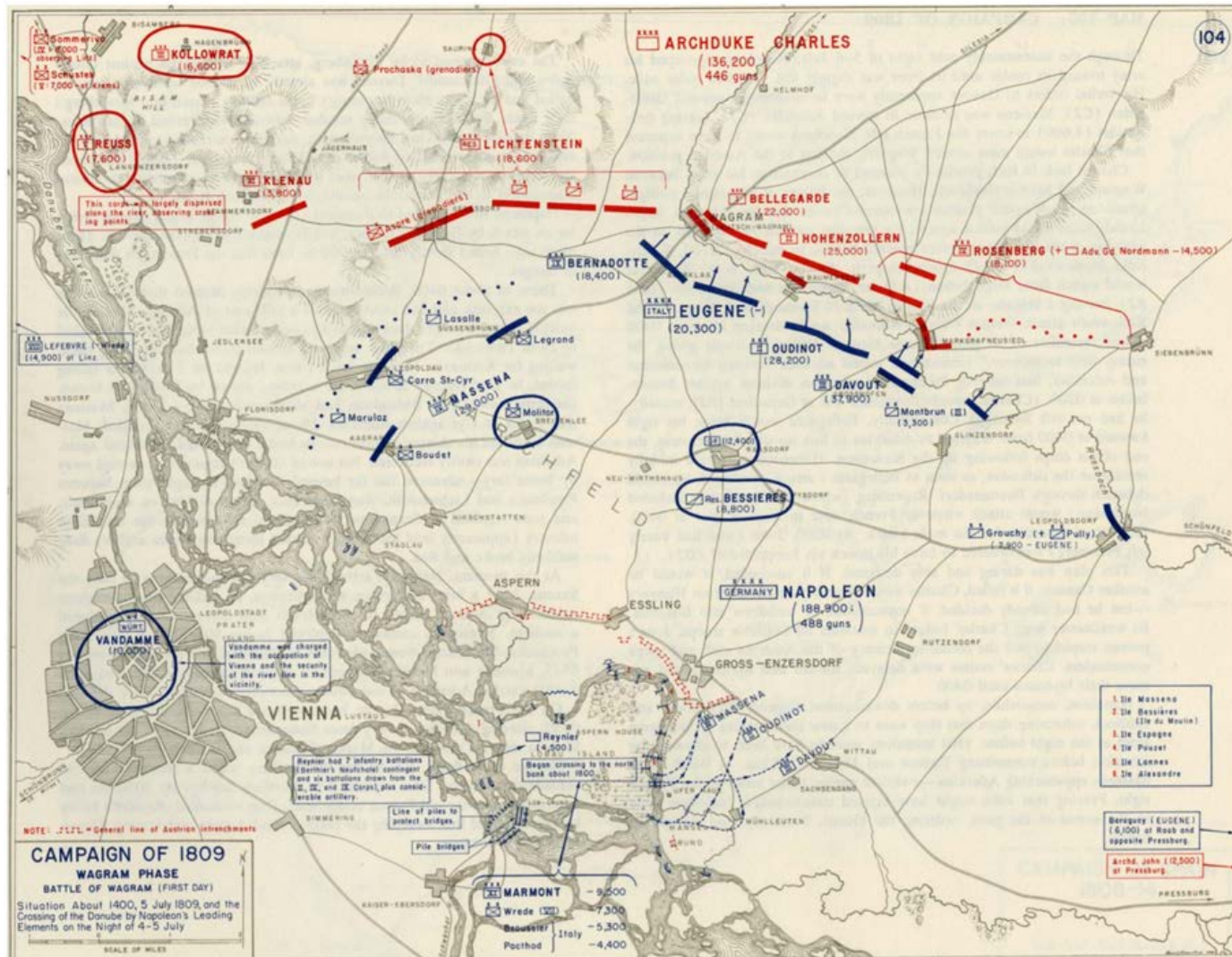




Map A.3: The Battle of Aspern-Essling, 21 May 1809.

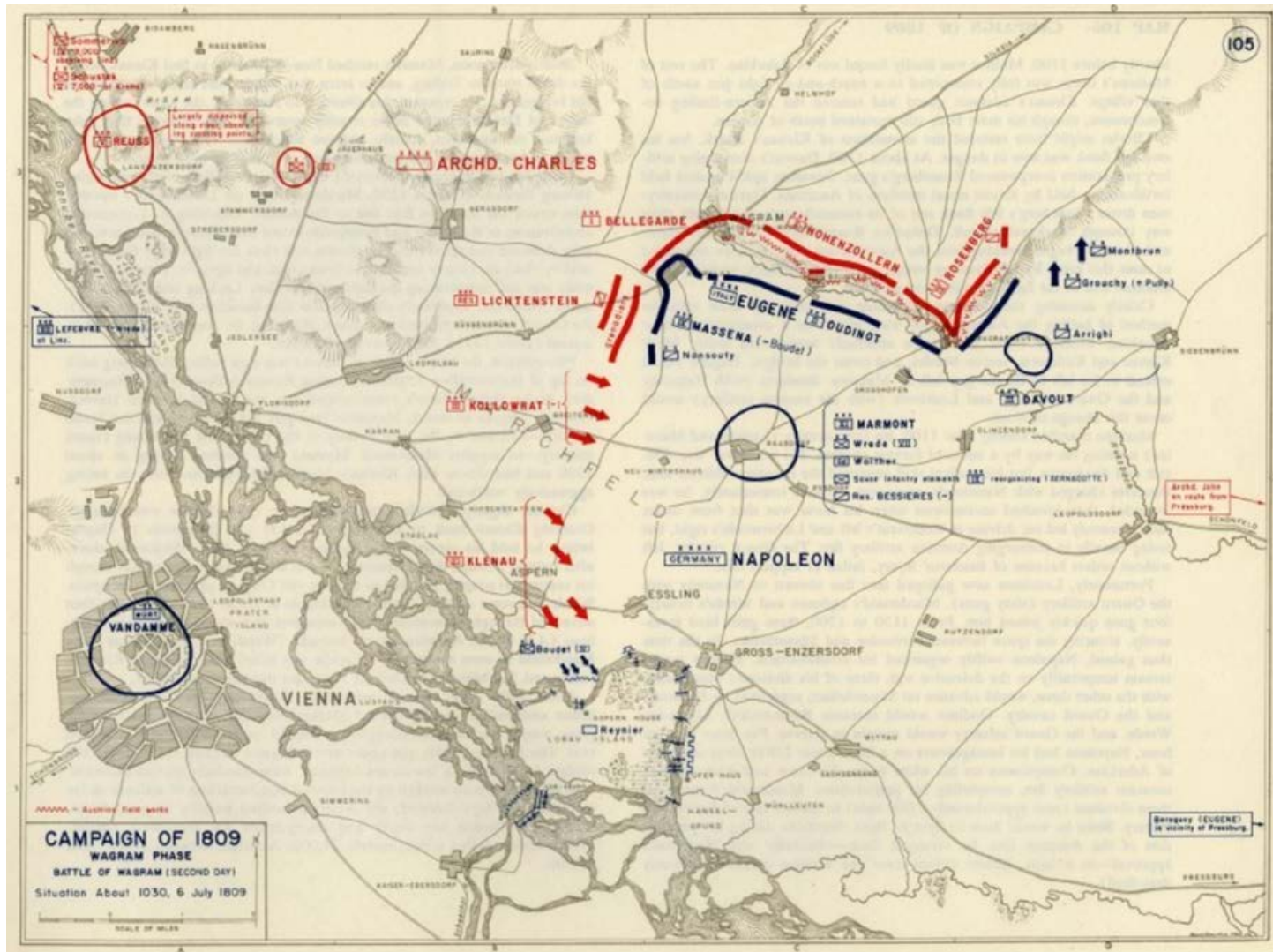
Despite Charles's dramatic numerical superiority, he failed to destroy the French bridgehead owing to the cumbersome nature of Austrian tactics at this juncture. Map courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History, *Atlas of the Napoleonic Wars*, <https://www.westpoint.edu/academics/academic-departments/history/napoleonic-wars>





Map A.4: The Battle of Wagram, 5 July 1809.

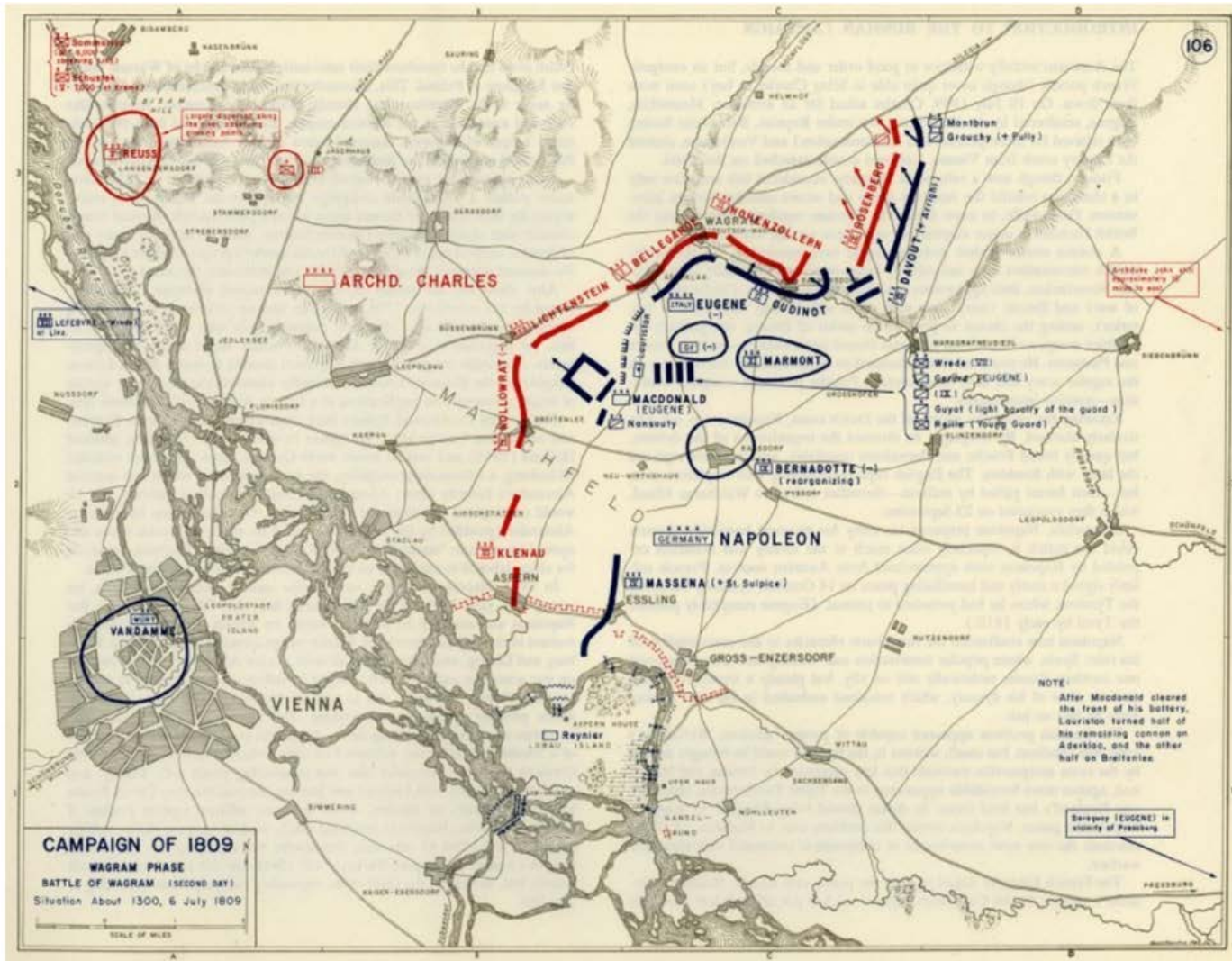
The Austrian left occupies a position behind the Russbach stream while the right moves into action. Both armies attempt to envelop the others' left. Map courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History, *Atlas of the Napoleonic Wars*, <https://www.westpoint.edu/academics/academic-departments/history/napoleonic-wars>



Map A.5: The Battle of Wagram, 6 July 1809.

