

# The Unity of the Operational Art

## Napoleon and Naval Integration

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**Abstract:** This article parallels the U.S. Marine Corps' purpose of achieving naval integration with that of the British success in defeating Napoleonic France. The historical context emphasizes the need to ensure that naval integration seeks a unity of the operational art and resists an inclination to bow to operational art as distinct in each domain. Britain's ability to marshal this response via all instruments of national power proved a key determinant of success that is worth emulating today.

**Keywords:** naval power, seapower, Rear Admiral Horatio Nelson, Napoleon, Trafalgar, continental system

**N**apoleon Bonaparte, “history’s greatest soldier,” casts a long shadow over U.S. military doctrine. Napoleon had the ability to fix and flank an enemy and win a swift battlefield decision, coupled with the conscious effort to seize the initiative even when on the defense. This mastery of maneuver warfare informs all the Services.<sup>1</sup> This mandate derives from the study of Napoleon’s campaigns where mobility and an unceasing offensive mindset constituted essential elements of his many successful battles. Added to this are the abundant leadership traits this individual can impart today, chief among them that a commander can will their troops to victory. To mirror such attributes pays a heady compliment to that soldier, but that homage faces the challenge of explaining the great one’s fall. After allied powers defeated him at

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Waterloo in 1815, Napoleon left France smaller, weaker, and more subservient to his foremost enemy, Great Britain, than when he first emerged to lead a revolutionary France some 20 years before.

No matter Napoleon's victories, there was always another campaign, another war, another risk of empire via combat arms, until he finally depleted France to such a point that it faced complete ruin. The reason for this failure rests with the better strategy Britain employed to exhaust its rival. While Napoleon remained supreme on land, only Britain, a seapower, proved able to check his ambition to rule Europe.<sup>2</sup> But that view reinforces a false divide between land and seapower and ignores the need to examine naval integration in step with the Marine Corps' recent call for greater coordination between the land and sea domains to advance U.S. national security aims.<sup>3</sup>

This understanding reminds one that integration across all domains, including air, space, and cyber, clearly promises to deliver the best warfighting practices, which is a needed footing taking a nation into the future. For this reason, naval integration in the age of Napoleon rebounds on the U.S. military today with obvious implications for strategy seen as a measure of all instruments of national power. That whole of government approach often calibrates the use of force of arms to best effect. That achievement is needed now just as great powers strove to achieve this end during the Napoleonic era. Assessing Napoleon's fate reveals a great deal about naval integration and how it explains France's defeat and, most importantly, that there is but one operational art—not one for land and one for sea. The focus on the unity of the operational art underscores that Britain simply did naval integration better than Napoleon.

## **The Long War**

Britain and France eyed each other as rivals well before the rise of Napoleon. By 1789, as the French Revolution boiled to the surface, Britain had set its strategy: naval power would be at a premium, the use of military force on land purposefully restricted.<sup>4</sup> Long established as a key component of the British approach to war with France, that strategy depended on a continental "balance of power," a euphemism for ensuring that no one state dominated the continent to then form a coalition against Britain that would threaten that state's position as the leader of global trade.<sup>5</sup> Understanding its chief source of strength as an economic power, Britain would maximize this advantage and elevate it to something of an art form once Napoleon emerged as leader of France.

French kings, and later Napoleon, coveted a direct blow against the island empire of Britain to end this strategic advantage. That purpose enjoyed the benefit of simplicity: conquering England would undoubtedly end that nation's trade dominance and, therefore, its intrusion into continental affairs. This direct approach had much appeal, but the trouble was the means. Britain

reigned supreme at sea. Moreover, a recent British failure in this arena, a rare French naval victory and one in support of American independence in 1781 just outside the Chesapeake Bay and forcing Britain to surrender an army at Yorktown, Virginia, had reminded Britain of where its military strength must lie—with the navy. Its improved naval doctrine a decade later, best illustrated with a standardized signal book for better tactical coordination at sea, helped make a French attack across the channel costly at best, improbable at worst.<sup>6</sup> Either way, France's ability to posture as a great power because of its large landmass and huge population would be exposed as a hollow advantage due to its limitations at sea. Risking such an assault could cost France more than it was worth to just stay put and merely threaten invasion.

While France posed a threat to England via a cross-channel invasion, seldom did that posturing go further than that. The French Revolution hurt the cause of invasion in rapid succession. The naval branch of service, full of royal officers, faced harsh purges and many of its key leaders left France as émigrés or fell to the guillotine.<sup>7</sup> No matter its navy's degraded condition, revolutionary France made the effort. A French fleet staging from Brest managed to threaten Ireland at the end of 1796, but bad weather scattered the invasion force, ending the attack. Another attempt came after Spain allied with France in late 1796, and leaders of both states made joining the naval forces of the two countries a priority. Britain turned back this effort in February 1797, off Cape St. Vincent south of Lisbon, forcing a Spanish fleet to give up the attempted juncture, forestalling any invasion. The French courted another ally in the Dutch, but by the end of 1797, the British crushed a Dutch fleet off the coast of the Netherlands near Camperdown, blunting a potential French effort to mass a fleet to protect an invasion force.

The British successes reflected a conscious effort to shift naval tactics. No longer content to exchange fire between a rigid line of ships, the admiralty encouraged massing ships against a portion of the opposing fleet to force a melee where a fight at close quarters would secure a decisive engagement at sea. Britain had come a long way from executing Admiral Sir John Byng for attempting such a maneuver in 1756, a movement that failed to relieve the port of Minorca.<sup>8</sup> An initial success came on the Glorious First of June in 1794, when British Admiral Richard Howe bloodied a French fleet escorting a convoy to Brest. While the grain shipment reached France and diminished the success of this battle, Howe's effort encouraged others to shift tactics. Several years later in early 1797, Sir Horatio Nelson embraced this mandate as part of Admiral John Jervis's command when engaging the Spanish fleet at Cape St. Vincent. Nelson moved his ship out of the British line to prevent an enemy concentration during the height of that battle, ensuring a British success. By the end of 1797, although there were difficulties, including mutinies among its crews, Britain's

seapower all but guaranteed it remained in control of the channel and able to repel an invasion. That key success allowed the tampering with naval doctrine to remain something Nelson could take advantage of in the future.<sup>9</sup>

Napoleon's military prowess meant a cross-channel attack received another look and this time from someone able to assess risk, possibility, and gain from such a military strike. In other words, Napoleon was more than a land general. His analysis would evolve but rely on the principle of naval integration. To this end, he faced some old and enduring limitations. Any attack on England involved forcible entry in that a cross-channel attack must defeat the British naval forces in the channel. That Joint operation meant a naval victory first; the land campaign that followed would simply be a campaign similar to any on the continent. Given this assumption, how to gain a naval success dominated much of the planning.

French planning was sound, as far as it went. Britain's limited ground forces in the home islands suggested a French ground force could be successful once landed. But the difficulty in simply embarking an invasion force, even within the confines of a safe harbor, proved imposing. In July 1805, Napoleon faced this limitation when such an exercise at Boulogne-sur-Mer killed at least 200 men as bad weather disrupted the attempt.<sup>10</sup> It was more than merely the weather. Landing craft simply did not exist to make this cumbersome process—never easy—manageable, at least on the scale Napoleon needed.

