



1814 French Campaign: How a series of tactical victories lead to strategic defeat

military-Earth thinking notebook

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Histoire & stratégie

The French campaign of 1814 was one of Napoleon's most brilliant. However, at the end of a series of tactical victories, he had to bow to the coalition.

After a reminder of the main historical elements of the campaign, the author wants to demonstrate by which fundamental principles of warfare (weight of numbers, understanding of the operational level by subordinates, direct and indirect approaches, confrontation of wills) tactical victories do not always turn into strategic victory.

In the winter of 1814, Napoleon returned to the mastery of his early years in the Italian campaign (1796-1797). Returning to operational mobility and his "manoeuvres between the interior lines" [1] (or "defence in a central position" [2]), his military genius once again destabilised the coalitions (England, Russia, Prussia, Austria and most of the German states). Nevertheless, the glorious chain of victories was not enough to disrupt them.

Indeed, beyond the crushing under the number, it was in the "battle of wills", dear to Clausewitz, that the Emperor failed to win: the coalition knew how to keep intact their determination to end the Napoleonic campaigns, while on the contrary the resolution of the French Nation was blunted by the decay of the Clausewitzian trinity [3].

3] The year 1814 opened with bleak prospects for France: the coalition was at the borders and the internal crisis was brewing. However, by rediscovering the operative scheme that had led to the victories of Arcole and Rivoli [4], striking alternately at his ungrouped enemies, the Emperor led a brilliant military campaign. However, it led to his abdication and opens in this register of teachings that remain relevant today.

The General Situation

- A military situation on the verge of collapse

After the disastrous Russian campaign (1812), Napoleon saw the whole of continental

Europe turn against him during the German campaign. Despite some fine tactical victories, notably at Dresden [5], he had to withdraw to France after the Battle of Leipzig [6]. 6] Forced to leave several tens of thousands of men to guard the fortresses of Germany, the Emperor returned to the Rhine only with about 70,000 demoralized and exhausted men. Bled by more than twenty years of war, France had almost no young men of fighting age left and had to call, in anticipation, the classes of 1814 and 1815. Hastily trained and poorly equipped, these "Marie-Louise" [7] were sometimes inexperienced and "naive" on the battlefields. Nevertheless, supervised by veterans of the Grande Armée, they will be able to compensate for their shortcomings with undeniable courage.

Faced with these young troops, the coalised have an overwhelming numerical superiority:

- In the north, von Bülow and Bernadotte emerge from the Netherlands with 100,000 men (Army of the North);
- Blücher, with 60,000 men, presents himself before the Vosges (Army of Silesia).
- Violating the neutrality of Switzerland, Schwarzenberg's Bohemian army of Schwarzenberg, 160,000 men strong, moves towards the Seine valley, ignoring Augereau's French army [8], charged with defending Lyon;
- ending the Spanish War, Wellington and 150,000 Anglo-Spaniards cross the Pyrenees while Soult gathers the remnants of the French army of Spain in Toulouse (45,000 men).

At the same time, 90,000 Austrians entered Italy to oppose the 50,000 men of Eugène de Beauharnais, the Emperor's son-in-law [9].

- A smouldering domestic crisis

Faced with the prospect of defeat, national unity tends to crumble. On 29 December 1813, the Legislative Body adopted, by 223 votes to 51, the Lainé Report [10] which denounced the continuation of the war and demanded that the Emperor begin peace negotiations. The Emperor reacted strongly and thundered the deputies during the speech of January 1, 1814 [11].

11] Perceptive, the coalition tried to play on these internal divisions and Austrian Chancellor Metternich suggested that they were willing to negotiate peace on the - ambiguous - basis of the restoration of France within its natural borders. However, Austria had already rejected a French proposal for peace negotiations (7 April 1813) and in their decision to withdraw from the peace process, the French had already refused to negotiate. Frankfurt Joint Declaration [12] (1 December 1813), the coalition had proclaimed that it was not to France that they were making war, but to Napoleon. The latter was thus cornered, and he was desperate because he knew that at any moment he could be betrayed on his political rear, all the more so as the untiring Talleyrand, in disgrace since 1809, was intrigued by the re-establishment of the Bourbons [13].

