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War In History 2013 20: 452

DOI: 10.1177/0968344513483071

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War in History
20(4) 452–490
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DOI: 10.1177/0968344513483071
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Abstract

This article investigates whether a military revolution took place in the German lands during the revolutionary and Napoleonic periods, with the potential to transform institutions and to alter contemporaries' attitudes not merely to war, but to politics and diplomacy. The scholarly debate about a metamorphosis of warfare during the revolutionary and Napoleonic periods involves three connected controversies: the meaning and timing of any 'revolution' in the conduct of war, the existence of a 'total war' in or after 1792, and the continuation of 'cabinet warfare' by the majority of the German states. Recently, historians have argued that the geographical and political diversity of the German states, in conjunction with popular criticism of the burdens and sacrifices of conflict in southern and western Germany, militated against a broad military revolution. This study contends that such reactions were themselves indicative of the transformation wrought by the conscription of more mobile and destructive mass armies in a seemingly unending series of wars, which ensured that military conflicts impinged more fully on civilian life.

Keywords

Revolutionary Wars, Napoleonic Wars, conscription, cabinet war, military reform, German states

Most Prussian and Austrian officers seem to have expected the campaign of 1792, begun by France's declaration of war against Piedmont, Austria, and Prussia on 20 April, to be

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a 'promenade to Paris', in the words of one French émigré.¹ In the event, the fighting between revolutionary or Napoleonic France and the German states continued, with few interruptions, for the next 23 years. Around 5 million Europeans, out of a total population of 190 million (1800), were killed in combat or through war-related diseases. According to one estimate, 2,532,000 soldiers perished on the battlefield or through wounding, making up more than 5 per cent of men of fighting age.² Historians disagree about the nature, impact, and continuity of such warfare, but few question the fact that it constituted part of a revolutionary threat to the foundations of the Continent's *anciens régimes*, creating the impression or reality of rapidly changing social, economic, and political conditions, and that it menaced the very existence of states, transforming the map of Europe and – via overseas expeditions (Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, 1798–9) and the naval war with Britain (1793–1802, 1803–15) – the wider world.³ This study reassesses the military impact of such revolutionary transformations.

The scholarly debate about a metamorphosis of warfare during the revolutionary and Napoleonic periods rests on two connected controversies: one concerning a 'military revolution' and the other, 'total war'. The dispute about a 'revolution in military affairs' has been complicated, despite agreement about the occurrence of 'a radical change or some form of discontinuity in the history of warfare', in the words of one recent commentator, by a lack of 'consensus regarding how and when these changes or discontinuities take place, or what causes them'.⁴ Some scholars have concentrated on 'battlefield technologies' and 'war-fighting techniques', whereas others have paid more attention to the relationship between a military transformation and 'the broader socio-political changes that a revolution involves'.⁵ The debate originally centred on a series of claims by historians of the early modern era that changes in military technology – either

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- 1 T.C.W. Blanning, *The Pursuit of Glory: The Five Revolutions That Made Modern Europe, 1648–1815* (London, 2007), p. 639.
 - 2 J.S. Levy, *War in the Modern Great Power System, 1495–1975* (Lexington, KY, 1983), p. 88. The figures are contested: see, for instance, Owen Connelly's criticism (*Journal of Military History* LXXI, 2007, p. 921) of David Bell's claim that 'France alone counted close to a million war deaths' (*The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare As We Know It*, Boston, 2007, p. 7): 'the French lost only 86,500 killed in action, not one million, which is the *casualty* figure, including killed, wounded, deserters, captured and missing. By contrast, in World War I, in four years, 1,400,000 French were killed in action.' Many more soldiers and civilians died in the revolutionary and Napoleonic periods of wounds, war-related diseases, and freezing, complicating direct comparisons of this kind.
 - 3 For a summary of historiographical differences of opinion, see R. Pröve, *Militär, Staat und Gesellschaft im Neunzehnten Jahrhundert* (Munich, 2006). On 'world war', see S. Förster, 'The First World War: Global Dimensions of Warfare in the Age of Revolutions', in R. Chickering and S. Förster, eds, *War in an Age of Revolution, 1775–1815* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 101–16.
 - 4 A.N. Liaropoulos, 'Revolutions in Warfare: Theoretical Paradigms and Historical Evidence: The Napoleonic and First World War Revolutions in Military Affairs', *Journal of Military History* LXX (2006), p. 366.
 - 5 *Ibid.*

the introduction of muskets (Michael Roberts) or the construction of fortifications and new types of artillery (Geoffrey Parker) – required increases in the size of European armies and necessitated higher taxation and a larger state, with the greatest changes taking place in the first century or so of the period between 1500 and 1800. Roberts contends that Gustavus Adolphus introduced linear formations of infantry with guns during the Thirty Years War (1618–48), in conjunction with more aggressive cavalry charges, which, in turn, pointed to the need for better trained, more disciplined soldiers and a new system of drill, uniforms, and standing armies.⁶ Parker extends and modifies Roberts's thesis, identifying the invention of new artillery fortifications in early sixteenth-century Italy (the *trace italienne*) as the cause of a shift towards defensive wars, sieges, and increased garrisons.⁷ The 'culmination' of this revolution purportedly came in the mid-eighteenth century. It was followed by innovations deriving from 'small wars' (*kleine Kriege*) such as light infantry and cavalry, the formation of self-contained divisions, the advent of standardized and mobile artillery, and – during the French Revolution – further increases in the size of armies, which have been termed a 'second military revolution': 'The scale of warfare was so totally transformed that it might be said that another "military revolution" had occurred.'⁸ Parker's claim coincides with that of Peter Paret, who alludes to the standardization of parts for artillery under Jean-Baptiste Vaquette, Comte de Gribeauval, and the formation of divisions under Victor-François de Broglie, following France's defeat at the battle of Rossbach in the Seven Years War: 'The French Revolution coincided with a revolution in war that had been under way through the last decades of the monarchy. Soon the two meshed.'⁹ Other historians have examined pre-Napoleonic changes in tactics and the reorganization of the infantry in a similar way.¹⁰

Scholars such as Azar Gat and Martin van Creveld have questioned not the fact that armies expanded and became permanent institutions, nor that centralized and powerful monarchies were established in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but that military innovations were largely responsible for the emergence of the modern state.¹¹ Rather, it