The problem redoubled when having to disembark onto enemy territory and presumably under duress from at least some resisting force, if not a powerful resisting force. And should the landing be effective, how was the French Army to be maintained thereafter?<sup>11</sup> This part of the French plan did not receive enough attention and problems abounded. If the British Army was swept aside by the superior French troops, a widely held belief but one that remained just an assumption, the population could hardly be expected to support the invading force. Living off the land, which was a common practice during the Napoleonic era, could solve this logistical problem, but for how long could the English countryside support an army of some 30,000 troops? And if this was the size of the attacking force, would that be enough to move from the coast to London and therefore dictate peace, assuming peace followed the occupation of the capital?

The entire enterprise presented grave dangers; it also offered the great benefit of ending the resistance of France's intractable foe. Should that happen, French domination of the continent beckoned. Better sailors, better landing craft, and a good deal of luck may have authored some optimism, but the French Navy had few good commanders, little naval know-how, and a corresponding loss of confidence that might have capitalized on any luck that presented itself. The entire

operation was stillborn, though that reality was never fully admitted or accepted.

When the prospect of invasion fell to Napoleon immediately after his successful campaign chasing the Austrians from northern Italy in 1797, he made this necessary calculation. The Directory, the governing body of five men leading revolutionary France, had asked the newly discovered general to solve the problem of invading England. One suspects that the newcomer with clearly unfulfilled ambition got this task to humble him in light of his recently exhibited military acclaim. No one could recommend such an assault and maintain good standing within France, perhaps at any time, but certainly at this juncture of the revolution. French revolutionary armies, with much departure from established military practices, had been able to more than hold their own when led by competent generals such as Napoleon. But no one believed that French naval forces could do the same. The spheres of land and sea were simply too different. Napoleon would not be able to solve this rift, and the Directory, while proving ineffective at leading France, would have surprisingly used some guile if not sophistication to neutralize one potential threat in the person of Bonaparte.<sup>12</sup>

Napoleon soon realized the Directory had forced him into a corner, but he swiftly developed a counterstroke that would get him a new assignment and his career a new lease on life. His proposal rested on solving, if not the cross-channel invasion, the problem of naval integration. He bluntly reported that a naval operation in the channel stood little chance of success given the British fleet present there and the inability of the French Navy to realistically challenge that force. He said nothing about the dubious ability to exploit such a naval success on land no matter how unlikely a favorable outcome at sea. This oversight went unacknowledged in 1798, but it would resurface as a key issue in a few more years when Napoleon again turned his attention to a cross-channel invasion. For now, he offered a plan that captured the key element of using naval and land forces in coordination with one another and that was seeking an objective that pushed strategy well beyond merely the act of military force. Napoleon sought the unity of the operational art and his capability as a military commander again surfaced to the benefit of France.

## **Egypt**

Napoleon hoped to strike Britain's means of military success—its ability to keep a large navy on station not just in the channel but throughout its sprawling empire. A French expeditionary attack on Egypt would nicely serve this end. With the French in control of the Suez region, Britain's trading empire would be dealt a blow—and one hard to counter.<sup>13</sup> By contesting British designs for dominance of the eastern Mediterranean Sea, Napoleon hoped the island nation would have to respond and do so with both naval and ground forces. The

problem of naval integration would now fall on the British, and there was no certainty they could mount such an effort any better than France. Increasing British forces in and around Egypt entailed a weakening of forces elsewhere. Perhaps that redistribution would encourage rebellions against British power in Latin America or Asia. Even better, interdicting trading routes that flowed through Egypt meant a need for Britain to harness trade elsewhere, again risking British oversight in other parts of its empire. In short, Napoleon hoped to test the viability of the British Empire, discovering tensions and fissures that spoke to its brittleness and lack of resiliency.<sup>14</sup> The American separation from Britain was a not too distant memory to hope for another such setback to British power.

A French strike at Egypt also spoke to a French economy of force. The comparatively modest fleet and landing component required for that action, rather than a strike across the English Channel, would not hamstring other French military concerns. The feasibility of the attack spoke to getting past land and sea warfare as two different ends of the operational art. This single stroke commanded two outcomes at once—military action coupled with a power projection that struck at the heart of British vitality: its economic success. Serving this national security interest meant a stroke of naval integration consisting of the use of force serving a credible strategic purpose.

The Directory handed over to General Bonaparte some 36,000 men and around 400 ships, including 13 warships. The fleet sortied on 19 May 1798, mostly from Toulon, and headed to Malta and then onto Alexandria, Egypt. No particular effort was made to contend with the British surface fleet threatening to enter the eastern Mediterranean to intercept just such an attack. Instead, all was left to chance. Hopefully, Rear Admiral Nelson, in command of the main British naval force in this area of operations, would find only a part of the French fleet and, with better luck, none of it at all. This latter more fortuitous outcome came to pass, and the French made it to both Malta and Egypt without any challenge at sea.<sup>15</sup>

This result came despite Nelson's best efforts. Always a captain in search of a fight, he relentlessly sought out the French fleet once he learned of its departure from base. His zealousness worked against him, at least initially. Unknowingly to him, he just missed the enemy in the waters east of Sicily. Frustrated, he sped toward Alexandria having correctly guessed the French destination. He arrived on 28 June, a few days before the French did, a tribute to his ability to move swiftly at sea, and a recognition of that very ability to work against him at times. Concerned he misjudged French intentions, he quit Alexandria and put to sea to resume his pursuit, heading farther east and then backtracking toward Sicily. Once reprovisioned, he moved east again.<sup>16</sup>

This pursuit spoke to much about the operational art and dispelled sugges-

tions that two different means to that end were required—one at sea and one at land. Nelson's speed lay bare that a competent sailor could travel distances and meet timetables no matter the clear dependence on winds, currents, and calm seas. Even when a storm initially disrupted Nelson's task force, he recovered swiftly and was ready to meet the French in battle at sea. This foremost aim spoke to his purpose of ensuring the expeditionary nature of the French offensive, made clear by the reported number of transports, did not come to fruition. He would destroy the French escort and then eliminate the helpless transports. There would be no land battle here, only a ship-on-ship engagement that Nelson welcomed, so confident was he in British naval superiority. Maneuverability at sea may well speak to that on land when operations rested in the hands of a competent naval commander, and so too did a desire for a decisive battle. Nelson would end the French threat in a matter of hours, just as Napoleon made crushing his enemy's army the main goal when fighting on land. Any gap between the land and sea evaporated given this understanding of the operational art.

Denied that battle on the open sea, Nelson soon learned that the French had landed in Alexandria after all and rushed to return to that destination. He reached that site on 1 August. There, at last, he found the French fleet, and he immediately signaled the attack. The forces were comparable: Nelson in charge of 13 warships and the French with a similar number including the massive 120-gunned *L'Orient* (1791), flagship of the French commander, Vice Admiral François-Paul Brueys d'Aigalliers. Like most French admirals, Brueys could boast of extensive experience at sea and a great fear of meeting the British in battle. With no confidence of success, he assumed a rigidly orthodox defensive position. He arrayed his ships in line at anchor, hugging the shore and facing the wide mouth of Aboukir Bay. That posture suited Nelson, determined to close with the enemy and wage a battle of annihilation. Nelson issued orders stating this mandate but offering his captains great leeway. All his ships were tasked with the same end—break the French line and engage enemy ships as opportunity presented. The aim was to allow his ships to fire on the enemy from both sides of the line, not just one as was the case when defending in line. Nelson had noticed that Brueys had not placed his ships close enough to the shore to prevent an attack from this side as well. Once the British ships could maneuver into position on both sides of the French vessels, the battle would be settled by gunnery ability and a willingness to fight. Nelson was confident those factors favored his force.<sup>17</sup>