13] Worse still: the Emperor's brother-in-law, Joachim Murat, King of Naples, turned against him and signed a separate agreement with England (January 11, 1814). Allying himself further with Austria, he puts Eugène de Beauharnais and the French army of Italy in a delicate position.

- The main players
 - **Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821)** . The atmosphere around the Emperor is one of end of reign. His health seems to be failing and his relatives at best distance themselves from him, at worst betray him. Providence

seems to have abandoned his military genius: since Jena (1806) and Friedland (1807), his victories were more the result of the overwhelming numerical and technical superiority of the Great Army.e (crushing of the Austrian army under the deluge of French artillery at Wagram, 1809) rather than his maneuvering skills. Also, its tactical victories are struggling to give a strategic result as in Moscowa (1812) or Dresden (1813), and its legendary invincibility seems to fail (Russian campaign and the Battle of Leipzig). He nevertheless refuses to admit defeat (let alone abdication) and seems to recover all his energy. Its objective is to drive the coalition back to the borders in order to force them to negotiate peace in a weaker position.

- **Karl-Philip Schwarzenberg** (1771-1820) came from the old Austrian military nobility. He had already distinguished himself at a very young age in the war against the Turks (1789) and against the French Revolution (Battle of Cateau-Cambrésis, 1794). He was noticed by Emperor Franz II when he escaped encirclement at the Battle of Ulm (1805). At Wagram (1809), he commanded the Austrian reserve, then took part, this time alongside Napoleon, in the Russian campaign (1812). Placed at the head of the coalition for the German campaign (1813), he carried out a cautious campaign, seeking to avoid direct confrontation with the Emperor until he had overwhelming numerical superiority. His role and strategy for the French campaign were the same: to avoid a direct confrontation with Napoleon - whose military genius he feared to the point of paralysis - and to unite the allied armies to crush him under the numbers.
- **Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher (1742-1819)** has a long military career behind him (he served under Frederick the Great). Like all Prussian officers, the defeat of Jena (1806) traumatized him and he nourished a deep francophobia [14]. 14] Thus, despite his advanced age, he was one of all the campaigns against Napoleon and commanded the army of Silesia during the invasion of 1814. Contrary to Schwarzenberg, he advocated a resolutely offensive tactic (his subordinates nicknamed him "Marschall Vorwärts", the marshal in front). These differences of opinion will not be without generating operational inconsistencies between the allied armies, and the Emperor will know how to play it.

Wellington and the duo Bernadotte-von Bülow will march too slowly towards Paris to influence, at least directly, the events of the campaign.

Course of the campaign

- Hesitant beginnings

The coalised enter French territory at the very beginning of January. Marshals Victor and Marmont abandoned the line of defence of the Vosges, almost without fighting, to the great fury of the Emperor, who needed as much time as possible to complete the training of the young conscripts and to regroup a new army. The Emperor then decided to take the head of the army (25 January) and initially moved towards Blücher's vanguard, which he defeated at Saint-Dizier (27 January). Nevertheless, the armies of Schwarzenberg and Blücher were only a few dozen kilometres away from making their junction. Using the advantage he had gained at Saint-Dizier, Napoleon decided to continue his offensive against the Prussians and did not hesitate to attack victoriously with a dozen thousand infantrymen the bulk of the Silesian army (30,000 Prussians) at Brienne-le-Château (29th January). He even narrowly fails to take Blücher and his entire staff prisoner. Having no

cavalry, the French cannot exploit the victory, however, and the Prussians withdraw in good order to make their junction with the Austrians from Schwarzenberg to La Rothière. Emboldened by the victory of Brienne and despite the overwhelming numerical superiority of the coalised (45,000 French against more than 150,000 coalised), the Emperor decides to attack them there (1 February). It is a bitter failure and heavy in losses (6,000 men and 60 guns, even if the coalition loses 8,000 men) and, to avoid the annihilation that could generate an Austrian counteroffensive, the French army must withdraw to Troyes.

At this point, Napoleon's situation seemed desperate: The announcement of the defeat of La Rothière further stirs the Parisian intrigues and, if the coalition decided to put all their efforts against the French army, the outcome of the battle would be in doubt. Two days later (3 February) the Châtillon congress opened, during which the terms of an armistice were to be negotiated. Feeling in a position of strength, the coalitions had some very heavy demands: the return of France to its 1791 borders and the refusal to let it take part in all the other decisions concerning the reorganisation of Europe (particularly concerning the sovereigns that Napoleon himself had placed on the throne). The Emperor refused and the congress was closed, without agreement, on 8 February.