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- 6 M. Roberts, 'The Military Revolution, 1560–1660', in *Essays on Swedish History* (Minneapolis, 1967), pp. 195–225. See also C.J. Rogers, ed., *The Military Revolution Debate* (Boulder, CO, 1995).
 - 7 G. Parker, 'The Military Revolution, 1560–1660: A Myth?', *Journal of Modern History* XLVIII (1976), pp. 195–214; idem, *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500–1800* (Cambridge, 1988).
 - 8 Parker, *Military Revolution*, p. 153.
 - 9 P. Paret, 'Napoleon and the Revolution in War', in idem, ed., *The Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton, 1986), p. 124.
 - 10 J.A. Lynn, *The Bayonets of the Republic: Motivation and Tactics in the Army of Revolutionary France, 1791–1794* (Urbana, IL, 1984); S. Wilkinson, *The French Army before Napoleon* (Aldershot, 1991); J. Black, *Warfare in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1999), and idem, 'Eighteenth-Century Warfare Reconsidered', *War in History* I (1994), pp. 215–32.
 - 11 A. Gat, 'What Constituted the Military Revolution of the Early Modern Period?', in Chickering and Förster, *War in an Age of Revolution*, pp. 21–48; M. van Creveld, *Technology and War* (New York, 1991). See also A. Latham, 'War Transformed: A Braudelian Perspective on the Revolution in Military Affairs', *European Journal of International Relations* VIII (2002), pp. 231–4.

is argued, the size of armies depended on the capacity of states to borrow and to raise taxes, which was sometimes accelerated by wars, the production of arms, and the professionalization of armies, but which was also linked to the growth of capitalist economies, the development of more efficient or reliable bureaucracies, and the creation of credit markets and central banks.¹² The implication of Gat's argument is that armies depended on 'modernization' – state-building, commerce, administrative techniques, finances – which continued to take place, often incrementally, in the eighteenth century. 'Contrary to the widely accepted view among scholars, it should be emphasized that revolutionary France was no more able than earlier states in history to keep over 1 percent of her population under arms for any prolonged period of time,' he points out:

No miracles were performed here. With a population of some 25 million, France reached a peak of 750,000 soldiers in 1794 only at a price of economic mayhem, and numbers fell to around 400,000 the year after, where they remained until the end of the decade.¹³

Briefly, however, French regimes and those of their opponents did manage to raise unprecedented numbers of troops, albeit comprising a historically comparable percentage of the population. Prussia's troops constituted more than 5 per cent of its total population, though including many foreigners, during the Seven Years War (260,000) and 6 per cent, with fewer soldiers from other states and with part of its territory recently annexed, in 1813 (280,000).¹⁴ The effort required to levy and support such numbers of soldiers, over many years of sporadic conflict, has prompted historians such as David Bell to label the Napoleonic Wars 'the first total war'.¹⁵ The term, of course, was coined in the interwar era to describe an allegedly complete mobilization of societies' resources for the sake of the war effort. Bell argues that this mobilization was necessarily incomplete in the twentieth century and that the decisive shift towards an attempted mobilization occurred not in 1914–18, but in 1792–1815. His case rests on four propositions: first, that there was a political dynamic, created by the revolution, towards total engagement and the abandonment of restraint; second, that there was a widespread fear in France of a 'war of extermination', waged by the Coalition, which fostered a demonization of the nation's enemies, including non-combatants, an escalation of French war aims

12 See D. Parrott, 'Strategy and Tactics in the Thirty Years' War: The "Military Revolution"', *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen* XXXVIII (1985), pp. 7–25; C. Jones, 'The Military Revolution and the Professionalisation of the French Army under the Ancien Régime', in M. Duffy, ed., *The Military Revolution and the State, 1500–1800* (Exeter, 1980), pp. 29–48; J. Black, *A Military Revolution? Military Change and European Society, 1550–1800* (London, 1991).

13 A. Gat, *War in Human Civilization* (Oxford, 2006), p. 503.

14 G.A. Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army, 1640–1945* (Oxford, 1955), p. 60.

15 Bell, *First Total War*; R. Weigley, *The Age of Battles: The Quest for Decisive Warfare from Breitenfeld to Waterloo* (Bloomington, IN, 1991), p. 290; T.C.W. Blanning, *The French Revolutionary Wars, 1787–1802* (London, 1996), p. 101. See also R. Chickering, 'Total War: The Use and Abuse of a Concept', in M.F. Boemeke et al., eds., *Anticipating Total War: The German and American Experiences, 1871–1914* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 13–28.

on ‘defensive’ grounds, and a general radicalization of warfare; third, that it proved difficult to end wars, as their human and political costs and their expected economic and diplomatic benefits multiplied, especially under Napoleon, who was ‘the product, master and victim of total war’; and, fourth, that ‘new understandings of war’ – or a ‘culture of war’, separable from nationalism and revolutionary ideology, although deriving from the ‘intellectual transformations of the Enlightenment’ and ‘the political fermentation of 1789–92’ – developed their own momentum and justified more extreme or extensive forms of national sentiment.¹⁶

Much of the debate, which refers to long-standing controversies concerning the definition and character of ‘total war’, concerns the ‘fusion of war and politics’.¹⁷ Thus, even a critic of Bell such as Michael Broers ‘acknowledges the intellectual and cultural presence of the concept of “total war” among the leadership of revolutionary France’, not least because ‘their sacred and profane intellectual baggage abounded in examples of “total war”, defined in terms of “absolute enmity” as well as material obliteration’, from the struggle of Rome and Carthage to Samuel’s story of Saul and the Amalekites in the Bible.¹⁸ Such conceptions were purportedly accompanied by ‘absolute enmity’ between opponents, with ‘intense hatreds – spawned as much by the hard realities of fighting wars with mass peasant armies as by propaganda’.¹⁹ What restricted warfare, preventing it from becoming total, in Broers’s view, was ‘the lack of effective technology’ of killing and ‘the survival of rulers still imbued with enough of the political ethos of the old order, and even of the Enlightenment, to hold in check the temptation to unleash all the forces they had’.²⁰ ‘Power still rested in the hands of men of the old order, at least among the allies’, he contends, meaning that states remained ‘resolutely civilian in character, if not in purpose’.²¹ The ‘best test of the term “total war”’ is therefore held to be ‘not whether it effectively mobilizes resources or how much damage it does, but how mass mobilization and prolonged campaigning are received by the populations subjected to them’.²² Bell argues that both contemporary meanings of a *levée en masse* – a

16 Bell, *First Total War*, pp. 8–9.

17 See William Mulligan’s review of Bell’s study in the *Journal of Modern History* LXXX (2008), p. 912. Also, W. Mulligan, ‘Total War’, *War in History* XV (2008), pp. 211–21. On the conflation of the terms ‘total war’, implying a total mobilization of resources, and ‘modern war’, resting on ‘the fruits of industrialization and technological innovation’, see H. Strachan, ‘On Total War and Modern War’, *International History Review* XXII (2000), p. 351.