The British soon engulfed the French line and the desired melee ensued, one segment at a time. After several hours of hard fighting, *L'Orient* caught fire and a tremendous explosion disintegrated the ship. French resolve, never strong, wilted as Nelson's fleet struck one ship after another. Soon, French resistance collapsed. At the Battle of the Nile, Nelson took or destroyed 10 French

ships without losing a ship of his own. The naval arm of Bonaparte's enterprise was lost. With the invasion of Egypt just a month old, the expeditionary nature of the operation appeared to have ended.<sup>18</sup>

Napoleon had started landing his ground forces on 1 July, as soon as he arrived in Alexandria, fearing the return of the British fleet. He immediately occupied Alexandria, his first objective, and was well on his way to Cairo three weeks later. As he approached Cairo, he faced a large Mamluk army that he defeated at the Battle of the Pyramids on 21 July 1798.<sup>19</sup> Superior French military arms secured this result; Napoleon formed his infantry into large square formations that repelled the swarming Mamluk cavalry attacks of the Turkish forces. With the enemy chased from the battlefield, the French advanced into Cairo and plotted their next steps.<sup>20</sup>

Until Nelson reappeared, the French occupation of the region appeared easy enough. The loss of the French fleet brought the goals of the expedition into cold relief. The situation now required a review of the entire operation and a confrontation with expeditionary warfare as a measure of the operational art. In practice, one could say the French had met their goal. The Suez region was under their control, presenting the British with the intended disruption of trading routes to the east. That success, however, now looked tenuous at best with the loss of the French fleet. How long could the French stay in place to reap any benefits from their earlier "success?" The rupture between land and sea operations appeared complete—a forfeiture of the operational mandate of naval integration. Stranded in Egypt, the French military effort appeared to have a limited shelf life. Without reinforcement, resupply, or even communication with Paris to coordinate next actions, the campaign had fizzled as soon as it began.

This crippling outcome came from Britain's seapower, and Britain now looked to complete its success of having bottled up the French ground force. In other words, not content to allow a standoff between sea and land, the British soon looked to conduct expeditionary operations of their own that matched naval success with a ground operation. This effort did require some care, given the strategic risks that Napoleon had believed the British faced were real indeed. To dispatch a large force to the region, both a reinforced fleet and an army was not just impractical but would require an effort that could spawn, if not unrest elsewhere, unwanted tensions in other parts of the empire. The solution was to empower another talented naval officer, Commodore Sir William Sidney Smith, to seek out supporting forces from the Ottoman Empire. A clear look to naval integration would provide the ground forces to team with British naval assets to check French efforts on land.<sup>21</sup>

Smith's diplomatic success at the Ottoman court translated into an operational art skillfully mixing sea and land components that soon witnessed another



er Bedouin army descending on Bonaparte's forces in Syria. Napoleon, though stranded in Egypt, had decided on expanding French power in the region. With land forces alone, he would make good the strategic intent of challenging British economic vitality by turning the Orient into a French stronghold, even if just on land. To this end, he struck Syria, advancing along the coastline to reach Acre, a fortress symbolizing Ottoman control. A military success here could force the sultan to negotiate a favorable agreement with France, one that spurned British authority. This objective had just enough promise to provoke a British reply and soon a great battle unfolded at Acre beginning in March 1799.<sup>22</sup>

The British under Smith managed to reinforce that city with cannon, enabling the Turkish garrison to hold. Checked before the city, Napoleon recoiled with no place to go. Turkish resistance was assured and the hope of making them allies gone. His army, already depleted, faced sickness and shortages of food and water. Under duress, Napoleon ordered a retreat to Cairo in June 1799. This maneuver he completed, a significant achievement given his army's condition. His dreams of a kingdom to rival Alexander the Great clearly exposed as a mirage, and he plotted his return to France. Abandoning his army in mid-August, and doing so without permission from the French government, he embarked with a select few on a tiny flotilla and made for France. He reached that destination on 9 October 1799, after a 47 day journey. Again, good fortune had spared him from capture and an end to his career. Instead, once on French soil, he plotted to seize power.<sup>23</sup>

The Egyptian campaign foreshadowed many Napoleon realities to come. He would abandon his army again in Russia in 1812. He would need good fortune to succeed in the future, much as what got him to Egypt, and he would again enjoy this favor until he did not. Mostly, however, the parallels rest with the lessons of expeditionary warfare and the resultant impact of that effort on the operational art. A failure of naval integration meant a failure of his larger strategic aims, whether in Egypt as a French general or when fighting in Europe as emperor of France. This relationship was clear at this early stage of his career; the hope of striking such a blow at Britain was the intended purpose of the assault on Egypt. In short, he had calibrated naval integration as operational purpose transposing land and sea, only to see that aim flounder with the loss of the French fleet. Subsequent primarily land operations could not overcome the lack of balance between the two. It was a lesson that begged indulgence, but it was one that Napoleon would never resolve no matter his efforts to do so. What came next was a rise to power, to sit as emperor at the helm of France, but a struggle to measure naval integration as a formula to make France the dominant power in Europe. Napoleon had deduced the means to wage the next war, but he could not be sure he could bring the means to bear. His eventual failure in

this respect was all the more painful to behold given Britain would take this measure successfully and defend its position to dictate power in Europe and across the globe in the near future and for many years to come.

## **Trafalgar**

Napoleon shrugged off his setback in Egypt. France proved willing to do the same. The Directory wobbled, unable to protect the nation from enemies abroad and continuing to prove unable to impose order at home. Perhaps the general of Italian fame could cure both ills. The coup of December 1799 left Napoleon in control but hardly a proven commodity. He had much to do to gain the favor of public opinion, and he acted to that end. Soon, he restored order across France, Napoleon proving a willing and able administrator. However, with Italy again lost to France and under Austrian control, the chieftain, assuming the title of first consul, returned to that theater of operation to blunt this threat and, more importantly, establish himself as a military leader capable of protecting France—accepted in this effort was a furthering of his standing as ruler of the nation should he win a great battle. When he again expelled Austria from northern Italy by June 1800, he returned to Paris to bring peace to France.

He achieved this outcome with the help of other French armies, defeating the Austrians in central Germany, and despite another round of naval operations far to north that involved Nelson countering a Napoleon economic blow directed at Britain. Napoleon encouraged the formation of a coalition serving French interests. If not answering directly to Napoleon, the nations of Russia, Prussia, Sweden, and Denmark announced a northern league of armed neutrality in 1800.<sup>24</sup> The group threatened British trade in the Baltic Sea, a region supplying its fleet with key materials. This move endangered Britain in two ways, both extending its operations to contend with previously neutral powers and undermining the very means of sustaining its fleet. This shrewd diplomatic move, while arising from fortunate circumstances, would constitute the height of Napoleon's naval integration.