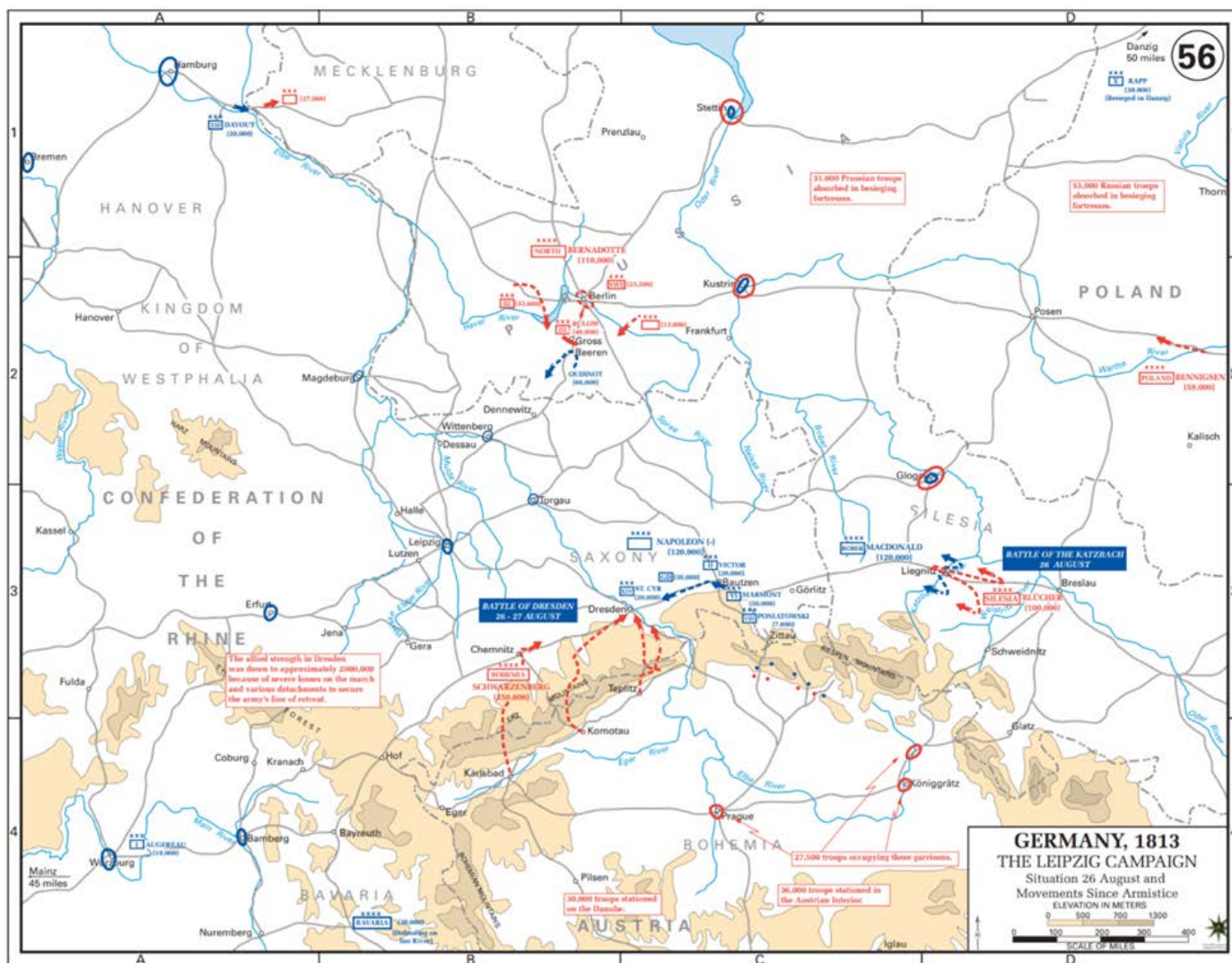
Both armies are pressing the enemy's left, but unlike Charles, Napoleon has extensive forces still in reserve. Map courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History, *Atlas of the Napoleonic Wars*, <https://www.westpoint.edu/academics/academic-departments/history/napoleonic-wars>





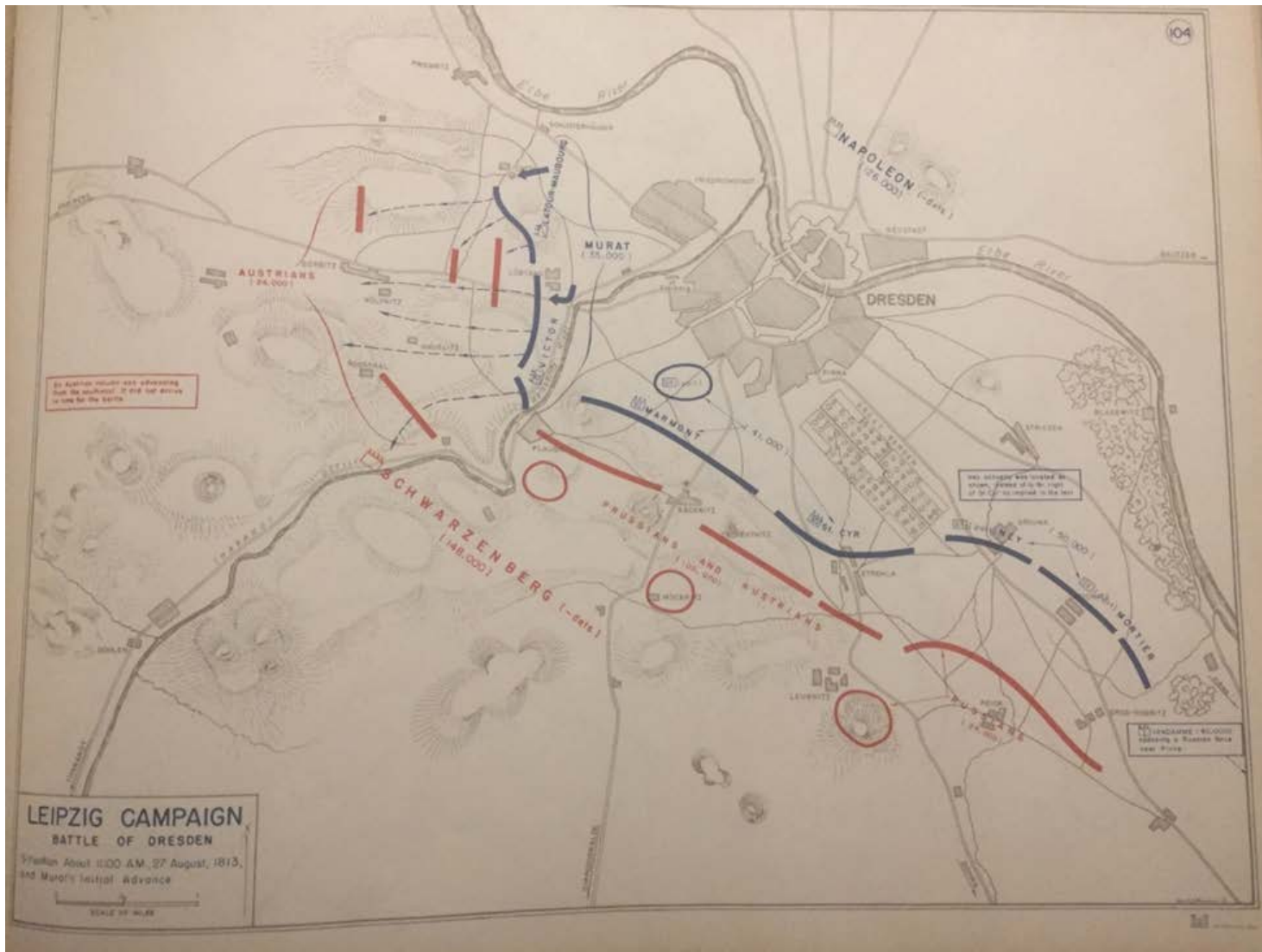
Map A.6: Battle of Wagram, 6 July 1809.

Macdonald's 'infernal column' breaks the Austrian line, but suffers heavy losses. Archduke John's army is unable to join Charles's. The Austrian right is giving way. Charles decides to retreat. Map courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History, *Atlas of the Napoleonic Wars*, <https://www.westpoint.edu/academics/academic-departments/history/napoleonic-wars>



**Map A.7: Fall Campaign, 26 August 1813.**

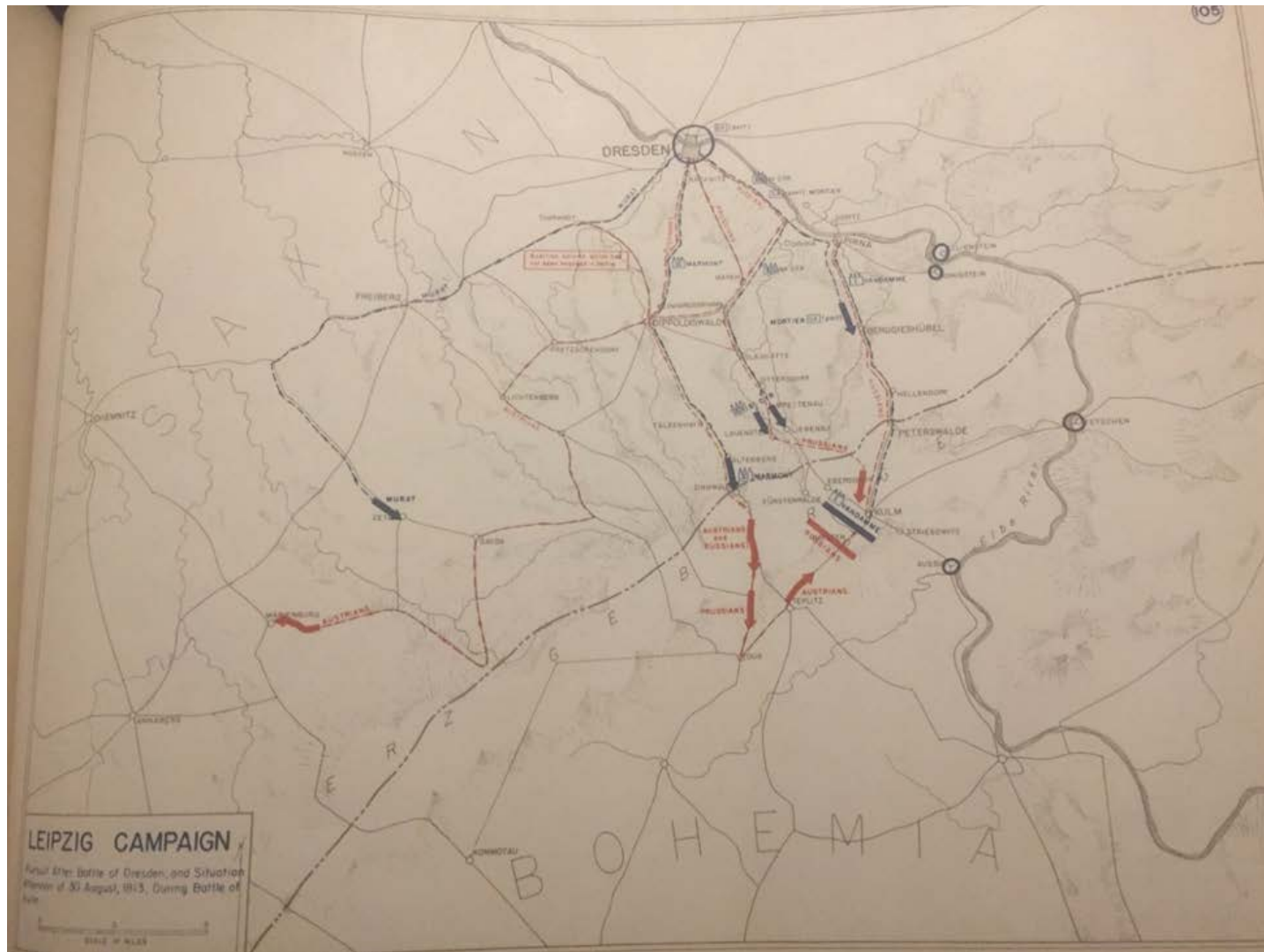
Oudinot's Berlin offensive is beaten back on 23 August at Großbeeren. Blücher defeats Macdonald at the Katzbach on 26 August. The Army of Bohemia's drive against Dresden is repulsed with Napoleon's arrival. Map courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History, *Atlas of the Napoleonic Wars*, <https://www.westpoint.edu/academics/academic-departments/history/napoleonic-wars>



**Map A.8: The Battle of Dresden, 27 August 1813.**

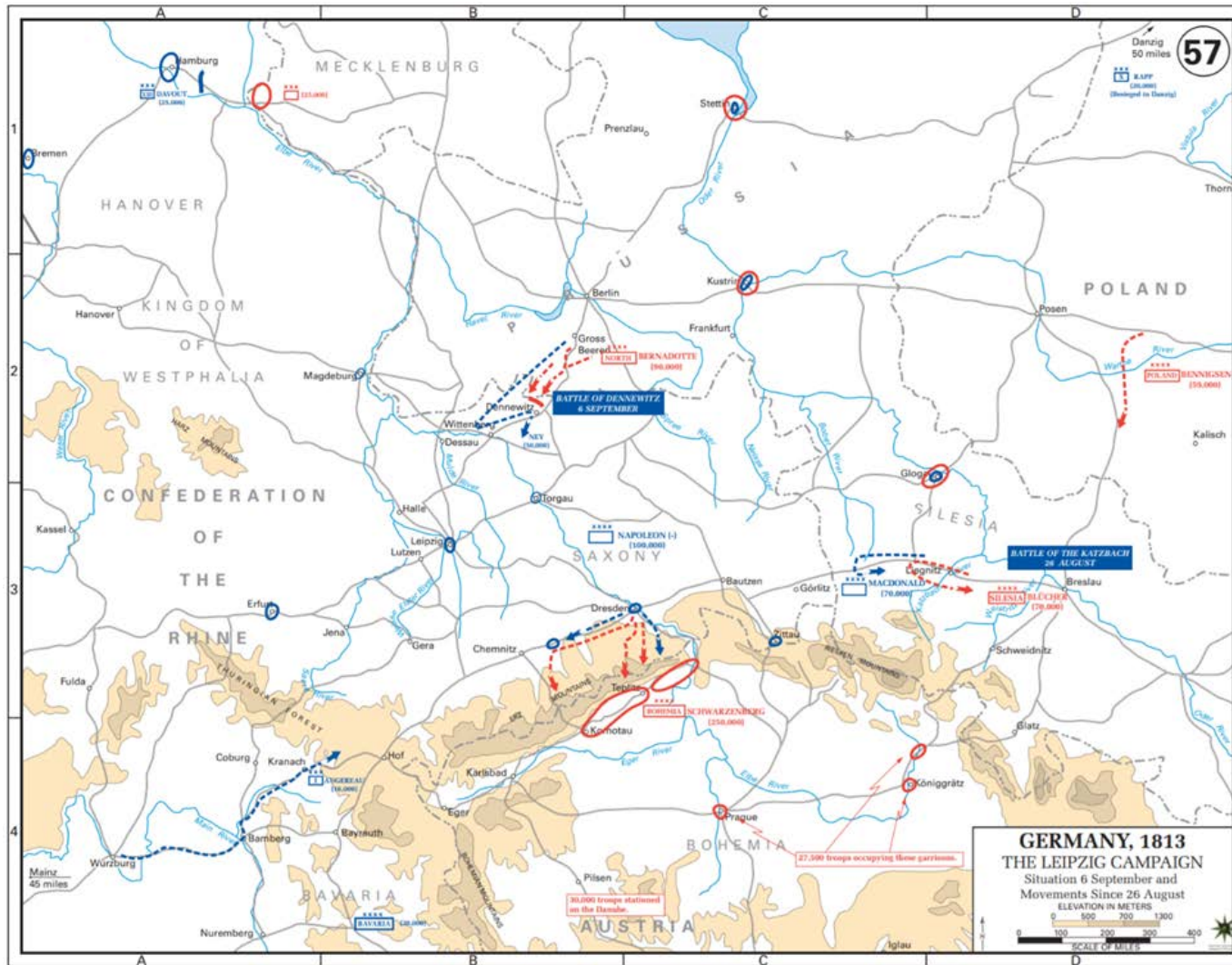
Three Austrian divisions are cut off from the main body and suffer a heavy defeat against Joachim Murat. Map from Esposito, *Atlas*, courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History.