At the same time, the coalition military forces took a surprising decision : they split up again, Blücher heading for Paris via the Marne valley, Schwarzenberg taking the same objective but via the Aube and then the Seine. From an operational point of view, while the annihilation of the French army seems within reach, this separation seems indeed singular. But, by heading for Paris, the coalition hopes to precipitate the internal political fall of the Empire without having to fight it. Moreover, Schwarzenberg was still afraid of confronting Napoleon's military genius in a direct engagement, and this solution, which was much more cautious, was better suited to his inclination.

- The three glorious ones: Champaubert, Montmirail, Vauchamps

The Emperor immediately seized the opportunity of this separation of forces. Moreover, Blücher articulated his army in three distinct and poorly coordinated corps marching towards Paris along the Marne: in the lead, 20,000 Russians commanded by Sacken, then Olusiev with 6,000 other Russians and, finally, the Prussian Kleist accompanied by 18,000 men. Napoleon therefore decided to attack from the flank and to separate Blücher's corps. Napoleon's troops fall on Olusiev in the fog at Champaubert. The Russians are annihilated and lose 4,500 men, including their general, taken prisoner (10 February). Immediately, the French leave in pursuit of Sacken. Sacken believes he is only dealing with a small part of the French army and decides to fight at Montmirail (11 February, "l'Austerlitz champenois"). In turn, his body was dislocated, Sacken lost nearly 4,000 men and fled north. Napoleon then decided to turn against Blücher's last corps, which he shoved at Vauchamps (14 February), inflicting severe losses (6,000 men and 16 cannons).

In five days, the French completely dislocated Silesia's army, inflicting more than 25,000 casualties. Nevertheless, the Emperor could not complete the annihilation of the Silesian army: Schwarzenberg was approaching Paris dangerously and he had to block the way to Paris.

The first Austrian vanguards are already in Fontainebleau. After three days of forced march, Napoleon surprises them at Montereau (18 February), at the confluence of the Yonne and the Seine. After a heroic capture of the town, thanks in particular to the cavalry charges of General Pajot, the vanguard of the Bohemian army was also totally disorganised and retreated towards the south-east. But the Emperor did not succeed in cutting Schwarzenberg's forces in half.

The coalition was stunned by Napoleon's string of victories. Added to this were the supply difficulties generated by the lengthening of their lines of communication and by the increasing number of guerrilla actions by the French inhabitants, particularly in the Vosges and the Jura. Internal divisions seemed to resurface, especially since they still did not agree on the future of France once the abdication of the Emperor was obtained [15]. 15] The coalition nevertheless manages to reach a consensus: Blücher will try to make his junction with the army of the North which leads to Picardy, while Schwarzenberg will resume his march towards Paris.

The inevitable retreat

Sensing the danger of a regrouping of the remnants of the Silesian army and the army of the North, Napoleon left the Austrians and set off again in pursuit of Blücher, whom he intended to catch up with in front of Soissons (still under French garrison and which commanded the passage of the Aisne). Intimidated by the coalition forces, the latter capitulated on 3 March, just a few hours before the arrival of Napoleon's forces, thus allowing Blücher to escape and join up with the Northern Army, narrowly escaping destruction.

However, the Emperor decides to continue his pursuit of the Silesian army, hoping to disorganise its regrouping with von Bülow's forces. On the plateau of Craonne (7 March), he came across a Russian detachment. The latter fights furiously before withdrawing, leaving 5,000 of its own on the battlefield (but the French have lost 6,000 men) [16]. It is now too late: Blücher and Von Bülow have entrenched themselves in the fortress of Laon with 100,000 men. Although clearly outnumbered, Napoleon tries well to dislodge them but, after two days of fighting, the French army is exhausted and he must withdraw (9-10 March).