18 M. Broers, ‘The Concept of “Total War” in the Revolutionary-Napoleonic Period’, *War in History* XV (2008), pp. 248, 256.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 253. Also, P. Gueniffey, *La politique de la Terreur: essai sur la violence révolutionnaire, 1789–1794* (Paris, 2000).

20 Broers, ‘Concept of “Total War”’, p. 267.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 259, 265.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 253. This argument rests on Broers’s extensive work on Napoleonic imperialism in Italy – in *Napoleonic Imperialism and the Savoyard Monarchy, 1773–1821* (Lampeter, 1997), *The Napoleonic Empire in Italy, 1796–1814: Cultural Imperialism in a European Context?* (Basingstoke, 2005), *Politics and Religion in Napoleonic Italy: The War against God, 1801–1814* (London, 2007) – and on banditry, in *Napoleon’s Other War: Bandits, Rebels and Their Pursuers in the Age of Revolutions* (New York, 2010).

spontaneous popular rising as well as an act of conscription, with ‘the relentless imposition of the machinery of the bureaucratic state on hitherto seemingly unassailable hinterlands’, as Broers puts it – were characteristic of the revolutionary and Napoleonic eras, while Broers is more sceptical about a political dynamic, tending towards total engagement and the abandonment of restraint.²³

Partly in reaction to ‘national’ interpretations of the ‘wars of liberation’ and partly in response to Bell’s case about the revolutionary impact of warfare between 1792 and 1815, which focuses above all on France but which has been extended – in modified form – to the rest of Europe and the United States through the work of Roger Chickering, Stig Förster, and others, recent historians of Germany have questioned whether the wars of the French Revolution and of Napoleon can be seen, in Ute Planert’s words, ‘as a caesura in world history’, bringing about ‘a fundamental change not only in the realm of politics but also in the nature of warfare’.²⁴ In her opinion there are good reasons to doubt that ‘the path toward total warfare began at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth’, since it has proved possible to question ‘the importance of ideology’, the existence of

unlimited war aims that tend toward annihilation of the enemy, the development of unlimited destructive potential, the geographical expanse of military operations, the abandonment of moral and legal conventions, the deployment of mass armies, and the mobilization of civilian populations and economies for purposes of war.²⁵

Planert, Katherine Aaslestad, and others have asked to what degree civilians – particularly but not only in south and west Germany, which are contrasted with a Prussian ‘exception’ – made a distinction between different sides and conceived of conflicts as patriotic or national struggles for survival and emancipation.²⁶ They have also, together with other scholars such as Peter Brandt, Michael Sikora, and Jörg Echternkamp, challenged the idea

23 Broers, ‘Concept of “Total War”’, p. 247. Bell, *First Total War*, pp. 8–9.

24 U. Planert, ‘Innovation or Evolution? The French Wars in Military History’, in Chickering and Förster, *War in an Age of Revolution*, p. 69. Chickering and Förster have edited six volumes, all with ‘total war’ as the main theme.

25 Ibid. Chickering argues in the introduction to *War in an Age of Revolution* that changes in combat ‘laid the moral and ideological foundations’ of total war (p. 3). Dierk Walter, ‘Reluctant Reformers, Observant Disciples: The Prussian Military Reforms, 1807–1814’, and Wolfgang Kruse, ‘Revolutionary France and the Meanings of *Levée en Masse*’, *ibid.*, pp. 85–101 and 299–312, agree with this position.

26 On civilians, see U. Planert, *Der Mythos vom Befreiungskrieg* (Paderborn, 2007); *idem*, ‘Staat und Krieg an der Wende zur Moderne: der deutsche Südwesten um 1800’, in W. Rösener, ed., *Staat und Krieg: vom Mittelalter bis zur Moderne* (Göttingen, 2000), pp. 159–80; K.B. Aaslestad, ‘Lost Neutrality and Economic Warfare: Napoleonic Warfare in Northern Europe, 1795–1815’, in Chickering and Förster, *War in an Age of Revolution*, pp. 373–94; *idem*, *Place and Politics: Local Identity, Civic Culture, and German Nationalism in North Germany during the Revolutionary Era* (Leiden, 2005); *idem*, ‘War without Battles: Civilian Experiences of Economic Warfare during the Napoleonic Era in Hamburg’, in A.

that soldiers were motivated by patriotic ideals, which had been believed to distinguish them from their eighteenth-century predecessors.²⁷ ‘The master narrative of modern military history’ has taken ‘insufficient note of lines of continuity to early modern times’ and has overlooked ‘differences between the French Revolutionary and the Napoleonic wars themselves’, encouraging ‘a mistaken picture of developments during the nineteenth century’, Planert continues: ‘From this perspective, the wars of the French Revolution fit in a long European tradition of state building by war that led from the early modern era to the nineteenth century.’²⁸ According to such a reading of events, there are few, if any, grounds for discerning a fundamental or revolutionary change in the practices or consequences of warfare between 1792 and 1815.