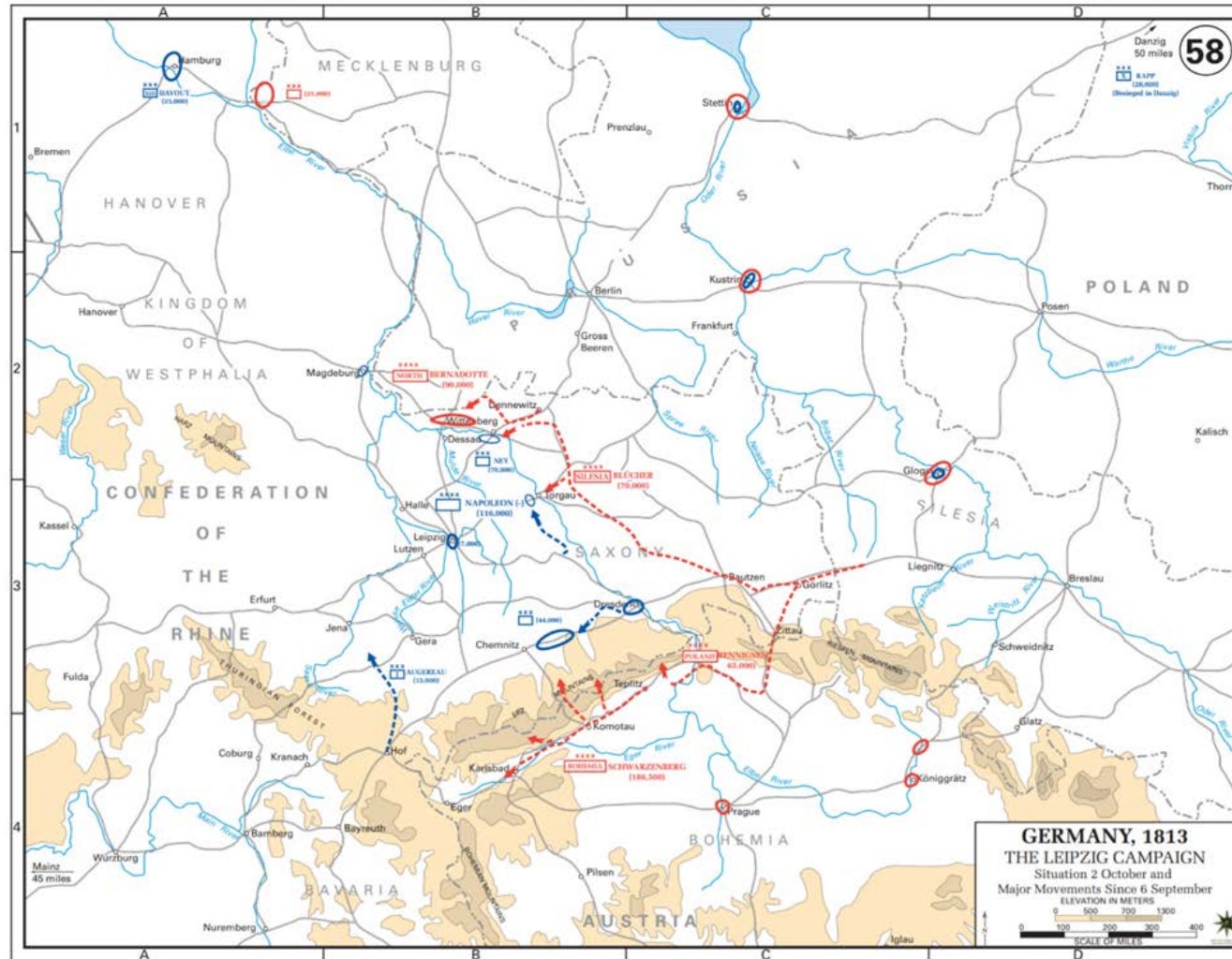
**Map A.9: The Battle of Kulm, 29-30 August.**

Dominique Vandamme's corps is isolated in the Bohemian mountains and attacked by a Russian corps from the front, an Austrian on the left, and a Prussian in the rear. The corps is effectively destroyed. Map from Esposito, *Atlas*, courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History.



**Map A.10: Fall Campaign, 6 September 1813.**

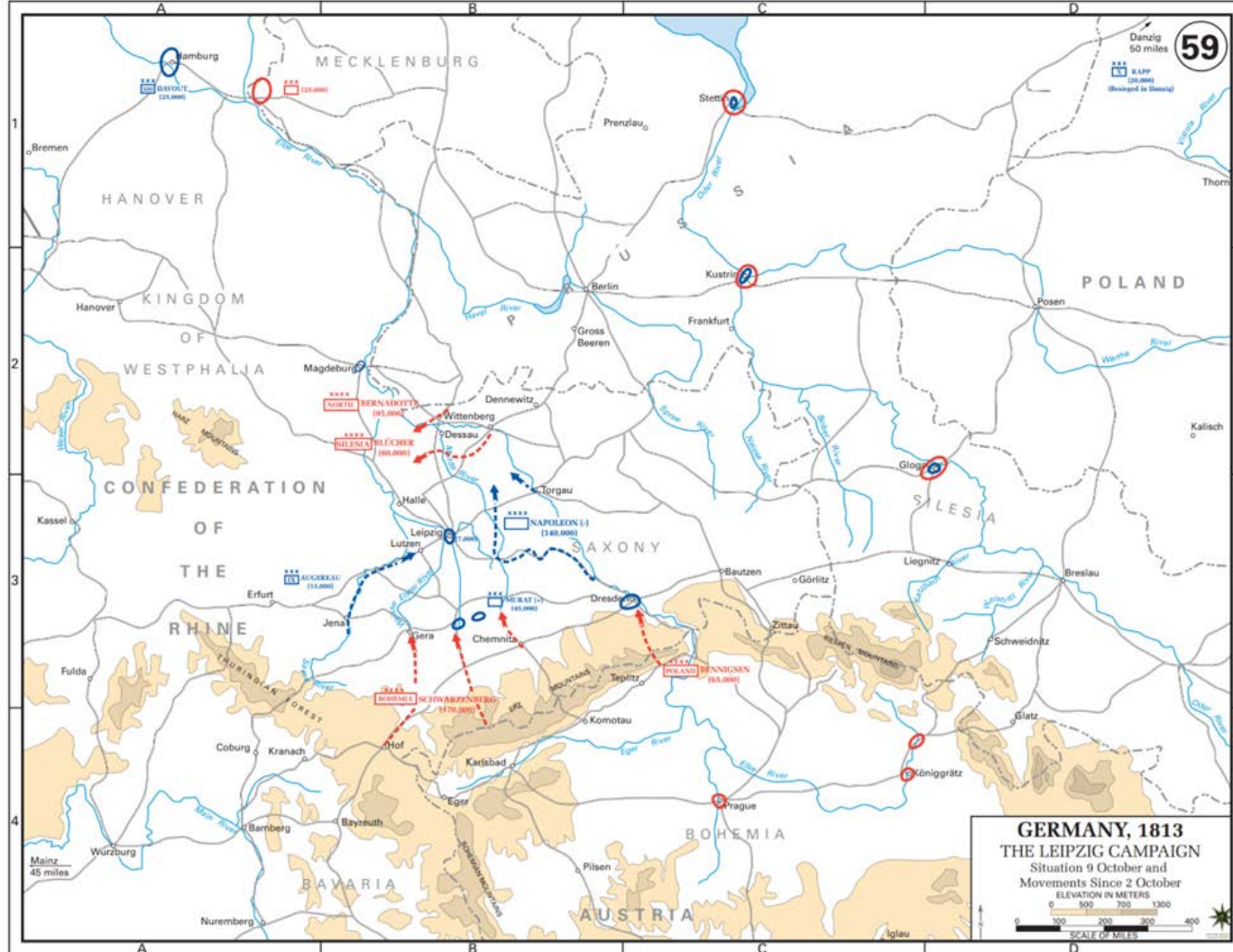
Napoleon planned to join with Michel Ney for a second drive against Berlin. However, Schwarzenberg's demonstrations against Dresden draw the emperor south. Ney is routed at Dennewitz on 6 September. Map courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History, *Atlas of the Napoleonic Wars*, <https://www.westpoint.edu/academics/academic-departments/history/napoleonic-wars>



**Map A.11: The Leipzig Campaign, 2 October 1813.**

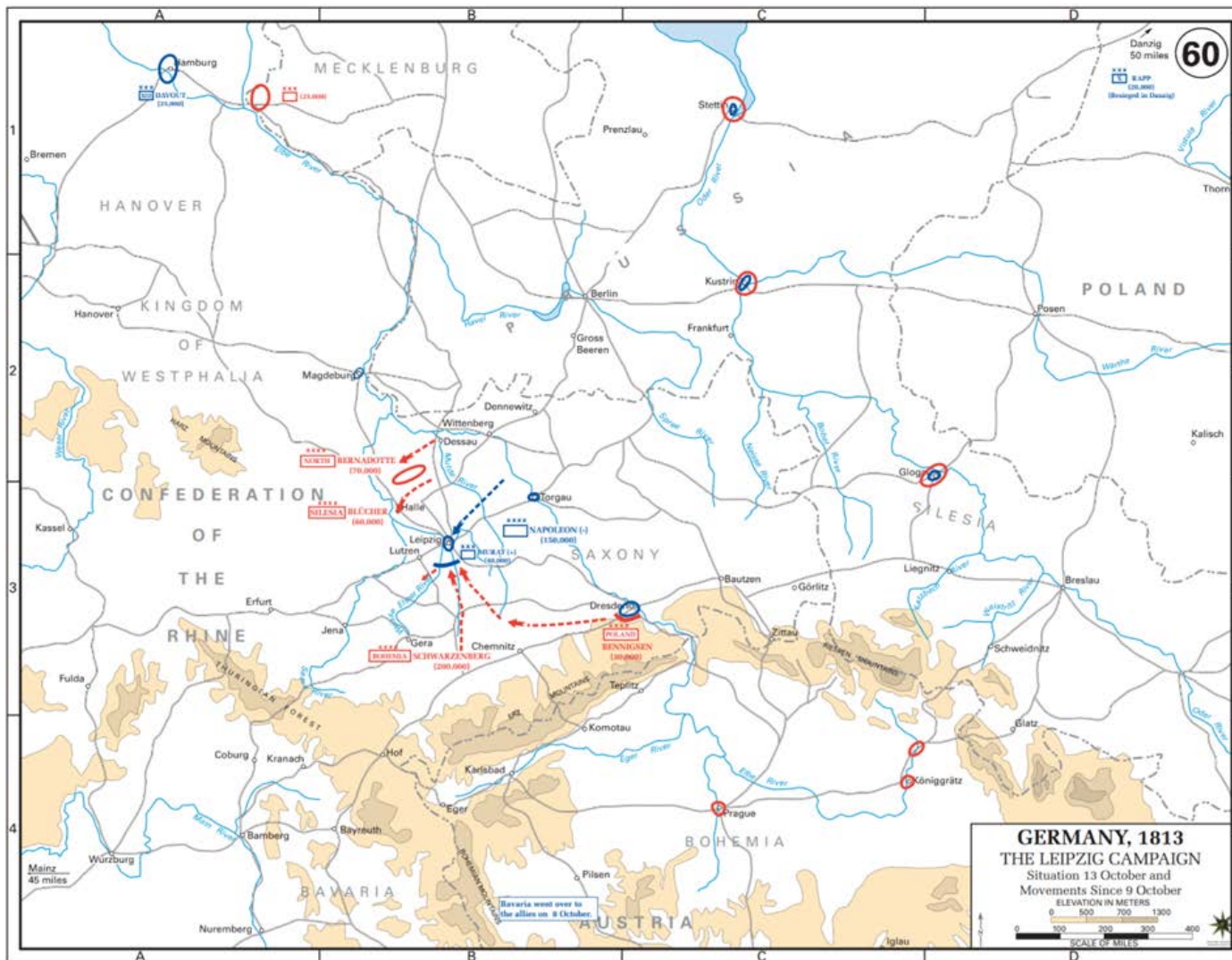
Bennigsen's Army of Poland arrives and the movement to the decisive battle begins. Bernadotte and Blücher link up and march on the Elbe. Schwarzenberg approaches the Bohemian frontier. Map courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History, *Atlas of the Napoleonic Wars*, <https://www.westpoint.edu/academics/academic-departments/history/napoleonic-wars>