The situation was all the more critical as Schwarzenberg was coming up behind him. The Emperor once again manages to prevent his junction with Blücher by defeating a Russian detachment in Reims (13 March). However, on 20 March, at Arcis-sur-Aube, the bulk of the Bohemian army presented itself (100,000 men). And the French have only 17,000 men to oppose him (joined by 10,000 additional men during the battle). The confrontation lasted two days, and a masterful intervention of the Guard prevents it from turning into a disaster.

Napoleon then decided to play one last poker game: he threw himself to the east to rally the French garrisons remaining in Alsace and Germany, hoping to draw the coalition after him, while Marshals Marmont and Mortier had to protect Paris with 15,000 men. They fought a fierce battle at the Fère-Champenoise (25 March) to disengage from the Allied army, which had finally regrouped (200,000 men). The couriers who had to announce the Emperor's plan to his brother Joseph, who was in charge of the regency in his absence, were intercepted by the coalition who, in fact, did not fall into the trap. They therefore presented themselves before Paris. Napoleon eventually attempted a manoeuvre to return to their rear, but Marmont accepted the surrender without really fighting, and opened the doors of the capital to the coalition (31 March).

Disillusioned, Napoleon regrouped the remains of his army at Fontainebleau and finally accepted an unconditional abdication (6th April).

Teachings

- The weight of numbers: an unfavourable balance of power compensated by

tactico-operative mobility, but ultimately unacceptable at the strategic level.

Faced with such a disproportionate number of troops, could the French armies have won? Nothing is less certain. However, certain elements of the campaign could have tipped it over and allowed the Emperor at least to negotiate an honourable peace. Foremost among these was the hasty abandonment of the Vosges, which precipitated the entry into the campaign of poorly educated and still incompletely constituted French forces. A few more days or weeks would have given Napoleon sufficient reserves to allow him to make operational use of his tactical successes. The surrender of Soissons, within a few hours, had dramatic consequences: without it, Blücher and his army would have disappeared from the campaign.

But there was no question of rewriting history because, despite all these circumstances, one fact emerged: the tactical genius, the **value and the courage of the French were not enough to compensate for the weight of numbers.**

At a time when most Western armies are making the choice to reduce their numbers, this is a fact that cannot be overlooked, as is rightly pointed out in the "... the government's decision to reduce the number of troops in Afghanistan. White Paper on Defence and National Security": «The criterion of number - staff and equipment - remains relevant and cannot be fully compensated for by quality.» [17].

Most of the large-scale engagements that followed the Napoleonic wars, modelled on the principles of national mass engagements, would indeed see the triumph of numbers: the Prussia of 1870 crushes France in large part by its ability to mobilize more troops more quickly, the daring tactics of Germany in 1918 only try to win the decision before bending under the weight of the arrival of the bitter divisions. If the Wehrmacht of 1944-1945 has equipment often far superior in quality (such as the Tiger-I tank) and still knows how to show tactical boldness (as during the counteroffensive in the Ardennes during the winter 44-45), it eventually bowed to the Allied steamroller.

While the paradigm of "war within the population" [18] seems to require an important meshing of the terrain and therefore of the personnel accordingly [19], and that under humanitarian requirements or new concepts, such as the global approach [20], the military see the spectrum of their missions widening, the criterion of number seems to remain more relevant than quality.

- Competence of subordinates: understanding the operational level to lead action at the tactical level

Throughout his campaigns, Napoleon saw his best lieutenants disappear. In 1814, the Desaix, Lannes and Davout were no longer there [21]. The generals and marshals of the French campaign were not devoid of courage or tactical sense on the battlefield (like Marmont and Mortier at la Fère-Champenoise), but the operative sense still eludes them and, consequently, they struggle to imbue themselves with the spirit of the Emperor's orders. The unfortunate surrender of Soissons by General Moreau, the hasty abandonment of the Vosges, or the procrastination of the army corps in charge of holding back one of the coalition armies while Napoleon, with the bulk of the troops, struck the other.

As Léonce Krebs and Henri Moris point out: "Bonaparte's conceptions were and could only be right on the whole; his ardent imagination was ahead of events; his orders are almost all given 24 hours too soon. His orders are almost all given 24 hours too early and require extraordinary efforts from the troops; so that there are many counter-orders

and trial and error, which are repaired by the intelligence and initiative of the generals. It must be noted that during the French campaign, Napoleon no longer had generals capable of grasping the spirit of his orders to remedy the hazards of counter-orders and trial and error. Napoleonic maneuvers thus show how important it is not only to be imbued with the **spirit of orders, but also to** grasp the scope of the higher level (**assimilate his mission, but also that of his leader**), that is, in the end: to have the skills to occupy the function of the higher level.