Britain responded by sending a large fleet, 23 ships of the line, with Nelson second in command, to break up the alliance, short of force if possible. Negotiations went nowhere, and the British struck Copenhagen on 2 April 1801. Nelson led the main attack against the city's strong fortifications, targeting the battle line moored along the shoreline of the city. This bitter fight deadlocked until Nelson offered a way out. He notified the Danes of his willingness to hold fire and end their needless suffering should they capitulate. The Danes agreed, though hardly expended by the fighting. Nelson had tested their faith in bearing the brunt of retaliation against the trade pact threatening Britain and judged correctly they did not want to carry on that struggle at the risk of

great loss and destruction. Naval integration hit a new high here since Britain possessed only a small landing force and Copenhagen could have remained unoccupied, if under blockade. The Danes shrunk from that measure of war, and Nelson next demanded a quick move to the far end of the Baltic to strike the Russian fleet in Reval (Tallinn). Another naval victory would end Russia's involvement in the crumbling neutrality pact. While that fleet had fled before the British arrival, Russia, convulsing under political turmoil as Alexander I replaced his assassinated father, Czar Paul I, left the pact as well.<sup>25</sup>

The Baltic campaign revealed how naval integration required very limited land forces, if any. The ability to move from strategic necessity—opening the Baltic to British trade—to tactical means, striking Copenhagen or other ports with a fleet action, laid bare the operational harmony of naval purpose serving military ends. States could not partner with France, even in proxy, without costs. The British resolve to wage war against France meant a willingness to risk much to keep vital areas accessible to trade and enforce a measure of diplomacy as Britain saw fit. In turn, bases of operation revealed themselves as key. Denied this station in the Mediterranean until winning the Battle of the Nile, the British prevented that same limitation in the Baltic.<sup>26</sup> Seapower could dictate access to bases to sustain naval operations that could help dictate political realities in Europe. That success ensured Britain's global reach remained intact, providing a means that would lead it to victory over France.

The military setting dictated stalemate for now and allowed Napoleon a space to make peace with Britain. This he did in March 1802. The peace assumed more of a truce, and both sides readied themselves to resume the war as occurred in May 1803, when Britain declared war on France. Territorial ambitions remained an issue but larger motives lay behind the source of acrimony. Napoleon, now consul for life, threatened the legitimacy of the monarchies of Europe, and that threat put at risk Britain's demand of balance of power on the continent.<sup>27</sup> An expansive France, led by a man of proven military capabilities, posed a threat to British standing in Europe. Even larger still, the British formula for maintaining its power was now in question. Naval integration as a measure of reducing commitments on land in favor of a navy capable of a global projection of power appeared suspect, or at least in need of reassessment. No less than a quest for a single operational art consumed British strategy, which was a need for this principle of naval power projection to be so. If French success on land could upend the British economic benefits arising from its power at sea, Britain's entire strategy was at risk and so too its empire. Whatever military steps came next must mesh with a strategic purpose leaving Britain's trading capacity intact.<sup>28</sup>

Napoleon's threat to established monarchies on the continent and to Britain as the foremost opponent of that threat advanced with the general's declaration

of himself as emperor of France in December 1804, escalating the conflict by requiring one side or the other to face complete defeat. This new round of hostilities forced Napoleon to again consider how to crush his greatest adversary. The divergence between land and seapower resurfaced and just as pointedly the need to find harmony among those two ends. The side that could orchestrate naval integration to best advantage had the greatest chance of winning the war.

A naval victory at sea remained a possibility for France. Despite defeat at the Battle of the Nile, France still possessed a large fleet. Warships occupied Toulon, Brest, Le Havre, and Rochefort. The British had responded in kind, blockading each port. Any sortie from one base would draw a British reaction. Should the French get past a blockading force, the British fleet would concentrate in the channel and stand ready to blunt a French cross-channel attack. The situation spoke less to stalemate and more to British ascendancy—they possessed freedom of maneuver if not an untethered initiative.<sup>29</sup>

Napoleon's task was to gain a military victory at sea to enable a land invasion. The problems he had confronted in 1798 remained, although Napoleon's span of control now encompassed the entire French state, so a reevaluation was needed and possible. But his extensive power did not change the naval integration calculus. The need for a naval success followed by a land operation meant his move against Britain fit the category of expeditionary warfare. Compartmentalizing the two needs of naval and land success obscured this manifest reality, and Napoleon would plan an attack unfolding in steps rather than in combination. A series of efforts, first success at sea to then be followed by success on land, was Napoleon's strategic goal. This purpose obfuscated the need for naval integration as an operational purpose.

Any military strike must entail the strategic end of defeating Britain. Again, occupying the home islands met this goal, and was a fair enough measure. But the economic sophistication of the attack on Egypt was absent, traded for the military hammer. A fully integrated force would work all needs simultaneously, forcing Britain to consider the threat France posed as more than merely military. As things would prove, Napoleon's plan may well have done this, but that accidental purpose proved unable to force Britain into more complicated assessments than winning a battle at sea, something it already desired. One could argue that Britain failed to see past its own myopia and indulged a lapse of naval integration in its own right. The difference was that crippling French naval power would force France into a land force, while Britain remained a dual threat. That superior stand would soon dictate the rest of the Napoleonic era.<sup>30</sup>

First came Nelson's defeat of a combined French and Spanish fleet off Cape Trafalgar in southwest Spain. This battle occurred at the end of extensive maneuvers that said much about Napoleon's effort to achieve the operational art at sea. French naval forces sortied from its southernmost ports and combined

forces in the West Indies. That long trek invited mishap and confusion and both problems arose. But a chase across the Atlantic went in favor of the French, with Admiral Pierre-Charles-Jean-Baptiste-Silvestre de Villeneuve moving from Toulon at the end of March 1805. He reached the West Indies with 11 ships and 8 Spanish ships from Cádiz in southern Spain, that nation again having joined with France to oppose Britain. But he was unable to rendezvous with a second French fleet of five ships from Rochefort. The timing proved impossible to synchronize. Meanwhile, Nelson again led the British pursuit seeking battle at sea. After confirming the safety of Naples, Malta, and Egypt, he tracked the French fleet to the West Indies but failed to make contact there. The French made their way back to Europe seeking an opportunity to leave the British in pursuit and one step behind.<sup>31</sup>

This maneuver gained the advantage Napoleon had hoped to secure. The channel lay exposed if not open. He was no sailor, so he weighed the prospects of a meeting engagement at sea much as he would on land. French ships could be at a certain place at a certain time, if all went well. But things seldom went well. No matter, in this case, the plan in its most basic form worked. The French had outmaneuvered Nelson's fleet to gain a possible window to fight for control of the channel and invade England. On reaching northern Spain at Ferrol at the end of July, Villeneuve added 14 more ships to his fleet. Napoleon ordered him into the channel. However, the admiral demurred, and instead retreated to Cádiz. By the end of August, Napoleon's grand design had failed. Britain amassed 39 ships near Brest, proving Villeneuve's circumspection correct. Now, Napoleon decided to quit the coast and with his army move south toward Austria in early October 1805. His land offensive superseded his imperative to win a sea battle, and so this expeditionary moment was forfeit, an opportunity permanently lost.<sup>32</sup>

One can question if Napoleon ever seriously considered risking the channel crossing. The operation was too fraught with peril to be considered genuine. The British always prioritized defending the channel, and a large fleet would have faced Villeneuve's 27 ships of the line no matter what transpired, proving Napoleon's deception and maneuver plan suspect. Moreover, the Austrians had moved through Bavaria toward France and threatened Napoleon's new regime. Having to forestall this outcome required a response and a need for self-defense.<sup>33</sup> A massive land campaign matched the possible threat, even as it underscored a more suitable purpose for France. The risk to Napoleon engaging Austria with his tested army certainly paled in comparison to his need for security in the channel for an uncertain period of time, but at least more than a few days to then achieve a crossing. Villeneuve's return had forced a moment of truth, and it exposed the lack of tying naval action to the strategy of defeating Britain. The immediate threat justified the change in plans,

but blunting Britain's continental allies underscored the superiority of British naval integration that matched coalition partners with strategic naval strength. Britain could repeat and would repeat this form of naval integration time and again after 1805.