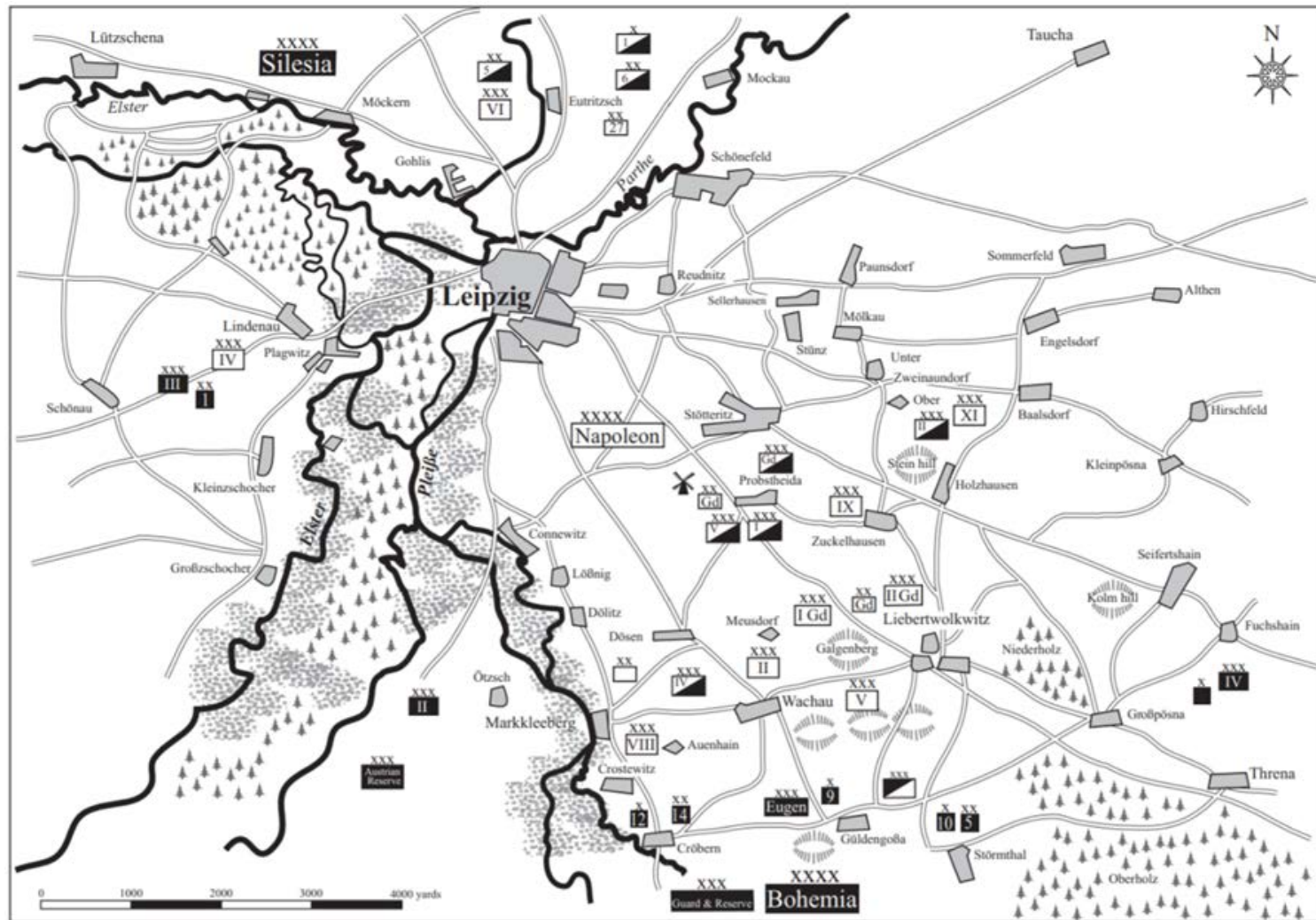
**Map A.12: The Leipzig Campaign, 9 October 1813.**

Bernadotte and Blücher cross the Elbe. Napoleon thrusts north to cut them off from the Elbe, leaving behind a body under Murat to observe Schwarzenberg. Schwarzenberg debouches into Saxony and advances cautiously against Murat. Map courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History, *Atlas of the Napoleonic Wars*, <https://www.westpoint.edu/academics/academic-departments/history/napoleonic-wars>



**Map A 13: The Leipzig campaign, 13 October 1813.**

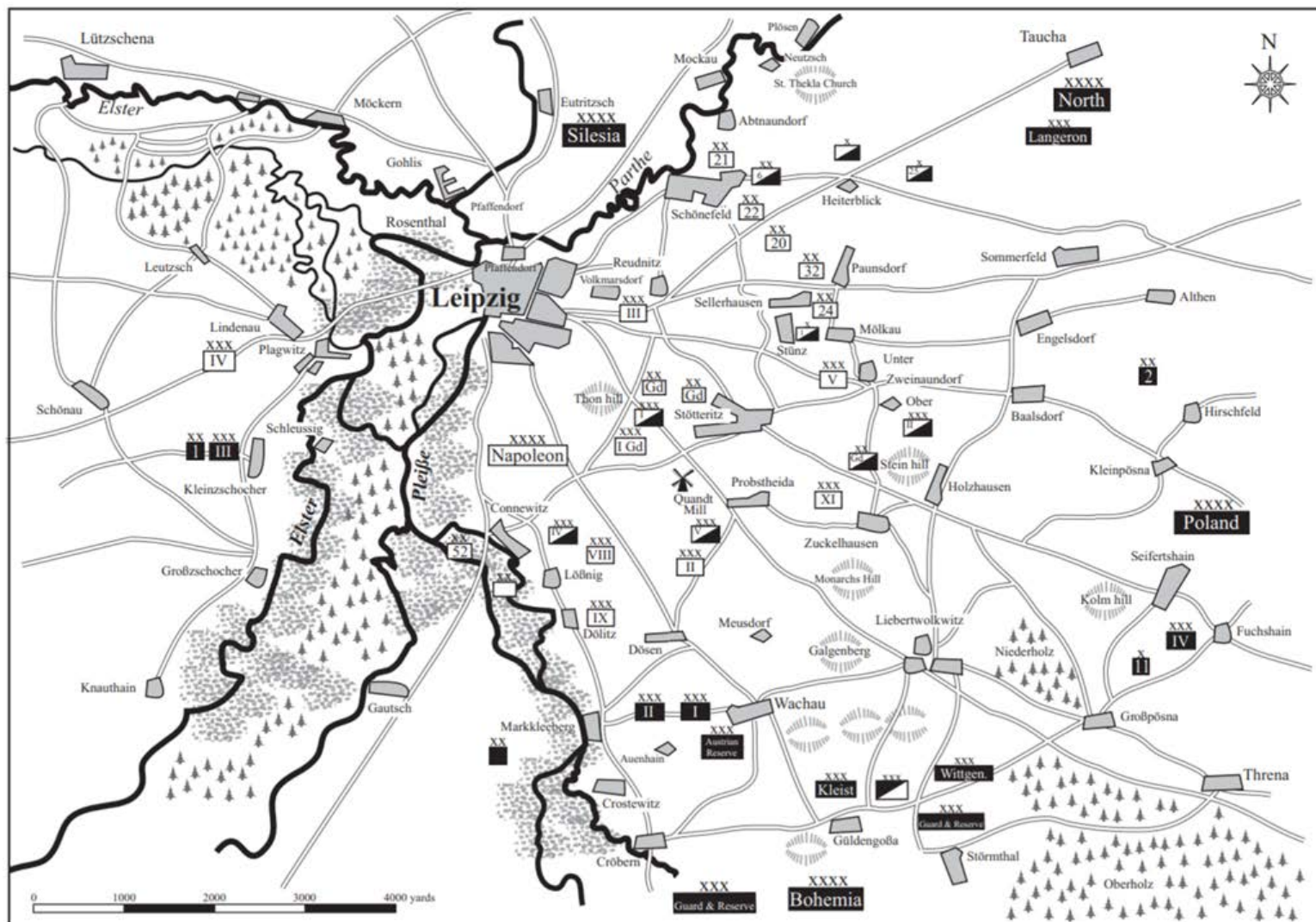
Napoleon reunites with Murat at Leipzig to face the Army of Bohemia. Blücher marches south from Halle. Map courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History, *Atlas of the Napoleonic Wars*, <https://www.westpoint.edu/academics/academic-departments/history/napoleonic-wars>



**Map A.14: The Battle of Leipzig, 16 October 1813.**

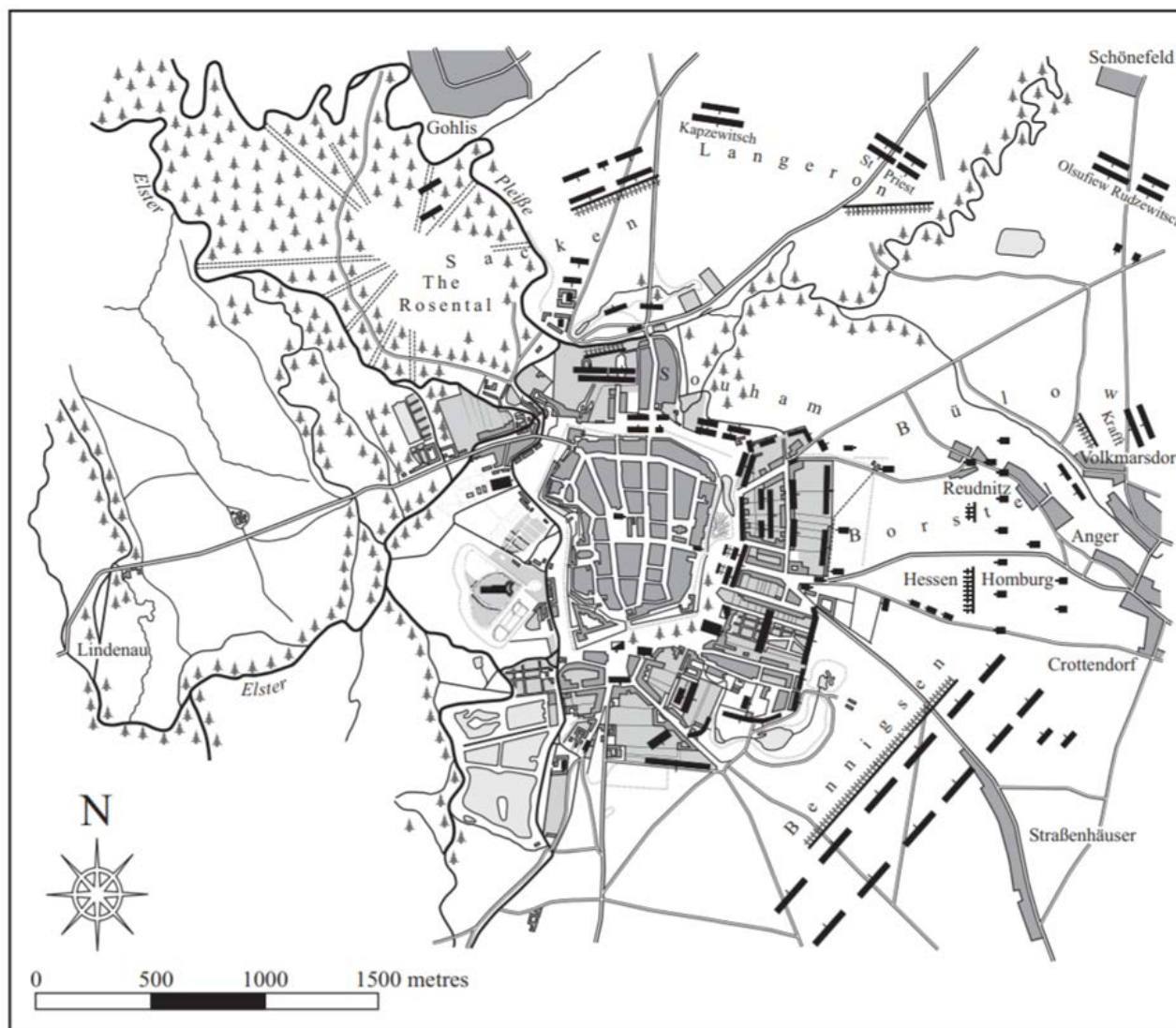
Napoleon concentrates his forces in the south against Schwarzenberg. The Allies attack in six columns against Lindenau, Connewitz, Markleeberg, Wachau, and Liebertwolkwitz from West to East. Napoleon holds the line Markleeberg-Wachau-Liebertwolkwitz with three army corps, siting his grand battery on Gallows Hill between Wachau and Liebertwolkwitz. Blücher attacks Marmont between the Elster and Parthe rivers. Map from Leggiere, *Napoleon and the Struggle for Germany*, 2: 628, courtesy of the author.