Forrest et al., eds, *Soldiers, Citizens, and Civilians: Experiences and Perceptions of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1790–1820* (Basingstoke, 2008), pp. 118–36; idem and K. Hagemann, ‘1806 and Its Aftermath: Revisiting the Period of the Napoleonic Wars in German Central European Historiography’, *Central European History* XXXIX (2006), pp. 547–79; T.C.W. Blanning, *The French Revolution in Germany: Occupation and Resistance in the Rhineland, 1792–1802* (Oxford, 1983); M. Rowe, *From Reich to State: The Rhineland in the Revolutionary Age, 1780–1830* (Cambridge, 2003); U. Andrea, *Die Rheinländer, die Revolution und der Krieg 1794–1798* (Essen, 1994); G. Schuck, *Rheinbundpatriotismus und politische Öffentlichkeit zwischen Aufklärung und Frühliberalismus: Kontinuitätsdenken und Diskontinuitätserfahrung in den Staatsrechts- und Verfassungsdebatten der Rheinbundpublizistik* (Stuttgart, 1994); P. Sauer, *Napoleons Adler über Württemberg, Baden und Hohenzollern: Südwestdeutschland in der Rheinbundzeit* (Stuttgart, 1987); H. Berding, *Napoleonische Herrschafts- und Gesellschaftspolitik im Königsreich Westfalen 1807–1813* (Göttingen, 1973); J. Engelbrecht, *Das Herzogtum Berg im Zeitalter der Französischen Revolution: Modernisierungsprozesse zwischen bayerischem und französischem Modell* (Paderborn, 1996); M. Hamm, *Die bayerische Integrationspolitik in Tirol 1806–1814* (Munich, 1996). On so-called Prussian exceptionalism, see U. Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks: Modern Germany, Military Conscription and Civil Society* (Oxford, 2004).

27 On soldiers’ motivations, see J. Murken, *Bayerische Soldaten im Russlandfeldzug 1812: ihre Kriegserfahrungen und deren Umdeutungen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 2006); P. Brandt, ‘Einstellungen, Motive und Ziele von Kriegsfreiwilligen 1813/14: das Freikorps Lützow’, in J. Dülffer, ed., *Kriegsbereitschaft und Friedensordnung in Deutschland 1800–1814* (Münster, 1995), pp. 211–33, and idem, ‘Die Befreiungskriege von 1813 bis 1813 in der deutschen Geschichte’, in M. Grüttner et al., eds, *Geschichte und Emanzipation* (Frankfurt, 1999), pp. 17–57; J. Echternkamp, ‘“Teutschland, des Soldaten Vaterland”’: die Nationalisierung des Krieges im frühen 19. Jahrhundert’, in W. Rösener, ed., *Staat und Krieg: vom Mittelalter bis zur Moderne* (Göttingen, 2000), pp. 181–203; M. Sikora, ‘Desertion und nationale Mobilmachung: militärische Verweigerung 1792–1813’, in U. Broeckling and M. Sikora, eds, *Armeen und ihre Deserteure: vernachlässigte Kapitel einer Militärgeschichte der Neuzeit* (Göttingen, 1998), pp. 112–40; K. Hagemann, ‘Der “Bürger” als “Nationalkrieger”’: Entwürfe von Militär, Nation und Männlichkeit in der Zeit der Freiheitskriege’, in idem and R. Pröve, eds, *Landsknechte, Soldatenfrauen und Nationalkrieger: Militär, Krieg und Geschlechterordnung im historischen Wandel* (Frankfurt, 1998), pp. 74–102.

28 Planert, ‘Innovation or Evolution?’, pp. 70–1.

Here, I reassess contemporaries' responses to the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in order to answer this underlying question about the existence and extent of a military revolution in the German lands. I argue, against the case made by Planert, that a fundamental shift occurred in the organization of armies and the waging of wars in Germany, with profound consequences for individual states and their subjects. There were many causes of the shift, but the creation of mass armies – examined in the third section – was decisive, bringing about changes in the ways in which wars were fought, experienced, represented, and perceived, and creating a common conception of unending, burdensome 'national' or 'participatory' warfare, without which the post-revolutionary 'peace' and the return to smaller armies after 1815 are difficult to comprehend. The effects of mass conscription and warfare were multifarious, altering military and civilian leaders' conceptions of conflict and threatening – and in some cases bringing about – the demise of particular states. Politics and war seemed to many contemporaries to be closely connected, raising questions about the national or patriotic purpose of military conflict.²⁹ The second section demonstrates, however, that the 'patriotism' of military and even civilian decision-makers in the German lands was a product of warfare – and sometimes an obstacle to it – rather than a cause, contrary to the claims made by Bell in respect of France. Many German officers remained critical of the allegedly patriotic or national motives of military reformers, but they nevertheless had to take them into account, imitating French methods in order to be able to fight alongside or to defeat French armies in mobile, protracted, and bloody wars. The first section shows how such a conception of military conflicts differed from earlier eighteenth-century precedents.

I. From 'Cabinet Wars' to 'Volkskriege'

In the wake of the battles of Jena and Auerstädt in 1806, reform-minded Prussian officers such as Gerhard Johann David von Scharnhorst and Hermann von Boyen regularly criticized the old system, which they held to be partly responsible for the kingdom's defeat. To August von Gneisenau, later quartermaster general and a staff officer of the Prussian commander Prince Friedrich Ludwig Hohenlohe in 1806, Berlin had failed to 'awaken the common mood in Germany' of 'disgust against French oppression', which could have created 'a new Vendée' for the Napoleonic regime; instead, it had maintained the separation of military and national affairs, allowing south Germans to remain disinterested bystanders and obliging 'only a fraction of the nation (*Nation*) to take up arms'.³⁰ The detachment of the army from civilian society was made worse by 'our system of recruitment, with all its exemptions', and Prussia's long period of military service, which necessitated strict discipline to keep unwilling soldiers in check, but which also permitted troops to marry, engendering homesickness and other burdens during long campaigns.³¹ What was more, Prussia's artillery and weapons were in a 'poor state', its many

29 Other 'ideological' objectives played a peripheral part in the German lands, in contrast to France (in some historical accounts).

30 A.W.A.N. v. Gneisenau, 'Über den Krieg von 1806', in *Ausgewählte militärische Schriften*, ed. G. Förster and C. Gudzent (East Berlin, 1984), p. 50.

31 *Ibid.*, pp. 50–1.

soldiers were sent home untrained in accordance with an antiquated system of leave (*Beurlaubungssystem*), and its generals were marked out by their 'incapacity'.³² The age of Duke Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand von Braunschweig, who had turned 71 on the eve of the battle of Auerstädt, left him with 'the indecision so characteristic of his years', aggravated by the 'disunity of the doyens of the General Staff'.³³ 'In summary, our self-conceit ... does not let us keep up with the times,' Gneisenau concluded.³⁴ The impression which he and other reformers gave was that Prussia's military system, widely thought to be the most advanced of its kind during the eighteenth century, had fallen behind the more flexible national system of France by the 1800s.