- Direct tactico-operative and indirect strategic-operative approaches: the examples of Blücher and Schwarzenberg

Prussia and Austria have radically divergent tactico-operative approaches: while the former is resolutely offensive, the latter is extremely cautious, even timid. However, as a result, Blücher only narrowly escaped annihilation, while Schwarzenberg suffered a tactical defeat of little strategic consequence (La Rothière). By constantly rushing to the assault of the regrouped French army, Silesia's army took a fort to fort approach, on a strictly tactico-operational level and, as a result, multiplied the human losses.

The Bohemian army probably followed a more strategic reasoning: it was a question of playing on the numerical weakness of Napoleon's army and on the internal dissensions within the French government. Within this framework, by proceeding by a long, but meticulous and coordinated march, thus making it possible to have large and regrouped forces, the French could only wear themselves out numerically in strategically sterile tactical battles.

Schwarzenberg is thus incidentally close to the conceptions of the Byzantine strategist Belisarius, who considerably extended the area of the Eastern Roman Empire without hardly ever going on the offensive at the tactical level. He thus brings us back to the theories of Liddell Hart[23] on the indirect approach: to circumvent the **enemy strong point to make it fall by imbalance**. In this case, the French strong point resided in Napoleon's military genius and his maneuvering capacities which it was thus necessary to guard against to attack directly, as Blücher did, while his imbalance could occur by playing on his ability to politically hold a military campaign in the long term.

- From tactico-operational to strategic: victory is not a homeomorphism

"None of the general plans necessary for war can be drawn up without an intimate knowledge of the political situation".(Carl von Clausewitz, "From the war»)

The example of the French campaign is far from being isolated in military history. In 1709, the Battle of Malplaquet is another illustration[24]. 24] Similarly, during the offensives of the spring of 1918, the Germans multiplied tactical victories without ever leading to an operational advantage - and even less strategic - significant.

In 1814, Napoleon hoped, through a rapid campaign, to multiply the tactical victories to bring the coalition to accept an honourable peace. But he was not unaware that in addition to the enemy's will, he also had to bend the will of the French of the "peace party", who wanted an end to hostilities at any price or, worse for him, the restoration of the Bourbons. In his Clausewitzian trinity, the apex of the triangle constituted by the government is already failing while those of the people and the armies begin to collapse [25]. 25] On the contrary, the rest of Europe wants to put an end to the hegemonic wills of Napoleonic France. The allied governments remained united, and when this union seemed to be failing, England knew how to cement this alliance, especially through its precious subsidies. Revolutionary ideals have awakened European nationalisms,

particularly German nationalisms, and these, almost paradoxically, unite behind their governments to put an end to French occupations. Finally, European armies were able to learn from their series of defeats. The post-Iena Prussian example is edifying. As the war campaigns progressed, the French Clausewitzian triangle was eroded while that of the coalitions was strengthened^[26]; the will of some was eroded in front of that of others, whatever the tactico-operative results.

Conclusion

In addition to the reflections on the weight of numbers and the indirect approach, the study of the 1814 campaign can thus result in a simple assertion: victory on the battlefield is nothing if it does not correspond to a victory over the will of the enemy. The constitutive purpose of war is therefore not the battle itself, nor is it really the occupation of the field, still less to inflict more casualties and damage on the enemy than we suffer. The first, fundamental objective of war, which the tactical or tactico-operative leader cannot abjure, consists only in bending the **will of the adversary**: "**The true goal of war is the spirit of the enemy leaders, and not the body of their soldiers**" ^[27].