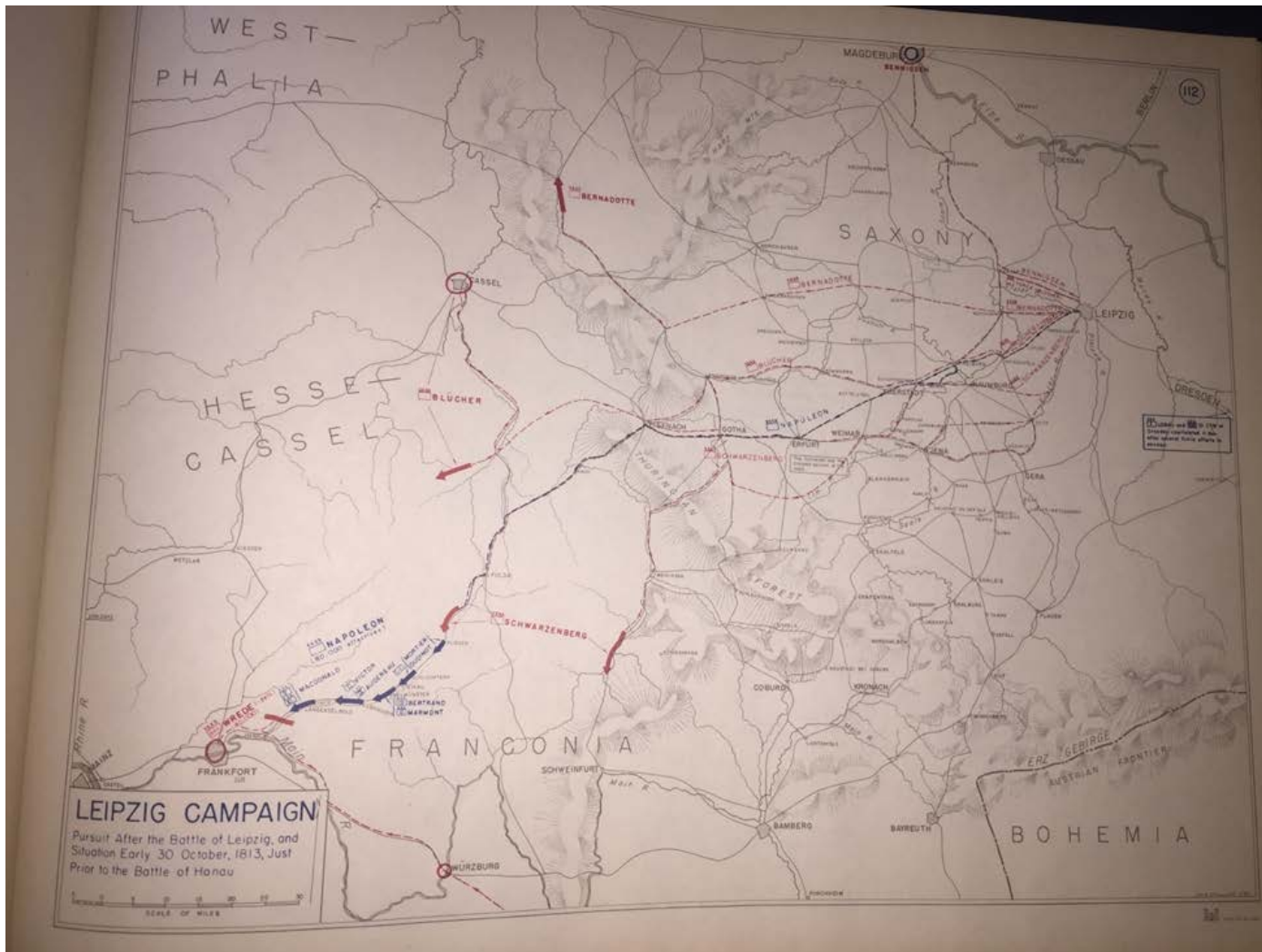
**Map A.15: Battle of Leipzig, 18 October 1813.**

Bernadotte, Bennigsen, and Colloredo have joined, reinforcing the Allies with 100,000 men. The Allies mount another series of concentric attacks on the French position. While no breakthrough materializes, the French lose ground, the Saxons defect, and French reserves are exhausted. Map from Leggiere, *Napoleon and the Struggle for Germany*, 2: 700, courtesy of the author.



**Map A.16: Storming of Leipzig, 19 October 1813.**

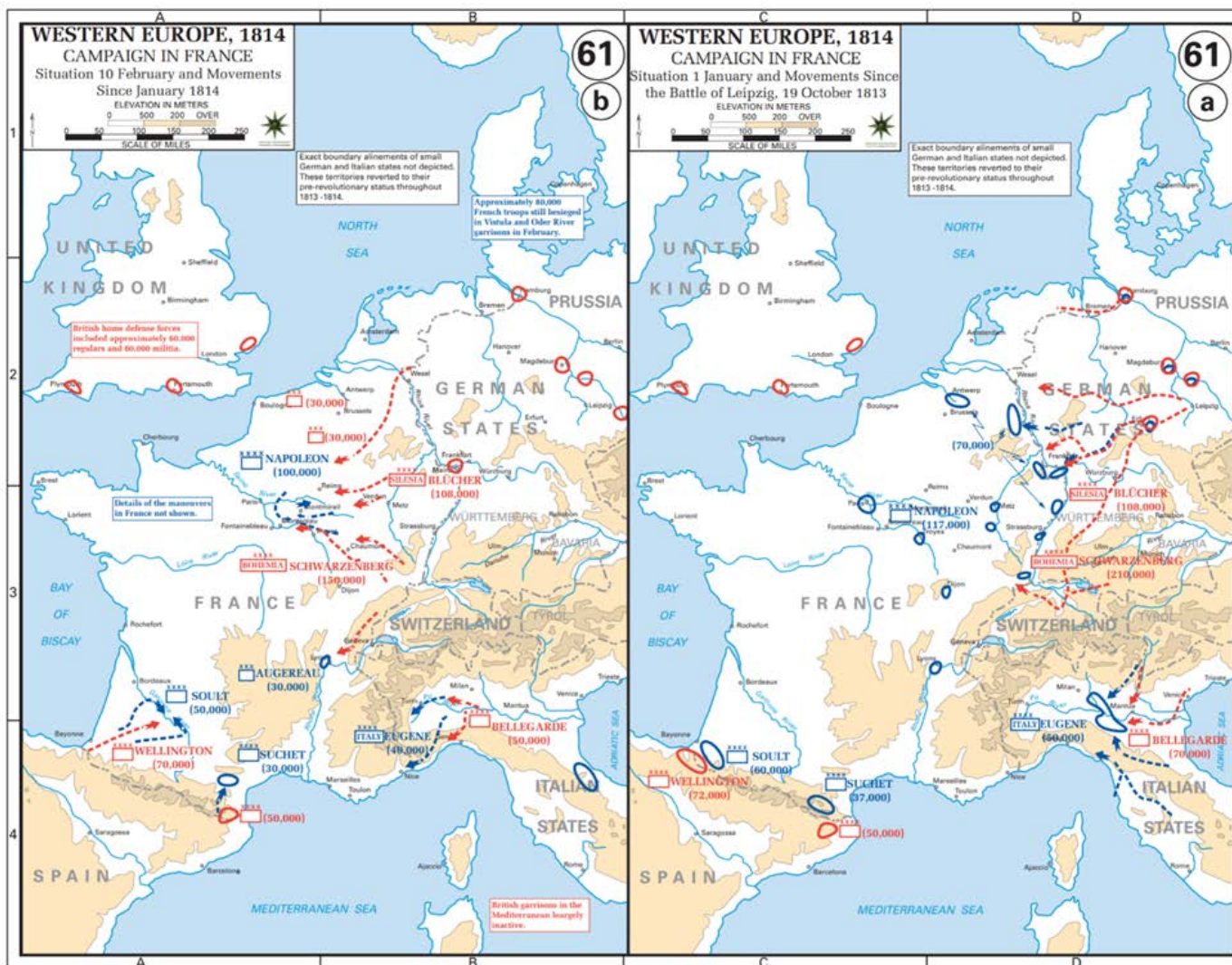
The French rearguard fights obstinately but is forced to surrender after the bridge over the Elster explodes. Map from Leggiere, *Napoleon and the Struggle for Germany*, 2: 731, courtesy of the author.



**Map A.17: The Allies pursue Napoleon after Leipzig.**

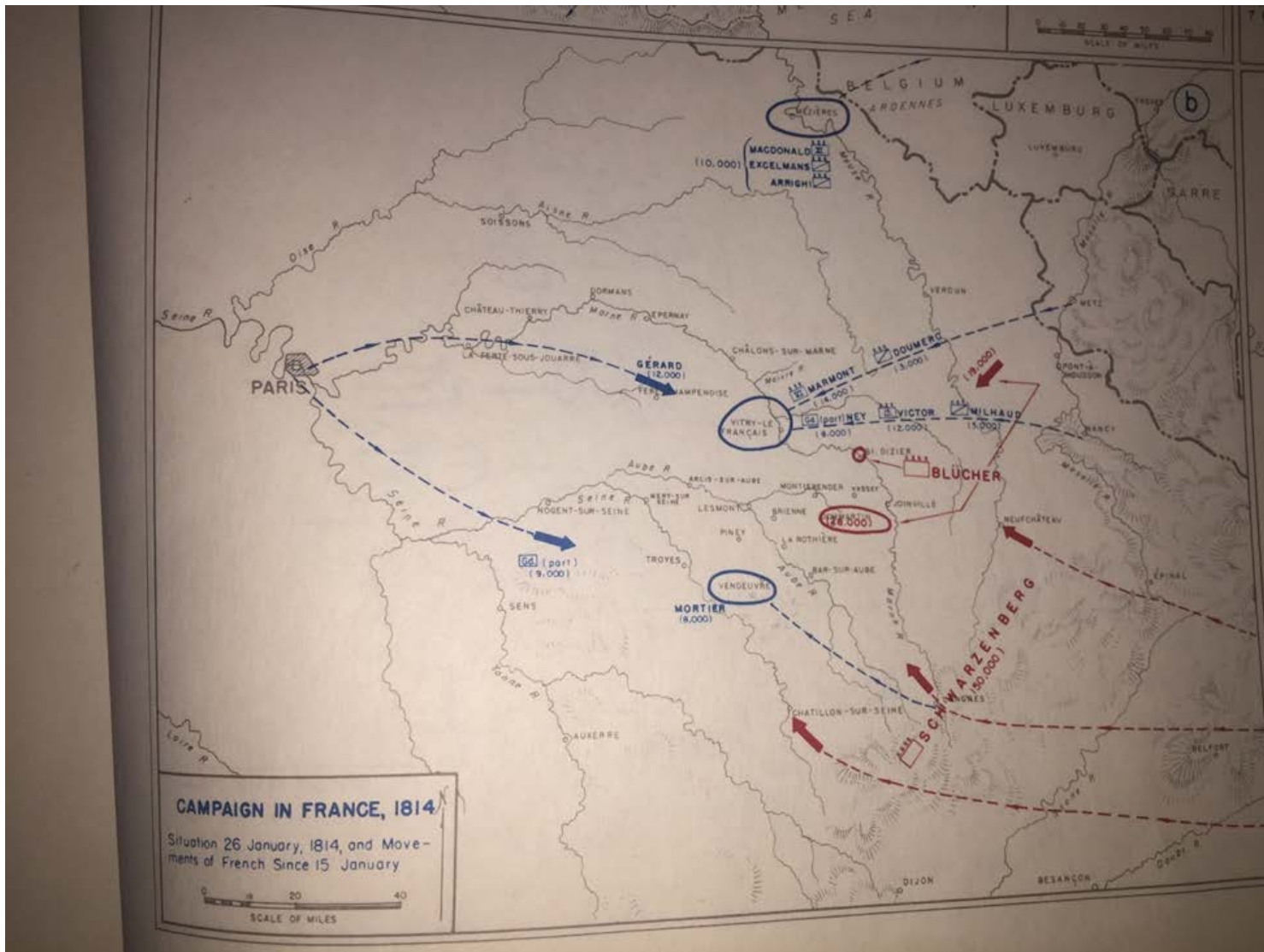
The Bohemian Army follows Napoleon's columns while Blücher marches on parallel roads north of Napoleon. An Austro-Bavarian army under Carl-Philipp von Wrede occupies a position on the Main, seeking to cut Napoleon off from France. On 30-31 October, Napoleon defeats the Austro-Bavarian army at Hanau and retreats across the Rhine. Map from Esposito, *Atlas*, courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History.