The French naval threat was less enduring. Villeneuve, relieved not to have to face a showdown with a British fleet, remained at Cádiz. He then exited that safe harbor to move into the Mediterranean, urged by Napoleon to attack Naples. Nelson waited for him and met the combined French-Spanish fleet off of Cape Trafalgar on 21 October 1805. Nelson again sought and gained his decisive battle by breaking the enemy line and separating the van or lead element from the main body, forcing a general melee that, in a matter of hours, although after bitter fighting, went in favor of Britain. This outcome came from superior tactics: a higher rate of fire and targeting the hulls of ships rather than the masts as the French and Spaniards did. To strike the hull inflicted large casualties and demoralized the crew.<sup>34</sup> Still, British ability at sea shone through as well. The zest for engagement, the knowledge that destroying a great many French vessels would directly spell British relief, certainly explained a great deal of the British urgency when fighting at sea. The island nation impervious to assault from sea could look forward to a long war, a needed strategic end tied to its limited use of military force on land. The operational art had never received a more pointed endorsement as a measure of naval integration seeking tactical results tied to strategic purpose.

The glory of Britain's victory and its meaning was only dampened with the loss of Nelson. He fell to a sharpshooter's bullet as he led his ship into the melee. His demise at this battle deflected from his chief accomplishment and that was to gain a decisive result from operational maneuver. Even if this ability rested on relentless pursuit and a decisive battle speaking to tactical prowess, his success at sea served British strategy as it was designed to.<sup>35</sup> The great military captain executed one leg of the effort while the other leg moved far ahead. Britain could now redouble its commitment to naval integration as strategic purpose. This aim would carry Britain forward to the conclusion of its long war with France in 1815. And it would win this struggle. In this respect, Nelson's victory at Trafalgar was decisive indeed.<sup>36</sup>

## **Napoleon's Continental System**

Defeat off Trafalgar exposed the real source of French failure at sea as a deficient strategic position compared to Britain. Napoleon at first embraced the deceit that said otherwise. His campaign against Austria in 1805 ended with the spectacular victory of Austerlitz just northeast of Vienna. Purposely crafted to crush the combined armies of Austria and Russia, Napoleon, feigning weakness, lured his foes into a set piece (pitched) battle. This engagement he won in a matter of

hours, decimating the opposing army. Peace came between France and Austria, although Russia remained a foe and prepared to fight again.

The Battle of Austerlitz in December 1805 as a tactical masterpiece called into light something of Napoleon's operational art.<sup>37</sup> He needed that battle and to win that battle in decisive fashion given that his forces extended from France far into Austria. That position invited disaster should the war drag on into the approaching winter. Winning a battle certainly redeemed his vulnerable position, but it taught him to seek that end in every campaign to come. In many ways, that expectation played to Napoleon and France's strengths, so such tests of strength were a logical pursuit. But the backdrop of the operational setting of a successful campaign on land to that of the still larger and ongoing challenge remained unanswered: ending Britain as a threat by addressing the need for success at sea. An operational art delivering land victories meant little if this larger strategic concern was not addressed, dispelling the myth of two operational arts—one on land and one at sea. Naval integration conceptually forced this recognition, if not a resolution.

Napoleon again had little time to weigh this dilemma. Prussia, neutral in the 1805 campaign, clamored for war with France. Consequently, a year after striking Austria, Napoleon attacked to the northeast and engaged the Prussian Army moving toward the frontier with France. While the Prussians could expect a large Russian Army to aid its offensive, that reinforcement was far to the east. In October 1806, when Prussia moved against France and did so by moving forward to attack a French concentration in southern Germany, it stood alone. The timing could not have spoken to more foolhardiness than finding itself facing a large and veteran French army unaided; the year before that Prussian advance may have stopped Napoleon in his tracks. In 1806, the Prussian offense suited Napoleon's plans well. His hope was to envelop this attack before the Prussians gained much ground at all.<sup>38</sup>

Soon, 160,000 French soldiers intercepted the plodding Prussians and devastated them in a series of disjointed battles at Jena and Auerstedt, both fought on 14 October 1806. With some good fortune, the French forced the Prussians to retreat, a retrograde movement that quickly resulted in the complete surrender of the standing Prussian Army. In a matter of weeks, Napoleon captured more than 125,000 prisoners. This loss, added to the battlefield losses, ended effective Prussian resistance.<sup>39</sup> Austerlitz appeared to have a twin.

This French success certainly left Napoleon in a dominant position in western Germany. However, the Russian forces still posed a threat and having slowed their advance, they remained in Poland, daring the French to launch an offensive far to the east. A French army strung out from Frankfurt to Warsaw clearly meant a repeat of the less desirable feature of the Austerlitz campaign, and that was having to win a decisive battle to redeem a worsening strategic situation.

Napoleon accepted the challenge. He quit Berlin and a series of maneuvers won him Warsaw with only a few minor battles as 1806 came to an end. Without a crushing blow, this gain of territory meant little. When a Russian army emerged from winter quarters to engage the French forces even farther east, Napoleon seized the chance to make good on his quest for decisive battle. Instead, he got stuck in a stalemate at Bagrationovsk (*Preußisch Eylau*) in early February 1807, a costly affair for both armies that made clear the hazards of risking battle to gain a strategic reprieve.<sup>40</sup>

This lesson shone forth only in the immediate. The need to link his widening military offensives far beyond French territory to the main task of defeating Britain remained suspect. Napoleon, aware of French unease about continuous war, had offered that link with his proclamation of the Continental System, announced in the Berlin Decree in November 1806. All territory under French control would cease trading with Britain. Deprived of its markets in Europe, the British economy would rupture, forcing Britain to negotiate. Moving east now meant enforcement of that decree. Russia, already a foe, was also a key trading partner with Britain. Forcing Russia to negotiate with France would end this dual threat.<sup>41</sup>

This larger cause justified French activity in the eastern hinterlands and near the Russian border. The viability of that end would get its chance to shine since, in the spring of 1807, Russia again accepted the French challenge of battle. Another clash unfolded at Friedland in eastern Prussia, ending with Napoleon destroying a large portion of another Russian army. Czar Alexander I immediately sued for peace, and the two emperors, with the Prussian king in attendance as well, met at the town of Tilsit (Sovetsk) on the Neman River to discuss terms. Unwilling to face the might of French arms, the czar accepted a peace tying Russia to the Continental System. Napoleon had achieved this concord as a blow against Britain, a tremendous achievement.<sup>42</sup>

The problem was, as was now an established pattern, a French-imposed peace meant another war as things escalated. First, a British expeditionary force again struck Copenhagen to destroy Denmark's fleet. Then, Napoleon attacked Spain. A French corps had crossed Spain and occupied Lisbon to force Portugal to close its ports to Britain, which it did by the end of 1807. The hoped for follow-on success to this operation evaporated once Napoleon deposed the Spanish king, plunging the nation into chaos. In a short time, a widespread guerrilla movement engaged a French army of increasing size, one attempting to pacify Spain. The French achieved this end soon enough, only to see a small British army arrive in Portugal and expel the French there, threatening their hold on Spain. Napoleon responded with a massive attack and swept into Madrid in early December 1808 after scattering the Spanish Army and forcing the advancing British to halt, retreat, and evacuate from the Galician port of A Coruña.