Prompted by French victories and the expansion of French power, it seemed, in the language of the time, that *Fürstenkriege* and *Staatenkriege*, or princely and state wars, had been superseded by *Volkskriege*, or wars of the people or nation.³⁵ Later, in the mid-nineteenth century, the term 'cabinet war' (*Kabinettskrieg*), which has subsequently been adopted by the majority of historians, came to describe the supposed shift from the regular, limited, aristocratic conflicts of the eighteenth century to momentous, unconstrained wars of 'annihilation' during and after the French Revolution. The term derived from the councils or cabinets of generals and ministers which were meant to guide the monarch as the nominal commander-in-chief of the army, and it became synonymous with the concealed war aims, secret diplomacy, and self-serving nepotism of cliques of nobles surrounding the ruler. Even in Prussia, where a noble warrior caste had been created over the previous century and a half as a functional, state-serving elite, the structure of command had become opaque, indecisive, and top-heavy, wrote the young officer Carl von Clausewitz to his fiancée on 29 September 1806, a fortnight before the battle of Jena. It was only possible to comprehend the difficulties facing Scharnhorst, his mentor and actual commander in 1806:

if one realizes that *three* commanders-in-chief and *two* chiefs of staff serve with the army, though only *one* commander and *one* chief of staff ought to be there ... How much must the effectiveness of a gifted man be reduced when he is constantly confronted by obstacles of convenience and tradition, when he is paralyzed by constant friction with the opinions of others.³⁶

With hindsight, cabinet wars seemed to have been characterized by relatively small standing armies, which had been deployed often but for specific purposes, as an extension of dynastic and commercial policy. Their use relied on the emergence of a more or less stable international order of consolidated states, within the 'Westphalian system' after 1648, and

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., p. 50.

34 Ibid., p. 51.

35 See N. Buschmann, C. Mick and I. Schierle, 'Kriegstypen: Begriffsgeschichtliche Bilanz in deutschen, russischen und sowjetischen Lexika', and F. Göse, 'Kabinettskrieg', in D. Beyrau et al., eds, *Formen des Krieges* (Paderborn, 2007), pp. 24–5, 121–47.

36 C. v. Clausewitz to M. v. Brühl, 29 September 1806, cited in P. Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, new edn (Princeton, NJ, 1985), p. 124.

those states' gradual monopolization of violence at home during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. 'The times are over', remarked Helmuth von Moltke the Elder in his history of the Franco-German War of 1870–1, 'when small armies of professional soldiers were deployed for dynastic ends, in order to conquer a city or a stretch of land, and then they returned to their winter quarters or signed a peace.'³⁷ In effect, standing armies had become the instrument of dynastic states, or 'absolutist' ones, in the common nineteenth-century cognate of 'cabinet', removing warfare, with its attendant risk of rebellion, from civilian (*bürgerlich*) life. Ideally, suggested Friedrich II, the civilian population should not notice that the state was at war at all.³⁸

Reacting to the bloodletting of the Thirty Years War, which had combined the large-scale combat and levels of killing of a religiously inspired civil war and the constant fighting of a state of baronial anarchy, monarchs had harnessed the new potential of their centralizing states, tying aristocracies to the royal court, in the manner of Louis XIV, and to the officer corps of standing armies, which were used to quash opposition to royal power.³⁹ Conflicts were frequent in the eighteenth century, occurring every two to three years on average and blurring the distinction between war and peace, but they were less bloody than in the early seventeenth century, with the warring parties relying on an established system of great powers and a shared aristocratic code of honour to regulate conduct and bring wars to an end.⁴⁰ Whereas states had failed to control the violence of noble retinues, popular revolt, and religious conflict in the century after 1559, they had managed to do so by a variety of means – most notably by increasing tax revenue, disbursing favours to a court aristocracy, expanding administration, and creating standing armies with noble officers and mercenary, foreign, or dragooned troops – after that point.⁴¹ Partly because of their domestic role as a police force and partly because of the cost of equipment and, especially, replacement soldiers, standing armies seemed increasingly to have concentrated on manoeuvring, informed by the enlightened 'science' of warfare, and on protecting elaborate supply lines needed for a system of fortifications, sieges, artillery, and other weaponry, rather than on battles. 'Why risk battle?' the Duke of Braunschweig asked the French envoy from Paris, whose offer of the command of French forces in January 1792 he had just turned down in favour of a similar invitation from Prussia:

If the French are the victors it will ruin us; if they lose they will still have other resources. My plan is to move numerous armies into your border regions, station them there for an extended period, have them take up unassailable positions, and await your defeat from internal troubles and bankruptcy.⁴²

37 H. v. Moltke, *Geschichte des Deutsch-französischen Krieges von 1870–71* (Berlin, 1891), cited in Göse, 'Kabinettskrieg', p. 123.

38 K.J. Holsti, *Peace and War: Armed Conflicts and International Order, 1648–1989* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 103.

39 Gat, *War in Human Civilization*, pp. 665–6.

40 On the frequency and limitation of warfare, see Holsti, *Peace and War*, pp. 84–7.

41 D. Kaiser, *Politics and War: European Conflict from Philip II to Hitler*, new edn (Cambridge, MA, 2000), pp. 135–41, 197–202.

42 Cited in Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, p. 23.

Table 1. Severity and intensity of European and world wars.

Wars	Dates	Number of great powers	Countries ^a	Severity ^b	Intensity ^c
Grand Alliance	1689–97	5	ABFNS	680	6,939
Spanish Succession	1701–14	5	ABFNS	1,251	12,490
Austrian Succession	1740–8	6	ABFPRS	359	3,379
Seven Years	1756–63	6	ABFPRS	992	9,118
French Revolutionary	1792–1802	5	ABFPR	663	5,816
Napoleonic	1803–15	5	ABFPR	1,869	16,112
All European wars (N=18)	1815–1913	3 or fewer	A: 6; B: 1; F: 8; R: 5	Fewer than 217	Fewer than 1,743
First World	1914–18	8	ABFGIJRU	7,734	57,616
Second World	1939–45	7	BFGIJRU	12,948	93,665

^aCountries participating in war: A, Austria; B, Britain; F, France; G, Germany; I, Italy; J, Japan; N, Netherlands; P, Prussia; R, Russia; S, Spain; U, United States.

^bSeverity of war: total battle fatalities suffered by great powers, in thousands.

^cIntensity of war: total battle fatalities suffered by great powers, per million European population.