**Map A.18: Napoleon leaves covering forces at the Upper, Middle, and Lower Rhine.**

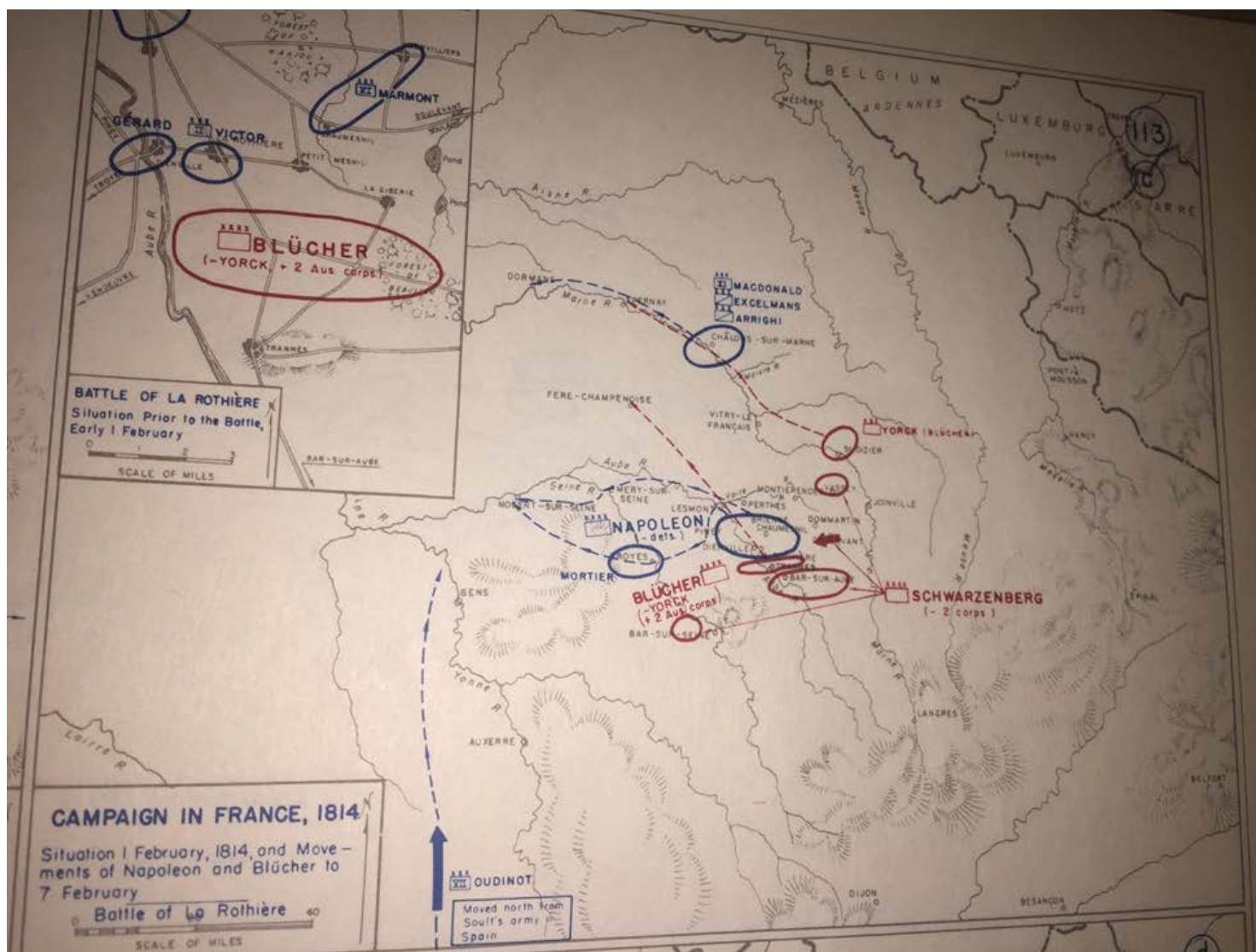
Schwarzenberg marches up the Rhine to cross at Basel in Switzerland on 20 December 1813, while Blücher crosses the Middle Rhine on 1 January 1813 and Wintzingerode and Bülow cross the Lower Rhine. Map courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History, *Atlas of the Napoleonic Wars*, <https://www.westpoint.edu/academics/academic-departments/history/napoleonic-wars>



**Map A.19: 26 January 1814.**

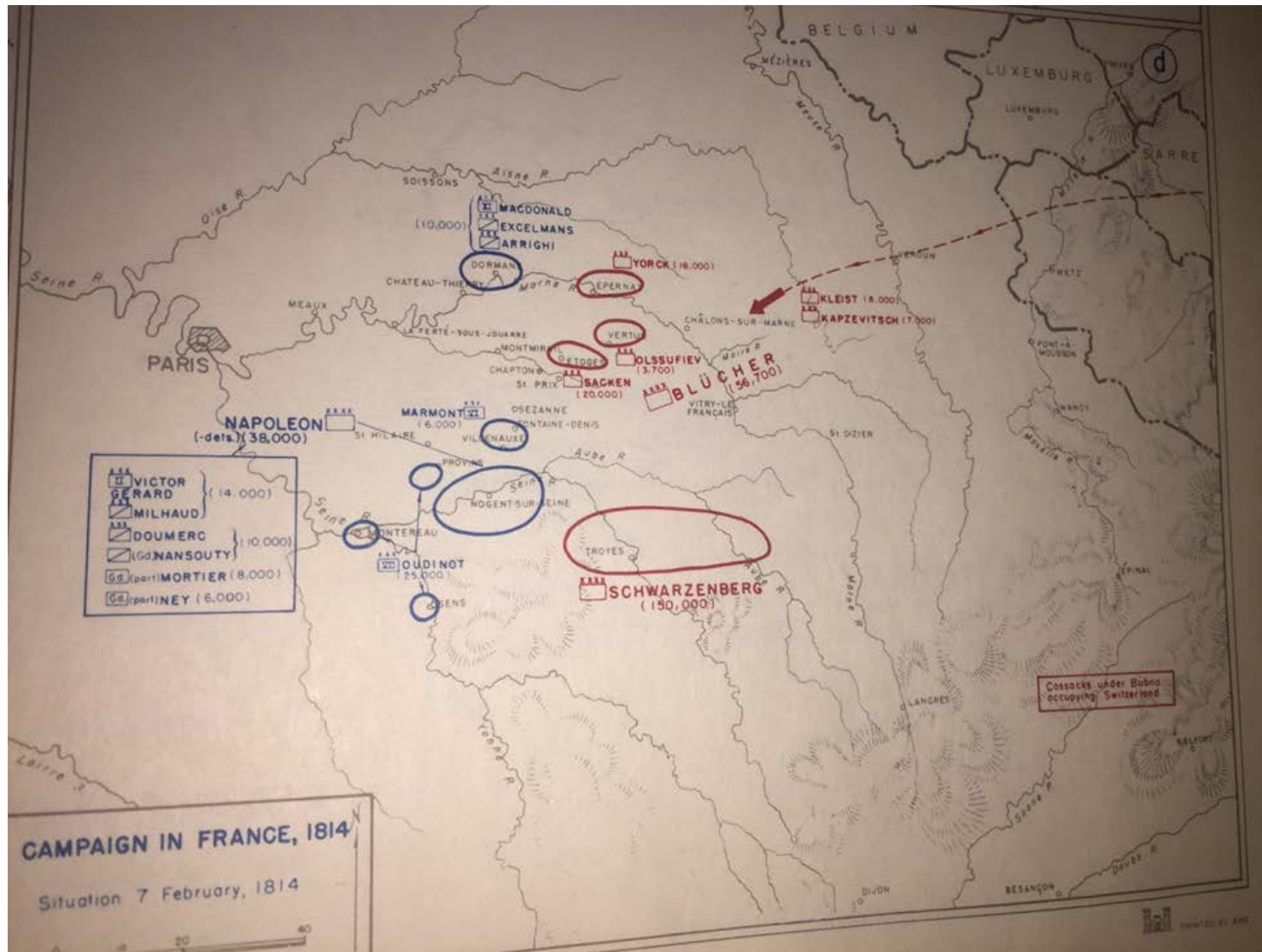
Schwarzenberg debouches from the plateau of Langres and moves to link up with Blücher. Map from Esposito, *Atlas*, courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History.





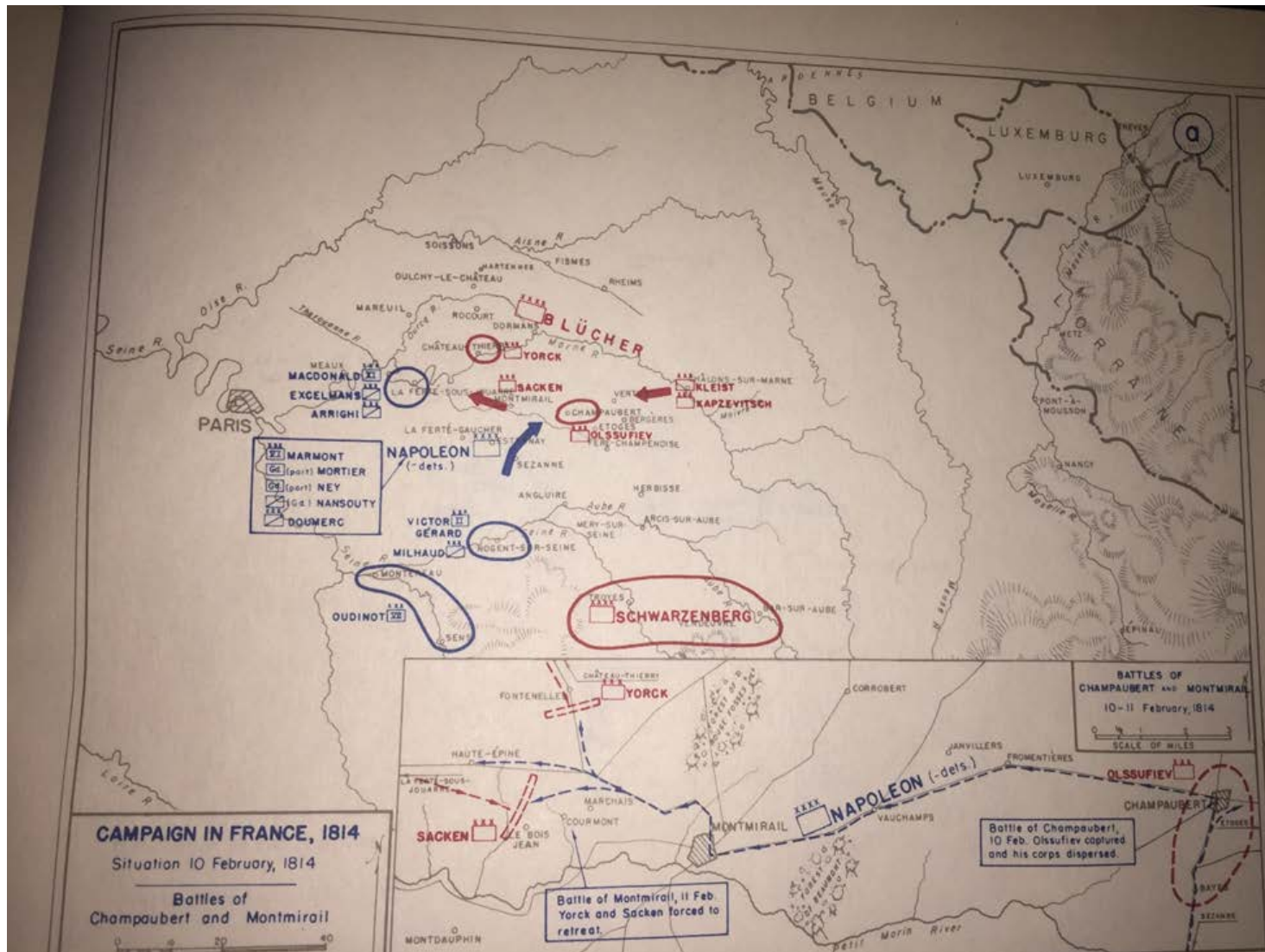
**Map A.20: 1 February 1814.**

Blücher, reinforced by corps from the Main Army, defeats Napoleon on 1 February northeast of the Bar-Sur-Aube defile. Schwarzenberg's main body provides a fallback position. Map from Esposito, *Atlas*, courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History.