A short time later, Britain sent another army to the peninsula to engage the French army there, and the war intensified.<sup>43</sup>

France, mired in Spain, emboldened Austria. That state again went to war against Napoleon in early April 1809. Still fuming given their defeat in 1805, the Austrians had revamped their army to once more challenge Napoleon on the field of battle.<sup>44</sup> The punitive nature of the Napoleon peace fueled this next crisis. French ability to maintain control of a good portion of Western Europe was now tested to the utmost. Napoleon rose to the challenge. He marshaled another army in central Germany and rebuffed the Austrian advance into Bavaria. But that success required another lengthy French advance to Vienna and another showdown with the Austrian Army. This next large-scale battle at Aspern-Essling in May 1809 blunted Napoleon's string of military successes. He crossed the Danube just south of Vienna on a makeshift link from one bank to the other, his force of approximately 30,000 men facing an Austrian Army of more than 100,000 soldiers. The French managed to survive and withdraw, but the retreat spoke to a Napoleon defeat. Popular unrest reverberated across Germany, further straining French control of Germany. Only another battlefield success could restore his reputation and reestablish French supremacy, and Napoleon set out to achieve this end.

He would get it at the Battle of Wagram, fought during two days in early July. There, at the same crossing point as before, Napoleon assembled a great host of 160,000 soldiers, confronted by an equal number of Austrians. In this tactical space, Napoleon found some room for maneuver, and he moved to strike the Austrian left flank. That blow invited that same strike against the French, and a perilous struggle engulfed the two armies. The French would prevail, having deflated the Austrian commander, Prince Charles, more than scattering the Austrian army. Each side lost some 30,000 men, and only the loss of fight in the prince spelled the difference in the battle. Napoleon imposed another peace, and Austria fell quiescent, but the new peace was as tenuous as the last.<sup>45</sup>

## **Twilight**

Napoleon appeared to heed this lesson of risking too much on battlefield success. Having survived in 1809, he looked to consolidate French power in 1810, and this purpose meant a chance for a fuller consideration of the operational art as naval integration. He dominated much of the western continent, but Britain remained defiant. Still, the Continental System put the island nation to the test and produced some predictable results: Britain faced hardships and even some turmoil but remained far from collapse.<sup>46</sup> The British Empire recalibrated its outlays, but not its mission. Seapower would continue to secure economic largess and ground forces would remain limited. Only Arthur Wellesley, 1st duke of Wellington, commanding an army in Spain, remained active in Europe.

Some additional expeditionary threats could again be brokered, but that effort had gone badly in a strike at Walcheren island near Antwerp in 1809, a move designed to support the Austrians. A British army of 50,000 men did little more than serve as a distraction, straining British resources still further.<sup>47</sup> Wellington's model appeared the wiser choice—an army intended to keep the fighting going in Spain, thereby keeping France off-balance.<sup>48</sup> Otherwise, that foe of France sought to put together another coalition to oppose Napoleon. Additionally, plying European states to consider resuming trade, if not entering yet another coalition, meant a challenge to French rule, and a validation of naval integration as a function of the operational art as Britain had maintained throughout the Napoleonic period. The British government issued their own decrees, such as the Orders in Council in 1807, demanding that neutral vessels declare themselves at a British port and pay a fee before continuing to Europe. Napoleon denounced that act and those complying in his Milan Decree in December 1807. In both respects, naval integration tested the purpose of ensuring economic vitality as a strategic weapon. But Britain embraced a long struggle, content to prolong the war and wait for the French to make a mistake.<sup>49</sup>

That came soon enough when Napoleon struck Russia in June 1812. Ostensibly the purpose was to force the czar to resume his participation in the Continental System. A French-dominated Europe would deliver lasting security.<sup>50</sup> Britain's continued resistance undermined this aim, and Napoleon sought recourse. Napoleon could not help but test his fortune again via battle—battle designed to bring land power to bear on the problem of naval integration. Perhaps one could label the French invasion of Russia strategic naval integration should the purpose be economic and targeting Britain economically, as was stated. But the indirection of this aim would prove the flimsiness of such reasoning. Predictably, the Russian armies avoided contact and retreated into the interior. Napoleon followed, incrementally advancing farther and farther into the recesses of an expansive land offering little means of supplying his army. Attrition from want, sickness, and contending with all hazards depleted the vast French Army of 660,000 men to but 130,000 making the final push onto Moscow.<sup>51</sup> On 7 September, another great Napoleonic battle at Borodino, 120 kilometers from Moscow, produced the now frequent bloodbath and dubious success—the Russians retreated some more, the French followed, even occupying Moscow, but the war continued.

This titanic struggle suggests that Napoleon's fate hung on his ability to broker a land decision. The czar's refusal to submit invited this confrontation and achieved the hoped-for result. Napoleon retreated from Moscow in the third week of October, a withdrawal that soon wrecked the remainder of his army. Indeed, the emperor faced complete annihilation and capture, and only some brilliant generalship on his part allowed the French Army to cross the

Berezina River and escape from Russia. This feat prompted him to abandon the remnants of his army and race for Paris to begin the process of quelling the inevitable tide of unrest that faced him after such a colossal disaster. The scope of this loss is hard to set in terms easy to understand. The fall had been rapid and far. And the foolhardy quest of seeking a land offensive of gigantic proportions to achieve a form of naval integration and so humble Britain also had been laid bare as a failure.

A recalibration featuring some other measure of naval integration was now no longer an option. Prussia embraced the struggle and joined Russian armies crossing the Elbe River.<sup>52</sup> Austria once more threatened war, waiting to see how the next stage of combat unfolded. A land war was again needed. Napoleon led a new, untested army into western Germany and quickly won a series of victories, but again, not decisive enough to force a settlement. When Austria did enter this war, the weight of force was too much for even Napoleon to contend with, and he met defeat after three days of battle at Leipzig in October 1813. This defeat forced him back into France, and he faced a fight for his very survival as emperor as well as for the integrity of the French nation.

Napoleon now contended with enemies on all sides, including Wellington advancing from Spain into southern France. In 1814, France was no longer the revolutionary power that faced similar threats in 1791, when allied armies threatened the state with invasion. Now, the empire was shattered, Napoleon still willing to fight but France was a spent force. Still, the allies offered Napoleon a chance to keep his throne; the old rivalries sapped allied resolve to finish off the usurper from long ago. Instead, Napoleon would force that outcome by refusing to submit, and an allied invasion went forward in January 1814, some 300,000 soldiers threatening France's eastern border alone. Napoleon, perhaps commanding 85,000 soldiers there, took the field and delayed the inevitable until forced to abdicate after the loss of Paris at the end of March 1814.<sup>53</sup> In a year's time, the upstart would return from exile and wage the Hundred Days campaign, ending with his defeat at Waterloo and permanent exile to St. Helena Island. This codicil merely punctuated the end, a rapid rise to power seeing an incredibly faster demise and all resting on a single focus—military exploits. The limitations of such standing on land alone had been clearly exposed, leaving the next task a measure of seeing the means to this end as a warning to those planning for future war to avoid such a negative fate with a better concept of naval integration.

### **Unity of the Operational Art**

Was there a better way? Such conjecture is easy in retrospect. Knowing the pitfalls that are to happen make alternative choices all the more desirable, even if the means to that end are artificial in the extreme. In this case, however, some

of that analysis is needed. An operational art wedded to land victories not only invited French defeat but spurned the larger understanding of the operational art. Napoleon accepted the division between land and sea; this was a choice more than a necessity. Even after defeat at Trafalgar in 1805, France had more ships and could still present a naval threat. But that rebuilding effort meant confronting a lack of seamanship. That ability was harder to judge and to overcome. Without such an improvement, further French naval engagement appeared pointless and this is where things went. There was no additional French challenge of Britain at sea. Any such naval considerations were long since abandoned in favor of land campaigns. The division between the two appeared all but accepted by Napoleon, much to the detriment of France.