^{27]} ^[27] It would be moreover captivating to believe that this axiom would apply only to symmetrical and asymmetrical conflicts. In Afghanistan, coalition troops are multiplying tactical micro-victories and inflicting far more casualties on the insurgents than they are suffering. Nevertheless, the insurgency persists because the Afghan imbroglio is such that the threads of its will seem unbreakable^[28]. ^{28]} On the other hand, the insurgency is attacking the will that it considers to be most within its reach in the Clausewitzian triangle, that of popular support: "They [the Taliban] have understood that Western public opinion is probably the Achilles' heel of the international community". ^{29]} For them, there is no need for victory on the ground, they need only to wear down the enemy until his will is weakened by itself. In the same way that the coalition of 1814 multiplied tactical failures while waiting for France's will to fight to wither away.

Basil Liddell Hart, "Strategy".

^[2] General Michel Yakovlev, "Theoretical tactics", Part 5, pages 550-552, Economica, 2007.

^{3]} The Clausewitz Trinity is made up of the people, the government and the army. According to Clausewitzian thought, the union of their wills is a key factor in the success of the war. Carl von Clausewitz, "Of the war", book one.

^{4]} The battles of Arcole (15-17 November 1796) and Rivoli (14-15 January 1797) forced the remnants of the Austrian army to lock themselves up in Mantua and then to capitulate a few days later, marking the end of the Austrian military presence in Italy. Bonaparte could then turn around to threaten Austria's borders directly and impose the peace preliminaries of Leoben (15 April 1797).

^{5]} On August 27, 1813, under the walls of Dresden and thanks to a brilliant turning movement, the Emperor inflicted a crushing defeat on Schwarzenberg's army, which was twice as numerous. Nevertheless, Napoleon was ill and had to leave the battlefield and could not exploit his tactical victory.

^{6]} Also known as the Battle of the Nations, the Battle of Leipzig (October 16-19, 1813) saw about 170,000 Frenchmen and 300,000 allied troops battle it out. Napoleon was unable to maneuver to compensate for his numerical inferiority and had to withdraw. Defeat turned to disaster when his Saxon allies, in the middle of battle, turned their weapons against the French.

^{7]} The decree of recall of the 1814 and 1815 classes was signed by Empress Marie-Louise. These young conscripts, often still beardless, were given the nickname of the Emperor's wife because of their youthful and not very virile appearance.

^{8]} Napoleon demanded on several occasions that Augereau leave Lyon to attack the communications and rear lines of the Bohemian army. Augereau will delay and his inaction will be interpreted as a defection.

9) Eugene de Beauharnais will deliver a very beautiful campaign there and will defeat the Austrians at the battle of Mincio (February 8, 1814). This remarkable campaign, which is also reminiscent in many respects of his father-in-law's Italian campaign 18 years earlier, has unjustly fallen into the dustbin of history.

10) From the name of the member of the Legislature who wrote the report.

11) The complete speech can be found on the Internet: <http://books.google.fr/books?id=dCMbAAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false> (p.50)

12) The full statement can be found on the Internet:

http://books.google.fr/books?id=geZaAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA464&lpg=PA464&dq=d%C3%Aaclaration+des+puissances+alli%C3%Aes+d%C3%Aacembre+1813&source=bl&ots=BlE5mS6inq&sig=Q9pOvYa18JRRXSZ8TOT3ToOvtC8&hl=fr&ei=zEiYTbqEBMOKhQfshlnwCA&sa-X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=7&ved=0CDcQ6AEwBg#v=onepage&q=d%C3%Aaclaration%20des%20puissances%20alli%C3%Aes%20d%C3%Aacembre%201813&f=false

13) The Emperor was a priori aware of the intrigues of the Prince of Benevento. Strangely enough, he will not be worried.

14) For the anecdote, at the capture of Paris that followed Waterloo, he wanted to destroy the bridge of Jena.

The humiliation of the German campaign of 1806 generated a deep trauma within the Prussian army. This humiliation was the source of a total questioning of its functioning, giving birth, in particular, to the Kriegs Academie (War Academy), the Grand General Staff and promotion based more on merit than on letters of nobility. It will also nourish the thought of Clausewitz and will profoundly change Prussian society (end of serfdom, partial democratization of the regime, awakening of national consciousness). All these reforms will simultaneously strengthen Prussian militarism and a German nationalism tinged with francophobia, both leading to the German revenge of 1870 ... and therefore to the French spirit of revenge!

15) The Russians pleaded for a restoration of the Bourbons, the Austrians asked for the installation of a regency in favor of Napoleon's son.