**Map A.21: 7 February 1814.**

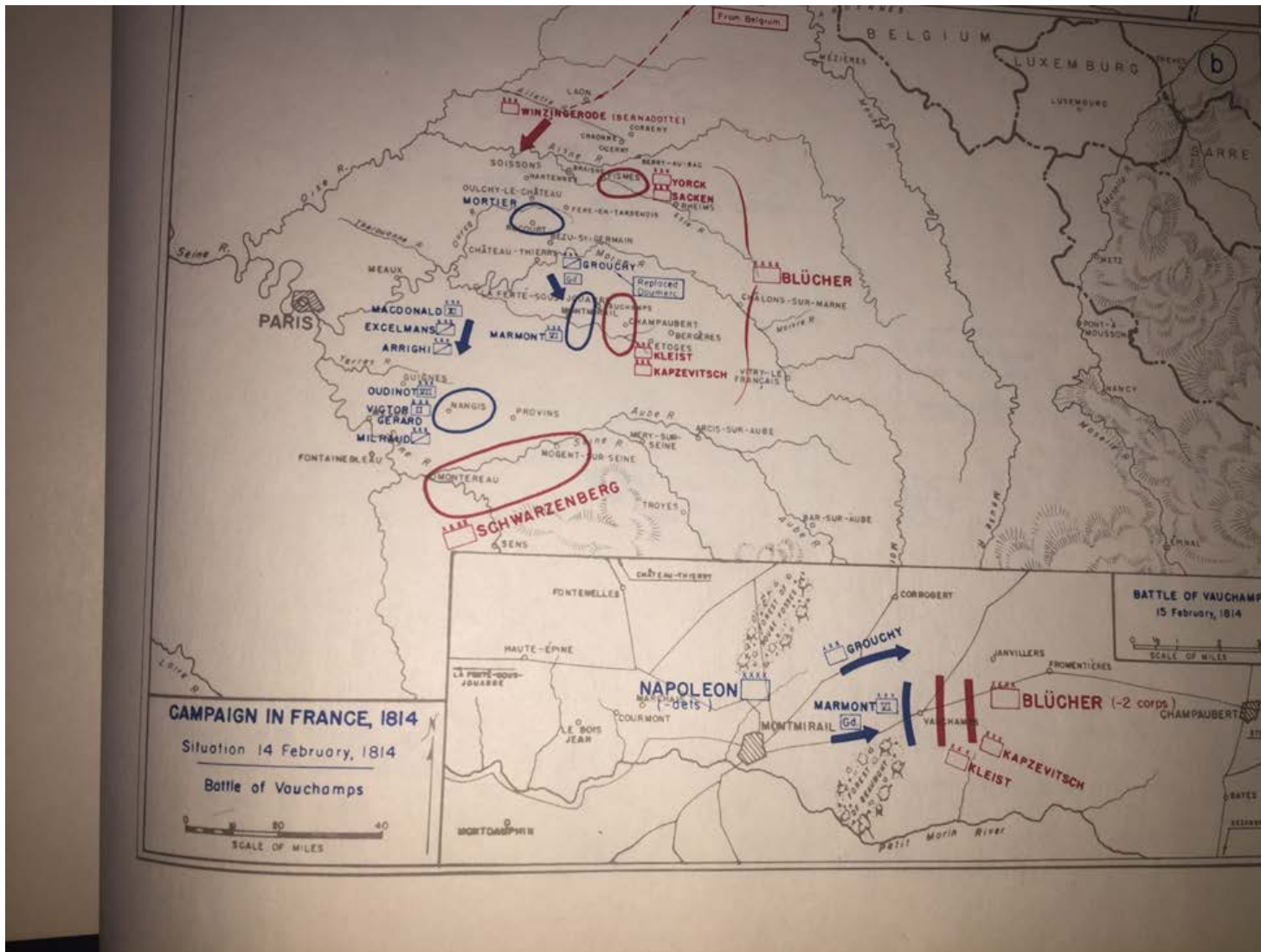
The Allied armies separate after the victory at La Rothière. Schwarzenberg marches along the Seine to Troyes while Blücher follows the Marne. Map from Esposito, *Atlas*, courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History.



Map A.22: 11 February 1814.

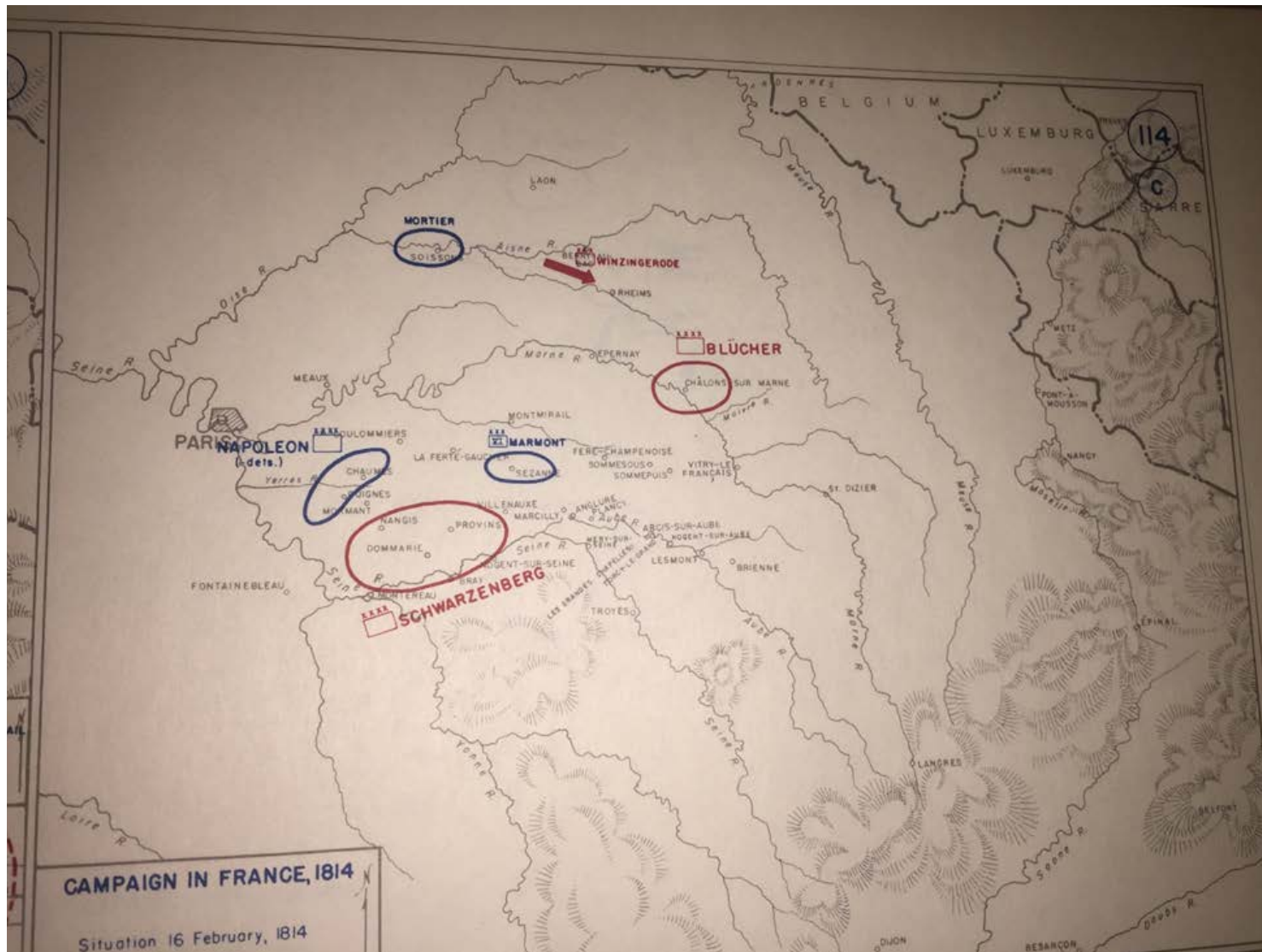
Napoleon cuts between Blücher's vanguard and main body and defeats them in turn at Champaubert on 10 February and Montmirail on 11 February. Map from Esposito, *Atlas*, courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History.





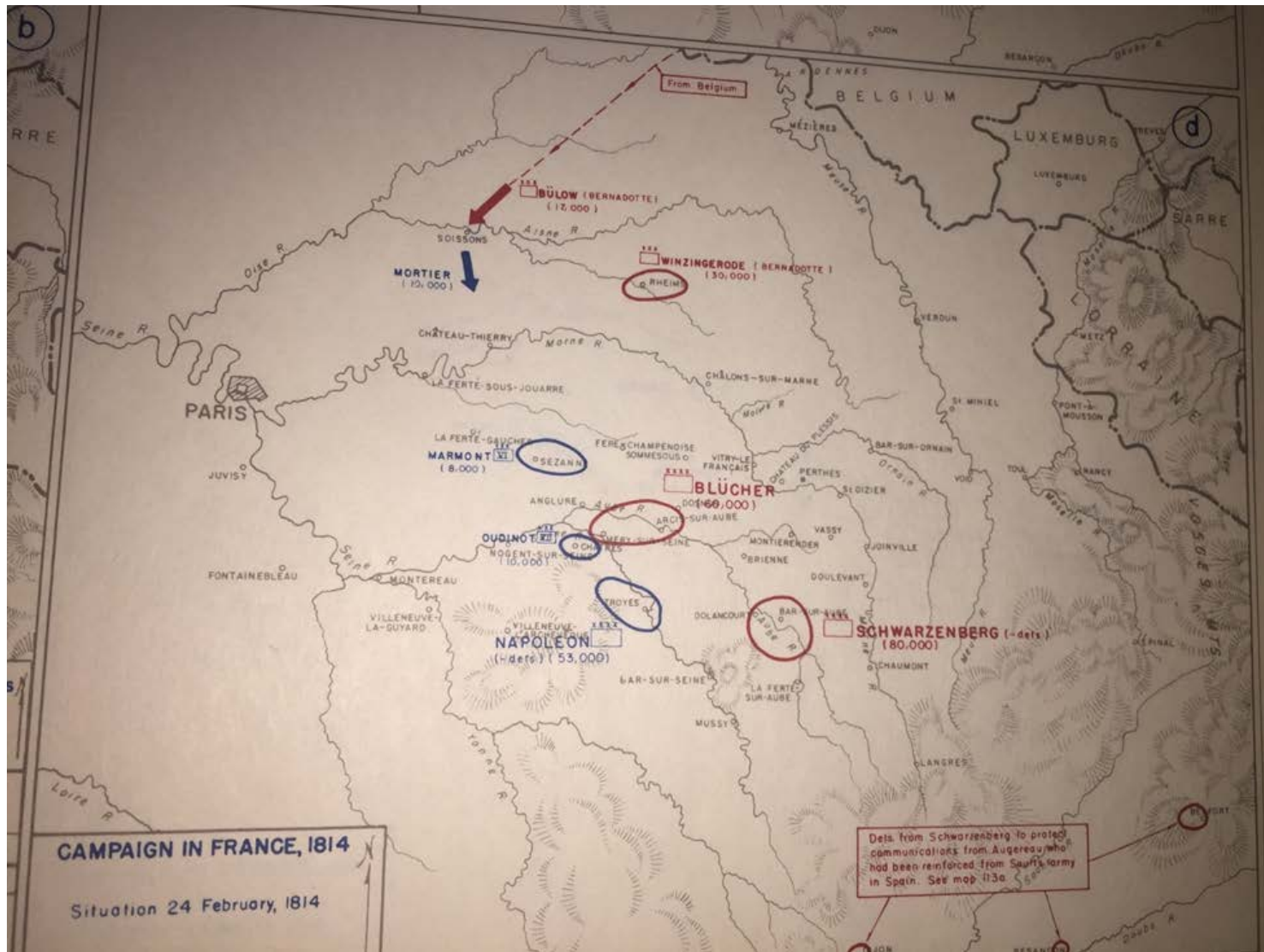
**Map A.23: Napoleon defeats Blücher again at Vauchamps, 14 February.**

Schwarzenberg advances down the Seine towards Paris. Map from Esposito, *Atlas*, courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History.



Map A.24: 16 February 1814.

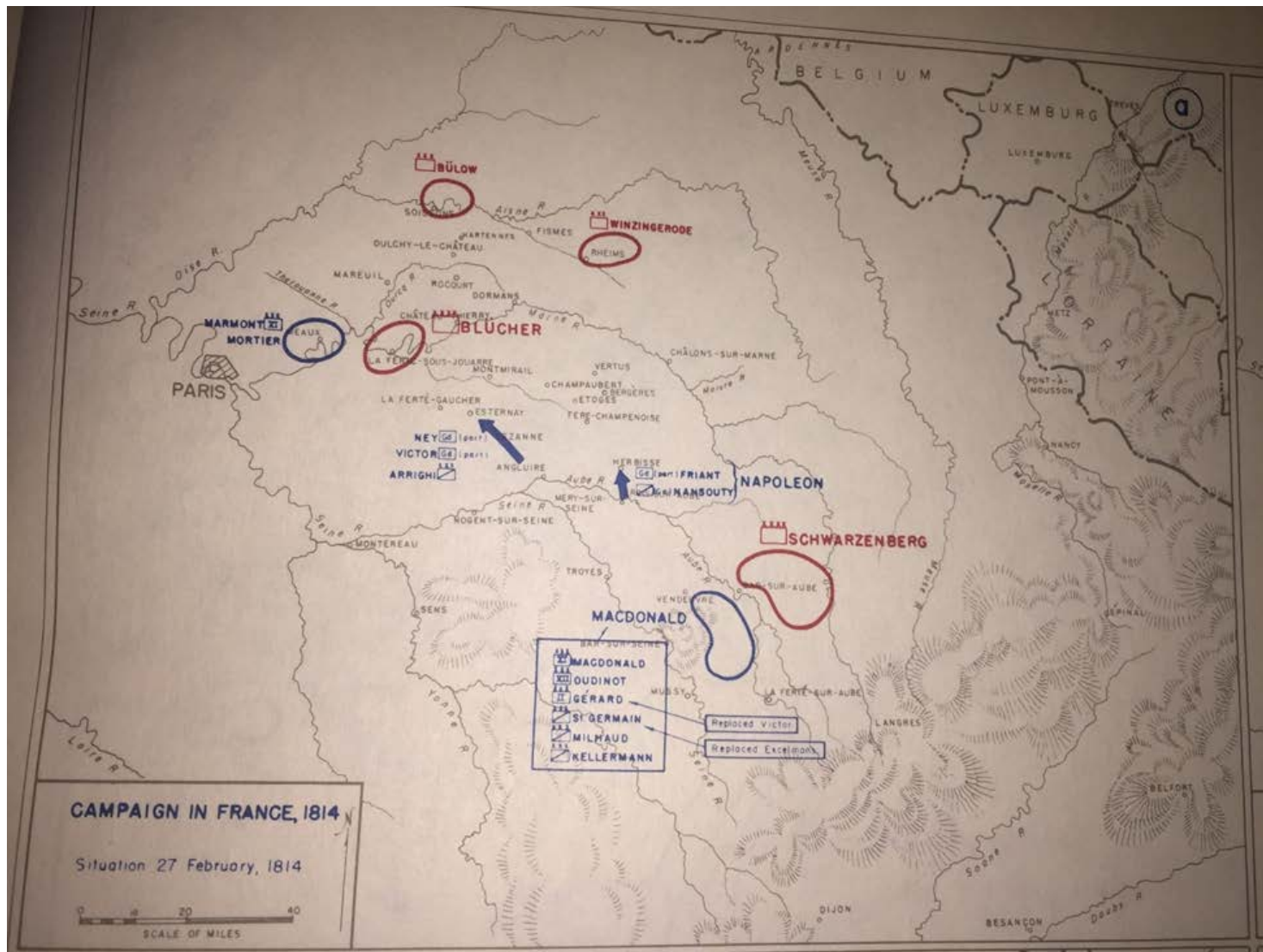
Blücher retreats to the Marne after defeat in the Six Days Campaign. Schwarzenberg threatens Paris. Map from Esposito, *Atlas*, courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History.