Source: J.S. Levy, *War in the Modern Great Power System, 1495–1975* (Lexington, KY, 1983), p. 88.

A great general, the official Saxon military manual of 1752 had declared, ‘shows his mastery by attaining the object of his campaign by sagacious and sure manoeuvres, without incurring any loss’.⁴³

On the battlefield itself, losses in the most important clashes had already diminished from approximately 15 per cent for the victor and 30 per cent for the vanquished during the Thirty Years War to 11 and 23 per cent respectively for the period between 1648 and 1715.⁴⁴ Such losses continued to diminish up to and including the Wars of the Austrian Succession between 1740 and 1748, in which the fighting was less intense than during the Wars of the Grand Alliance (1689–97) and Spanish Succession (1701–14) – see Table 1. Friedrich II, who was famous for contravening many of the mantras of eighteenth-century warfare and forcing his opponents onto the battlefield, conceded that, ‘of the five battles which my troops have joined’, there were ‘only three which I had planned’.⁴⁵ Even these battles, under the circumstances, he saw as a means of conserving men and supplies, asking in 1759 ‘whether it is not less dangerous to meet the enemy in battle and risk the danger of a small reverse’ than to face the losses, through disease, hunger, and desertion, of a prolonged campaign.⁴⁶

43 Blanning, *French Revolutionary Wars*, p. 14.

44 Göse, ‘Kabinettskrieg’, pp. 128–9.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 129.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 130.

47 For the German case, see especially Planert, ‘Innovation or Evolution?’, pp. 69–84, and *idem*, ‘Die Kriege der Französischen Revolution und Napoleons: Beginn einer neuen Ära der europäischen Kriegsgeschichte oder Weiterwirken der Vergangenheit?’, in Beyrau et al., *Formen des Krieges*, pp. 149–62.

The costs and losses of eighteenth-century campaigns were still great, of course, comparable in many respects with those of earlier and later conflicts.⁴⁷ In contrast to the seventeenth century, wars had become the preserve of the great powers in the Westphalian system, with Saxony, Bavaria, Sardinia, Venice, Naples, the Dutch Republic, and Savoy – and not the multitude of other small states – involved only as minor powers: Russia played a major part in 14 eighteenth-century wars; Austria and France, 12; Britain, 11; Prussia, 8; Turkey, 7; and the Dutch Republic and Naples, merely 2.⁴⁸ Yet not all such conflicts were easily contained and, when they did escalate, they were likely to be bloody precisely because the great powers were involved. Furthermore, some wars concerned the very survival of states, as the first partition of Poland (1772) had proved, with the potential to break the precarious rules and practices of engagement. Most German contemporaries seem to have distinguished between major and minor wars, with the Thirty Years War and the Seven Years War their principal points of reference.⁴⁹ Certainly officers, diplomats, ministers, and rulers, those most responsible for the outbreak of wars, were guided by memories and myths of Friedrich II's struggle for survival – or by Austria's and Saxony's confrontation with Prussia – between 1756 and 1763.

For Hermann von Boyen, later Prussian war minister (1814) and a member of the general staff in 1806, the problem during the 1790s and 1800s was the gradual disappearance of the idiosyncratic but decisive generals 'from the times of the Seven Years War', such as his own commanding officer, who had barely been able to read and had given briefings in his kitchen, but who had 'maintained a certain independence at grave moments, which can only be won by a profound inner education, not by social forms'.⁵⁰ What would happen, Scharnhorst asked his audience at the Berlin Militärische Gesellschaft, which he had helped to found in 1802, 'when the men Friedrich II trained during the Seven Years' War are no longer with us?'⁵¹ To such officers, the Prussian king had risked everything in 1756 in a war for the existence of Prussia, countenancing battles, the massing of troops, rapid marches, looting, living off the land, the further professionalization of the officer corps, promotion of commoners, and fuller exploitation of the cantonal system of conscription introduced in the 1730s. As a result, Prussia's army had increased from 39,000 men in 1710 to 260,000 by 1760 (see Table 2). The number of fatalities incurred in this perceived fight for survival was greater than that incurred in the Revolutionary Wars between 1792 and 1802 – 992,000 compared with 663,000 – and the intensity of the fighting, or number of fatalities per head of population, was almost double that of the revolutionary conflicts. With its 'geographical position and lack of natural and artificial defensive means', it seemed to Scharnhorst in April 1806, 'Prussia cannot wage a defensive war.'⁵² In such conditions

48 Holsti, *Peace and War*, p. 84.

49 On the long shadow cast by the Thirty Years War into the nineteenth century, see K. Cramer, *The Thirty Years' War and German Memory in the Nineteenth Century* (Lincoln, NE, 2007).

50 H. v. Boyen, *Denkwürdigkeiten und Erinnerungen 1771–1813* (Stuttgart, 1899), vol. 1, pp. 24–5.

51 Cited in Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, p. 67.

52 Scharnhorst to E.F. v. Rüchel, 16 April 1806, in Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, p. 111.

Table 2. Armed forces numbers in thousands during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Country	Late 17th century	Early 18th century	Mid-18th century	Late 18th century
Habsburg monarchy	50 (1690)	100 (1705) 100–40 (1710)	157–201 (1756) 202 (1760)	312 (1786)
Prussia	30 (1688)	40 (1713)	143 (1756) 260 (1760)	160 (1778) 194 (1786)
France	130 (1679) 338 (1690)	400 (1703) 300–60 (1710)	330 (1756) 280 (1760)	156 (1786) 800 (1794)
Russia	200 (1680)	220 (1710)	284–344 (1756)	200 (1778) 300 (1796)
Great Britain and Ireland	80 (1690)	139 (1710)	62 (1739–48) 93 (1756–63)	100–8 (1775–83) 800 (1803)
Sweden	90 (1690)	110 (1709)	53	45
Dutch Republic	73 (1690)	100 (1710)	39 (1756)	
Spain		40 (1703)	56 (1759)	140 (1803)

Source: J. Black, *A Military Revolution? Military Change and European Society, 1550–1800* (Basingstoke, 1991), p. 7; W. Demel, *Europäische Geschichte des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart, 2000).

the risk, cost, and bloodshed of war could appear undiminished and the distinction between civilians and combatants tenuous.