16) A little more than a century later, at the same place, a battle that had become infamous was held on the Chemin des Dames (April-June 1917).

17) «White Paper on Defence and National Security», Odile Jacob, 2008, page 130.

18) Sir Rupert Smith, "The usefulness of force", *Economica*, 2005.

19) This is, in part, the meaning of the "Surge" initiated by General Petraeus to allow American troops to leave Iraq after having stabilized, at the very least, the local situation (2007-2008).

20) The global approach is not a novelty in itself: Marshals Lyautey and Gallieni, respectively in Morocco and Madagascar, dealt with all possible aspects of "pacification"; the Roman Empire was certainly built partly militarily, but it also gave pride of place to the de facto "pacification". The Roman Empire was built partly militarily, but it also gave pride of place to the development of administration, communications, the economy and even to the reconciliation of the religions of the conquered peoples with the Roman religion. It is therefore as a conceptualization, that, at the very least, the global approach can be considered a novelty.

21) General Desaix (1768-1800) was the hero of the Battle of Marengo (1800) and lost his life there. Under conditions very similar to those that prevailed at Waterloo, and unlike Grouchy, he knew how to "walk with the gun" to save Bonaparte from a perilous situation and transform a defeat into a decisive victory. At St. Helena, Napoleon painted a laudatory portrait of him: "Desaix's talent was constant; he lived and breathed only noble ambition and true glory. He was an ancient character. He loved glory for itself and France above all". (Las Cases, "St. Helena Memorial">).

The only marshal to be on the Emperor's first name, Marshal Lannes (1769-1809) was of all Napoleon's campaigns until his death on the battlefield at Essling (31 May 1809). "The most distinguished general of my armies, the one I considered my best friend" according to the Emperor (Letter to Marshal Lannes) is also the only one who dared to stand up to him.

Marshal Davout (1770-1823) is the only marshal of the empire to have always remained undefeated. During the French campaign, he was besieged in Hamburg, where he put up a heroic resistance for almost a year (he did not give way to the coalised troops until the end of April 1814, on the orders of Louis XVIII and not without first having had the King's fleur-de-lys banner fired from the cannon).

[22] Léonce Krebs and Henri Moris, "Campaigns in the Alps during the Revolution according to the archives of the French and Austro-Sardinian staffs, 1794, 1795, 1796.", Paris, Plon, 1895.

23| Basil Liddell Hart, "Strategy».

24| Read Battalion Commander Paul Bury's article, The Battle of Malplaquet - 11 September 1709 - From tactical draw to strategic victory and the importance of major effect. Available on the Defence Intranet: http://www.cesat.terre.defense.gouv.fr/taktika/IMG/pdf/080328_Malplaquet_1709_CBA_BURY.pdf

25| Most marshals are worn out by the years of Napoleonic wars and aspire to enjoy in peace the honours they have derived from them. The will of the troop - who fought well throughout the campaign - and of the people is more difficult to perceive. The war has, of course, tired the latter, and desertions and refusals of incorporation have multiplied during the last years of the Empire. However, the coalitions were worried about the multiplication of partisan actions on their backs (mainly in the Vosges and the Jura) and in theSome urged the Emperor to declare, following the example of the Revolution in 1792, "the fatherland in danger" in order to provoke a popular uprising in all the occupied territories. Probably marked by the massacre of Louis XVI's Swiss Guards during the capture of the Tuileries (20 June 1792), which he had witnessed as a spectator, Napoleon remained deeply distrustful of the uncontrollable waves of popular violence and refused to bow to it.

26| The Soviet writer Albert Manfred develops a parallel hypothesis to this one: Napoleon is victorious as long as he is progressive and wants to overthrow the established order; he begins to lose when he becomes conservative (Albert Manfred, "...").Napoleon Bonaparte(Albert Manfred, "Progress Edition, Moscow, 1980). The same type of reflections can be made on the oppositions between nomads and sedentary people, then between thalassocracies and earthly powers, throughout history (Halford John Mackinder theories).

27| Basil Liddell Hart, "...Strategy».

28| On this subject, see, in particular, Manière de voir, Imprenable Afghanistan, April-May 2010.

29| Hervé Morin, Minister of Defence, interview with France Inter, September 5, 2008.

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