Map A.25: 24 February 1814.

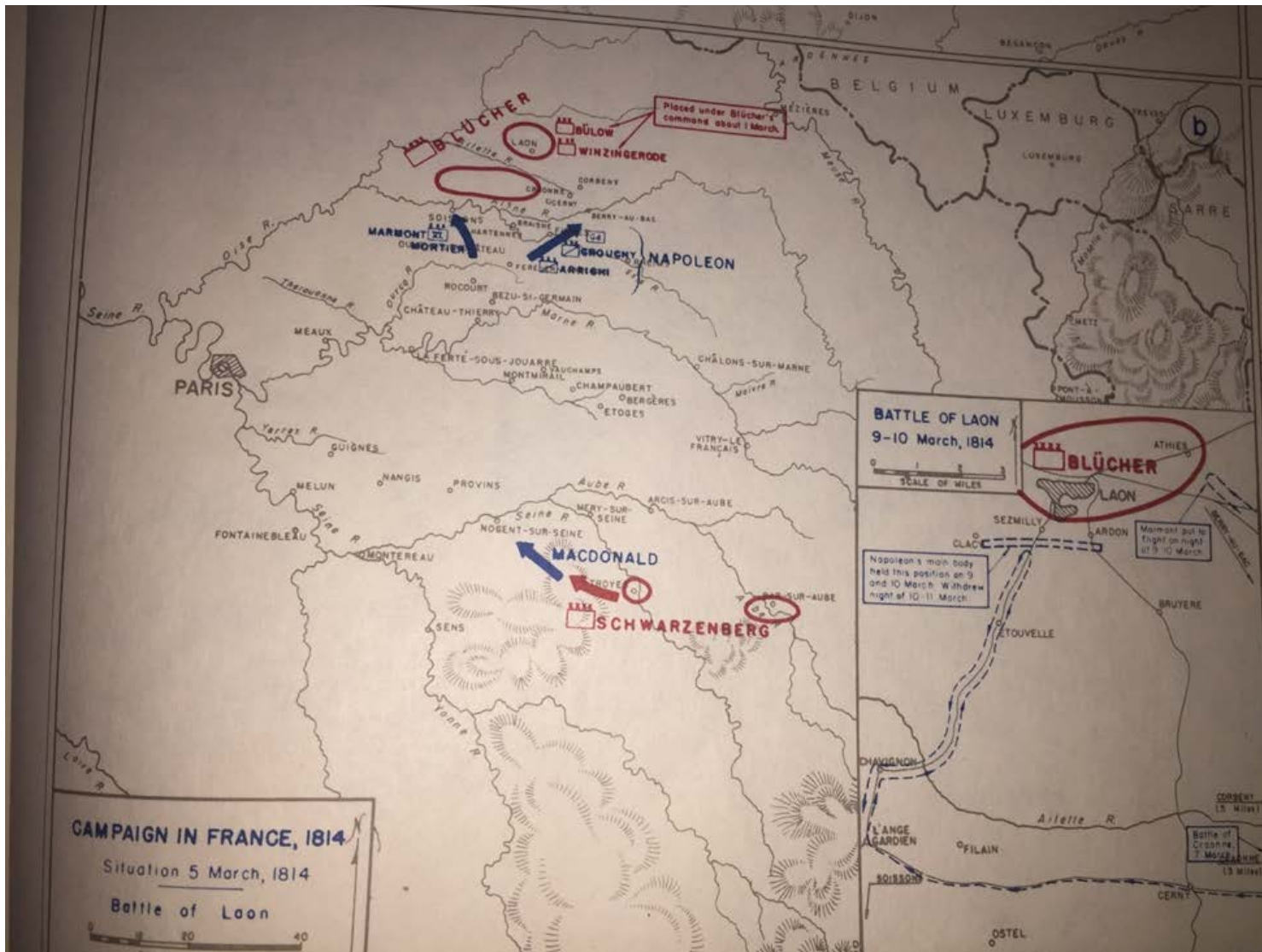
Schwarzenberg retreats to the Aube after being beaten at Mormant and Montereau on 17 February and 18 February. Map from Esposito, *Atlas*, courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History.





**Map A.26: 27 February 1814.**

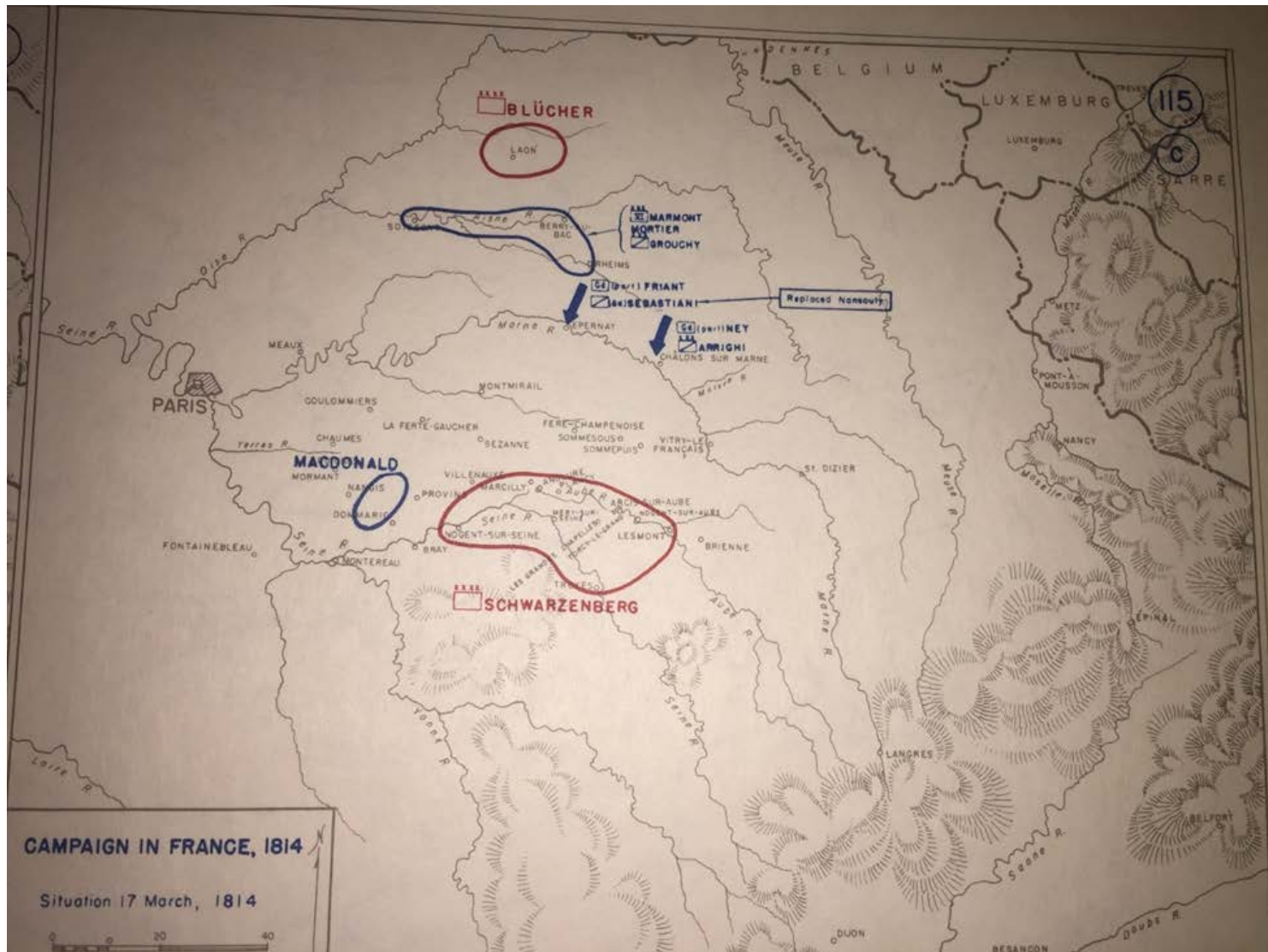
Napoleon turns north to Blücher's thrust towards Paris. Schwarzenberg defeats MacDonald at Bar-sur-Aube. Map from Esposito, *Atlas*, courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History.



Map A.27: 9-10 March 1814.

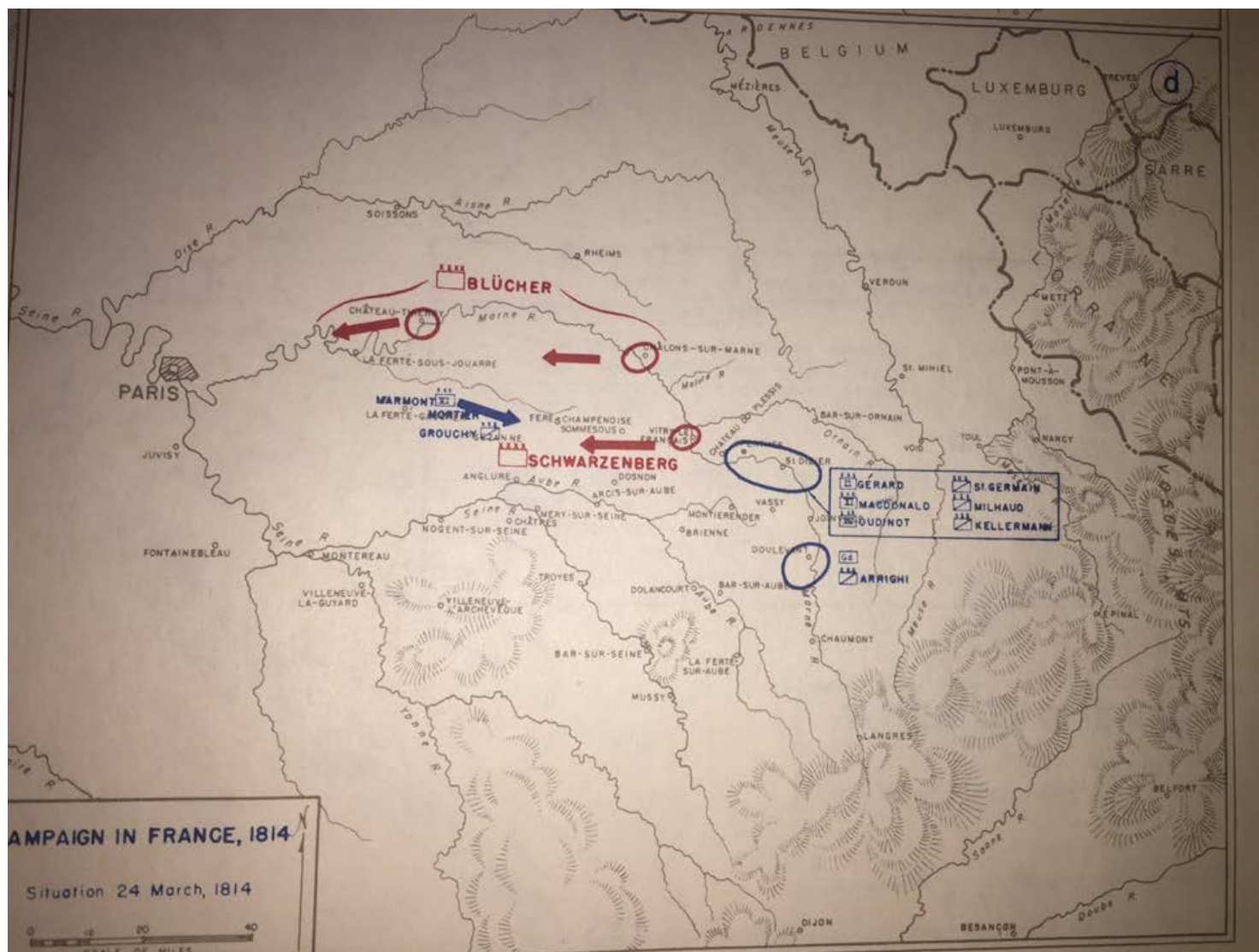
Napoleon marches north of the Aisne and attacks Blücher at Laon, suffering a serious defeat. Map from Esposito, *Atlas*, courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History.





**Map A.28: 20-21 March 1814.**

Napoleon turns south after his defeat at Laon. Schwarzenberg awaits him behind the Aube and defeats him at Arcis. Map from Esposito, *Atlas*, courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History.



**Map A.29: Napoleon marches east after the defeat at Arcis, defeating a Russian corps on 26 March.**

Schwarzenberg and Blücher march on Paris. On 25 March, they envelop and rout Marmont and Mortier at Fère-Champenoise. On 30-31 March, the Allied armies captured Paris. Map from Esposito, *Atlas*, courtesy of United States Military Academy Department of History.

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