The Continental System challenges this view, however. Here was a more sophisticated counter to British seapower than its critics allow. True, the need to force Europe to comply with this means of economic warfare helped explain Napoleon's constant and expansive wars.<sup>54</sup> These endless campaigns invited disaster, and this eventually came to pass. One could admire the great general's ability to last as long as he did and to expand French influence as far as he did, but this compliment too easily forgives his defeat.<sup>55</sup> France would bow to British mastery, and this outcome represented bitter defeat. Be that as it may, to deny Britain markets on the continent resembled the economic goal behind the attack on Egypt in 1799. This deliberate purpose meant a reckoning with the unity of the operational art, of melding sea and land campaigns into one.<sup>56</sup> That Europe proved ungovernable for Napoleon speaks to the limits of French power, less a bankrupt effort of naval integration. Britain's strategic position simply proved stronger than France's. Napoleon did not ignore this reality; he strove to do something about it with the most promising means at his disposal—economic coercion. That he failed speaks more to the strength of Britain's operational art and less to a failure of Napoleon to adapt to the threat he faced as a referendum on a better operational art at sea than on land.

Yet, this view confronts the emperor's unwillingness to make peace after the Russian debacle. Tied to a land struggle, the campaign in 1813 made some sense; that of 1814 was unforgivable. France had no reasonable chance to prevail, and it did not. Flouting naval integration had brought Napoleon to this point. If a decision by land was unavoidable after 1812, up to this date, the chance and need to frame naval integration as the unity of the operational art loomed large. As mentioned, the invasion of Russia could be labeled strategic naval integration given the economic purpose of bringing Russia to heel with the Continental System. But the means too far exceeded that purpose. Attempted success on land too much dwarfed this economic, naval pursuit. Additionally, Napoleon had ample time to make this measure and find a suitable application of naval integration meeting the strategic end of humbling British

power. Perhaps Napoleon could reason the ends would take too long via this means. He needed to stay in power. This view lost credibility after 1807, perhaps before that date. More pointedly, his ultimate failure underscored Britain's ability to stay true to its purpose of naval integration. With Britain's operational art superior to that of France, this unity of the operational art would at last seek one guiding principle of the means of war and as such proved there was only one such method, not two (i.e., one for land and one for sea).

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## Endnotes

1. The Marine Corps is most overt. See the section on "Maneuver Warfare" in *Warfighting*, Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 1 (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 1997), 72–76. See also John R. Boyd's principles of maneuver captured in a series of videos. See John Boyd, "Patterns of Conflict: Part 4," YouTube, 2 August 2015, 27:35. Boyd, an Air Force officer, greatly influenced the Marine Corps and its adoption of maneuver warfare. See that discussion in the *Marine Corps Gazette*, best captured in the following: William S. Lind, "Defining Maneuver Warfare for the Marine Corps," *Marine Corps Gazette* 64, no. 3 (March 1980): 56; Capt Gary I. Wilson et al., "The 'Maneuver Warfare' Concept," *Marine Corps Gazette* 65, no. 4 (April 1981): 53; and Maj Kenneth F. McKenzie, "On the Verge of a New Era: The Marine Corps and Maneuver Warfare," *Marine Corps Gazette* 77, no. 7 (July 1993): 64. Joint doctrine recognizes nine principles of war that one could say reflect Napoleonic lessons: "objective, offensive, mass, maneuver, economy of force, unity of command, security, surprise, and simplicity." See *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication 3-0 (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 2018), ix. In parallel fashion, the U.S. Army stresses four "tenets of unified land operations" consisting of simultaneity, depth, synchronization, flexibility. See *Operations*, Army Doctrine Publication 3-0 (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2019), 3-12.
2. Andrew Lambert stresses England as a "seapower culture" dictating strategy. Lambert, *Seapower States: Maritime Culture, Continental Empires and the Conflict That Made the Modern World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 6. Colin S. Gray says seapower nets greater influence than merely land power. Gray, "Sea Power: The Great Enabler," *Naval War College Review* 47, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 18.
3. Naval integration consists of ensuring "persistent naval forward presence [on land] to enable sea control and denial operations." This "operational integration" links land and sea efforts to defeat "long-range precision fires" to gain freedom of maneuver "by traditional large-signature naval platforms." See the Marine Corps definition of naval integration, *Commandant's Planning Guidance: 38th Commandant of the Marine Corps* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 2019), 2.
4. Martin Robson, *A History of the Royal Navy: The Napoleonic Wars* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 3. For this approach as a "mercantilist war," see Edward Mead Earle, "Adam Smith, Alexander Hamilton, Friedrich List: The Economic Foundations of Military Power," in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1986), 219–20, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400835461-010>. See "Pitt's Plan" as per the elder William Pitt and continued by Pitt the Younger, in E. B. Potter, *Sea Power: A Naval History*, 2d ed. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1981), 25–26, 55. Jeremy Black calls this combination a mixture of naval strength and colonial power. Black, *Britain as a Military Power, 1688–1815* (London: UCL Press, 1999), 222.
5. Paul Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 116–17.
6. For signaling reform, see Michael A. Palmer, *Command at Sea: Naval Command and*

- Control since the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 163.
7. Palmer cautions against a too categorical condemnation of the revolution's impact on the navy. On the one hand, turmoil ended any push for reforms, so much of the French fleet remained intact. On the other hand, naval reform did not go far enough to capitalize on the new French fighting spirit. Palmer, *Command at Sea*, 164. Philip Dwyer says the French Navy suffered terribly from the revolution. Dwyer, *Napoleon: The Path to Power, 1769–1799* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 334. So too does Andrew Lambert, *Nelson: Britannia's God of War* (London: Faber, 2004), xx.
  8. Potter, *Sea Power*, 25.
  9. Lambert, *Nelson*, xxiv; and Roger Knight, *The Pursuit of Victory: The Life and Achievement of Horatio Nelson* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 222, 227.
  10. Palmer, *Command at Sea*, 195.
  11. Piers Mackesy, "Problems of an Amphibious Power: Britain against France, 1793–1815," *Naval War College Review* 30, no. 4 (Spring 1978): 18–19.
  12. Dwyer, *Napoleon*, 335, 342.
  13. Other members of the French government had conceived of this same plan. Steven Englund, *Napoleon: A Political Life* (New York: Scribner, 2004), 191, 269.
  14. Britain's difficulty of maintaining its empire is in Christopher Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War, 1803–15* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1999), xi–xii. Julian Stafford Corbett took this measure in 1911, writing that "defensive fleet operations" must allow for "offensive operations" to gain "sea command." Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988; London: Longmans, Green, 1911), 209.
  15. The weather and Nelson's lack of frigates handicapped his effort to detect and engage the French fleet. See Knight, *The Pursuit of Victory*, 282–83.
  16. Peter Padfield, *Maritime Power and the Struggle for Freedom: Naval Campaigns that Shaped the Modern World, 1788–1851* (London: John Murray, 2003), 156.
  17. Whether Nelson gave this order to maneuver on both sides of the French fleet is in question. Padfield, *Maritime Power and the Struggle for Freedom*, 160. Roger Knight says he did not. See Knight, *The Pursuit of Victory*, 291.
  18. Padfield, *Maritime Power and the Struggle for Freedom*, 158–60.
  19. *Mamluk*, or slave soldier, refers to a member of one of the armies of slaves that won political control of several Muslim states.
  20. David G. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon* (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1966), 223.
  21. Padfield, *Maritime Power and the Struggle for Freedom*, 170–71.
  22. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 238.
  23. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 219–45.
  24. Ole Feldbaek, *The Battle of Copenhagen, 1801: Nelson and the Danes*, trans. Tony Wedgwood (Barnsley, UK: Leo Cooper, 2002), 32.
  25. Feldbaek, *The Battle of Copenhagen*, 13, 19, 223–25.
  26. Clark G. Reynolds, *Command of the Sea: The History and Strategy of Maritime Empires* (New York: William Morrow, 1974), 294.
  27. Englund, *Napoleon*, 267.
  28. The difficulty of achieving this balance is in C. I. Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty: British Naval Policy-Making, 1805–1927* (New York: Cambridge, 2011), 2; Roger Morriss, *The Foundations of British Maritime Ascendancy: Resources, Logistics and the State, 1755–1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 5; David Andress, *The Savage Storm: Britain on the Brink in the Age of Napoleon* (London: Little, Brown, 2012), iii; and Roger Knight, *Britain against Napoleon: The Organization of Victory, 1793–1815* (London: Allen Lane, 2013), 7–8.
  29. Black, *Britain as a Military Power*, 228.
  30. All rested on keeping the navy at sea for extended periods of time. See N. A. M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649–1815* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), 379, 543.