The ‘taming’ of eighteenth-century warfare, particularly from the point of view of north German onlookers, was less salient than historians have claimed.⁵³ Nonetheless, Prussian military reformers, most of whom emphasized the speed and all-or-nothing character of Friedrich II’s campaigns, also underlined the fact that the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars were different in kind from earlier conflicts as a consequence of changes introduced by French regimes. War seemed, in Clausewitz’s phrase, to have become ‘absolute’, transforming the significance of ideology, creating mass armies, giving a greater role to conscripts and public opinion, mobilizing civilian populations and economies, promoting unlimited war aims and wars of ‘annihilation’ (*Vernichtung*), and compromising moral and legal conventions.⁵⁴ Scharnhorst, who had transferred to the Prussian army from Hanover in 1801 and became the principal military reformer after 1806, had already indicated in his well-known essay ‘The Development of the General Causes of the Good Fortune of the French in the Revolutionary War’ of 1797 that the

53 The term ‘tamed Bellona’ comes from J. Kunisch, ‘Von der gezähmten zur entfesselten Bellona: die Umwertung des Krieges im Zeitalter der Revolutions- und Freiheitskriege’, in idem, ed., *Fürst – Gesellschaft – Krieg: Studien zur bellizistischen Disposition des absoluten Fürstenstaates* (Cologne, 1992), although he has himself pointed to important continuities, especially those relating to *kleine Kriege*, which adumbrated the mobility and flexibility of later conflicts; idem, *Der kleine Krieg: Studien zum Heerwesen des Absolutismus* (Wiesbaden, 1973).

54 Planert, ‘Innovation or Evolution?’, p. 70.

neighbouring state's victories had not been fortuitous: 'The source of the misfortune which struck the allied powers in the French revolutionary war must be deeply interwoven with its internal relationships and with those of the French nation.'⁵⁵ Tellingly he began with the soldiers' new-found, nationally inspired motivation to wage war and ended with questions of military tactics and leadership, as if the former had informed or even produced the latter. In 1807 Scharnhorst was made the chair of the Military Reorganization Commission, created by Friedrich Wilhelm III to investigate every capitulation and to receive reports from every senior officer implicated in Prussia's defeat. Five of the commission's six members – by the end of 1807 – were in favour of thoroughgoing change, encouraged by the king's 'Guidelines for the Reorganization of the Army', drafted in July 1807, which had confirmed that 'it will neither be feasible nor advisable, after the experiences we have had until now, to put the army completely on its old footing after its rebirth'.⁵⁶

Many Prussian officers, however, were opposed. It was 'not to be doubted that our officers still dream ("think" would be to say too much) of a great army on the old footing, and the propertied, the merchant and the farmer can pay and suffer', wrote Barthold Georg Niebuhr in a letter to Heinrich Friedrich Karl vom und zum Stein in 1813: 'Each limitation is an assault (so says von Kalckreuth).'⁵⁷ Initially, Friedrich Wilhelm III had appointed three of his own adjutants to the commission, plus another similarly minded officer, to create a conservative majority, which was only averted by Scharnhorst's subsequent manoeuvring.⁵⁸ Lieutenant General Julius von Grawert, who was later appointed to command the Prussian forces in the Grande Armée in 1812, and whose division had been slaughtered at Jena in 1806 while using the traditional tactic of advancing slowly and volley by volley, wrote to the king from Breslau in September 1807 that 'the renown which the Prussian army had fought for in the whole of Europe during the Seven Years War' had only been lost through the softening of the army during too long a peace and by 'the unfortunate revolution in France', which had nurtured ideas, 'especially among the civilian orders (*Zivilstände*)', which 'threatened to overthrow every previously existing order and constitution (*Verfassung*)'.⁵⁹ Correctives put forward by Grawert included emergency relief for impoverished officers who had been falsely accused of a dereliction of duty in 1806, measures against 'immorality', such as the establishment of workhouses, and putting any 'burgher' who impugned the honour of an officer in chains.⁶⁰ Other

55 M. Sikora, 'Scharnhorst und die militärische Revolution', in J. Kunisch and H. Münkler, eds, *Die Wiedergeburt des Krieges aus dem Geist der Revolution: Studien zum bellizistischen Diskurs des ausgehenden 18. und beginnenden 19. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1999), p. 158.

56 Friedrich Wilhelm III, July 1807, in R. Vaupel, ed., *Die Reorganisation des Preussischen Staates unter Stein und Hardenberg* (Leipzig, 1938), part 2, vol. 1, p. 8.

57 Cited in G.H. Pertz, *Das Leben des Ministers Freiherrn vom Stein* (Berlin, 1849–55), vol. 2, pp. 82–4.

58 P. Paret, *The Cognitive Challenge of War: Prussia, 1806* (Princeton, 2009), p. 86.

59 J. v. Grawert memorandum, 27 September 1807, in Vaupel, *Reorganisation des Preussischen Staates*, part 2, vol. 1, pp. 108–9.

60 *Ibid.*, pp. 108–19.

Prussian officers were more moderate, but remained cautious. Prince August, for instance, submitted a memorandum in June 1807, while still a prisoner of war in France, which backed Scharnhorst's proposal to combine infantry, cavalry, and artillery in separate divisions, improving their coordination, and which called for greater speed, partly by relieving soldiers of heavy equipment, better use of sharpshooters – a Prussian invention – and a more flexible system of supply. He also demanded tactical alterations, most notably 'an intelligent combination of line with light infantry' which 'the French were the first to carry out ... on a large scale', securing 'important advantages', but he stopped short of fundamental 'French' innovations which required greater independence and motivation on the part of nationally inspired troops: 'In modern times one generally cannot expect great results from patriotism ... In nearly all contemporary wars, love of honour and ambition have been a greater influence and have often replaced enthusiasm or patriotism.'⁶¹

In Vienna, Archduke Karl had arrived at a similar conclusion a decade earlier, in his treatise *On War against the New Franks* (1795). 'How was it possible that a well-equipped, balanced, disciplined army had been defeated by an enemy with raw troops, lacking cavalry, and with inexperienced generals?' His answer, like August's, concentrated narrowly on strategic and tactical questions: Austria had fought a defensive war, it had been preoccupied with its lines of supply, and it had fragmented and dispersed its forces in an easily punctured cordon of defence.⁶² Although aware of military reforms carried out by Austria after defeat in 1805, officers and ministers in other German states had fewer reasons and less opportunity, given the swingeing nature of French demands for money and troops from its allies in the Confederation of the Rhine, to implement changes on the Prussian model. Patriotism – or loyalty to a particular state – existed within a narrow reading public and beyond, but it was of limited significance for the reform of German armies.