31. Black, *Britain as a Military Power*, 229.
32. Padfield, *Maritime Power and the Struggle for Freedom*, 215–16, 228.
33. Matthew J. Flynn, *First Strike: Preemptive War in Modern History* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 20, 25.
34. Potter, *Sea Power*, 57–58; and Andrew D. Lambert, *War at Sea in the Age of the Sail: 1650–1850* (London: Cassell, 2000), 181.
35. Nelson as the architect of this success shines through even when the history is stripped of the myth and legend that surround his name. See Knight, *The Pursuit of Victory*, xxii–xxiii. Lambert makes the same claim in *Nelson*, xvii. Robson says British naval success was always more than just what Nelson accomplished. Robson, *A History of the Royal Navy*, xxi.
36. Scholars debate the decisive results of Trafalgar, stipulating that while England was not again seriously challenged at sea, Britain did face another 10 years of war. See Palmer, *Command at Sea*, 206. David Syrett argues Britain maintained dominance after 1805. See Syrett, “The Role of the Royal Navy in the Napoleonic Wars after Trafalgar, 1805–1814,” *Naval War College Review* 32, no. 5 (September–October 1979): 82. Jeremy Black concurs. See Black, *Britain as a Military Power, 1688–1815*, 231. Lawrence Sondhaus maintains that France’s ability to reach into other states allowed a massive ship-building program to unfold after 1805, straining Britain’s seapower. See Sondhaus, “Napoleon’s Shipbuilding Program at Venice and the Struggle for National Mastery in the Adriatic, 1806–1814,” *Journal of Military History* 53, no. 4 (October 1989): 349. Reynolds concurs, although he stresses that Britain prevailed. See Reynolds, *Command of the Sea*, 315. Richard Glover said something similar. Sheer numbers of French ships after 1805 could possibly overcome Britain’s superiority in seamanship. See Glover, “The French Fleet, 1807–1814: Britain’s Problem; and Madison’s Opportunity,” *Journal of Military History* 39, no. 3 (September 1967): 236.
37. The campaign climaxing at Austerlitz that sees the end of the “old order” speaks to strategic success, even one of grand strategy. See Frederick Schneid, *Napoleon’s Conquest of Europe: The War of the Third Coalition* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005), 2. That more wars followed dampens this view and so dampens Napoleon’s successful use of the operational art. That Napoleon pioneered this thinking, see Bruno Colson, *Napoleon on War*, trans. Gregory Elliott (New York: Oxford University, 2015), 197–98, 363. But the limits of change Napoleon brought to Europe in the name of revolution speak to less of a strategic success. See the lack of great wars of liberation in Italy, Spain, Russia, or Germany. For Russia and Germany, see Charles Esdaile, *Napoleon’s Wars: An International History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 472, 499; and Esdaile again for Spain, *Fighting Napoleon: Guerrillas, Bandits and Adventurers in Spain, 1808–1814* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 89. See also Michael Broers, *Europe under Napoleon, 1799–1815* (New York: Arnold, 1996), 269; and in Italy, Broers, *The Napoleonic Empire in Italy, 1796–1814: Cultural Imperialism in a European Context?* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 35, <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230005747>.
38. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 460.
39. David A. Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon’s Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007), 238–39.
40. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 534–35.
41. Esdaile, *Napoleon’s Wars*, 276–77.
42. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 588–89.
43. Napoleon’s failure to consolidate his gains by repeated wars after 1807, not just in Spain, but in other parts of Europe, underscored his failure to reach accommodation with other states in Europe, states not friendly to Britain. Esdaile, *Napoleon’s Wars*, 13.
44. Gunther E. Rothenberg, *The Art of Warfare in the Age of Napoleon* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1977), 170–80.
45. For Wagram and the tenuous results of the 1809 campaign, see Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 707–32, 732–36.
46. Mark Philip, “Introduction,” in *Resisting Napoleon: The British Response to the Threat of Invasion, 1797–1815*, ed. Mark Philip (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 2, 7, <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230005747>.

- doi.org/10.4324/9781315244372; Stuart Semmel, *Napoleon and the British* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 6; and Wilfrid Prest, *Albion Ascendant: British History, 1660–1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 150.
47. Lambert, *Age of Sail, 184*. Reynolds stresses that the British threat to Antwerp strained French commitment of forces as well. See Reynolds, *Command of the Sea*, 313.
  48. Rory Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, 1807–1815* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 379, 381. Christopher Hall argues the Royal Navy was key to Wellington's success. See Hall, *Wellington's Navy: Sea Power and the Peninsular War, 1807–1814* (London: Chatham, 2004), 2.
  49. Richard Harding says Britain's economy was well positioned to withstand Napoleon's Continental System. See Harding, *Seapower and Naval Warfare, 1650–1830* (London: UCL Press, 1999), 274. Potter says Britain created new markets and increased trade. Potter, *Sea Power*, 81.
  50. Adam Zamoyski, *Moscow 1812: Napoleon's Fatal March* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 8, 10. Esdaile says Napoleon's personal ambition drove him to invade Russia. See Esdaile, *Napoleon's Wars*, 458.
  51. See Bell, *The First Total War*, 258, for total numbers. The push to Moscow represents my own math.
  52. Michael V. Leggiere, *Napoleon and Berlin: The Franco-Prussian War in North Germany, 1813* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2002), x–xi, 1.
  53. Despite the odds and the outcome, scholars still rate Napoleon's 1814 campaign as one of his best. Michael V. Leggiere, *The Fall of Napoleon*, vol. 1, *The Allied Invasion of France, 1813–1814* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 40, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316257135>; and Andrew Uffindell, *Napoleon, 1814: The Defense of France* (Barnsley, UK: Pen and Sword, 2009), x.
  54. Bell, *The First Total War*, 250.
  55. See the legacy of the French empire as one of resting on French administration, less Napoleon. Stuart Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 133–34; Broers, *Europe under Napoleon*, 266–67; and Alexander Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), x, 205.
  56. Colin S. Gray says “the natural relationship between sea and land power is more one of cooperation than of antagonism.” Gray, “Sea Power: The Great Enabler,” *Naval War College Review* 47, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 26.