II. Patriotism and Its Limits

The transformation of the German armies which occurred in the 1800s and 1810s was at once part of a broader movement of reform and a direct response to the changing imperatives of combat.⁶³ More and more soldiers entered the army and the relationship between civilian – particularly urban – society and the military became closer, at the same time as military institutions, codes, and traditions were collapsing or were being replaced. These developments were accompanied in Prussia after 1806 and Bavaria after 1813 by debates within the military and the state about the necessity of a 'patriotic' reorganization of the

61 Prince August of Prussia, 'Vorschläge zur Verbesserung der preussischen Militär-Verfassung', 13 June 1807, in P. Paret, *Yorck and the Era of Prussian Reform, 1807–1815* (Princeton, 1966), pp. 126–7.

62 Cited in Blanning, *Pursuit of Glory*, p. 639.

63 The best analysis of the tensions between the two is currently M. Sikora, 'Militarisierung und Zivilisierung: die preussischen Heeresreformen und ihre Ambivalenzen', in P. Baumgart et al., eds, *Die preussische Armee: zwischen Ancien Régime und Reichsgründung* (Paderborn, 2008), pp. 164–95.

army. To Prussian reformers such as Scharnhorst, the allies had lost and France had won primarily because the French had been more motivated than their opponents. ‘The struggle was indeed too unequal: one side had everything to lose, the other little,’ he had written in 1797.⁶⁴ French soldiers, as well as officers, had believed in 1792 that they were threatened with subjugation and the disappearance of the state at the hands of their enemies, which pushed civilians and combatants to make extraordinary sacrifices. This sense of fighting for survival had combined with the desire for a free society and with a longer-standing national pride – ‘The French nation has always deemed itself to be the only people which is enlightened, intelligent, free and happy, despising all other nations as uncultured, bestial and wretched’ – to create a new type of soldier and, as a corollary, new forms of combat: ‘the reasons for the defeat of the allied powers must be deeply enmeshed in their internal conditions and in those of the French nation.’⁶⁵

When war recommenced on the Continent in 1805–6, the allies demonstrated that they had still not learned their lesson. Prussia had treated the conflict ‘like an autumn manoeuvre’, averred Scharnhorst from Hamburg on 13 November 1806:

I was the only one who knew all the different parts of the great military machine, but I was transferred to Hanover with a small corps, as quartermaster general, and only then, when they could not help themselves, did I come to a larger army.⁶⁶

Prussian soldiers and civilians had not realized, despite the revolutionary changes which had occurred in France in the 1790s, that they were fighting a ‘national’ war of survival:

It was a great misfortune that no one knew that everything was in play – the indifference of the milieu of the king and of the king himself often made me melancholic, and often vexed, to the highest degree. Eight weeks before the outbreak of war, I sent a memorandum to the king and asked him for the general arming of militarily capable men, up to a 300,000-strong national militia (*Nationalmilitz*).⁶⁷

Six and a half years later, in a memorandum for Hardenberg of April 1813, Scharnhorst remained more convinced than ever that ‘only an arrangement which employs the entire strength of the nation (*die Gesamtkräfte der Nation*) can secure the throne and our independence’:

To entrust the security of the king and national independence to a standing army alone is always dangerous, especially against an opponent such as ours is, which stands before us, which risks everything in order to win everything. If chance should decide against us in a few battles, it will destroy us, insofar as we do not now muster the entirety of our national forces against it. Without such a development of all the institutions of defence available to us, which does not

64 Scharnhorst, ‘The Development of the General Causes of the Good Fortune of the French in the Revolutionary War’ (1797), cited in Blanning, *Pursuit of Glory*, p. 640.

65 Ibid.

66 Scharnhorst to F. v. der Decken, 16 November 1806, in J. Niemeyer, ed., *Scharnhorst Briefe an Friedrich von der Decken 1803–1813* (Bonn, 1987), p. 114.

67 Ibid.

merely mean the standing army but also the physical and moral resources of the nation, we cannot vouch for success. On the other hand, if this development of our armed forces (*Streitkräfte*) in their full extent takes place, then we will never again be completely knocked down, and the operations of our armies can therefore be carried out with greater security.⁶⁸

By the end of 1813, Prussian and Bavarian leaders were able to cast their armies in a patriotic light. Unlike other *Rheinbund* states, Bavaria concluded an alliance with the Coalition nine days before the battle of Leipzig, on 8 October, and its actions were justified by Max Joseph in patriotic and national terms for the well-being of the kingdom and in the name of 'German' culture.⁶⁹ About 6,000 volunteer soldiers and 230 volunteer officers eventually came forward, funded by 'patriotic' donations.⁷⁰ In this respect the experiences of the Bavarian government and army were closer to those of Prussia, which had used the reverses of 1806 to increase the motivation, independence, and mobility of its soldiers. The significance of such state 'patriotism' – not to mention German nationalism – varied, of course, with even Bavaria failing to enforce conscription in the newly annexed Tyrol after 1808–9 and with its internal troops arresting 7,800 Bavarian deserters and 5,100 fleeing conscripts, together with 43,500 'foreign' deserters, out of a total of 270,000 people arrested, between 1806 and 1815.⁷¹ Likewise, Prussian authorities found it difficult to enlist conscripts in cities such as Berlin and Potsdam and in annexed or border regions such as Westphalia, Silesia, and its Polish provinces. In 1813, 631 out of 2,800 soldiers in the Prussian *Landwehr* of the district of Münster deserted, yielding a figure – 22.4 per cent – in excess of the French desertion rate of 10 per cent between 1803 and 1814 or that of the German-speaking territories of the left bank of the Rhine, annexed by and subjected to the conscription of France, where 14 per cent of recruits, or 5,000 out of 35,000, deserted between 1801 and 1810.⁷²

In the Prussian and Bavarian heartlands, however, desertion was much rarer, in spite of the makeshift nature of the two states between 1806 and 1815 and increasing levels of conscription, with Berlin doubling the size of its forces through the creation of the *Landwehr*

68 Gneisenau and Scharnhorst memorandum for K.A. v. Hardenberg, April 1813, in Gneisenau, *Ausgewählte militärische Schriften*, p. 254.

69 Few diarists referred to Bavaria's changing of sides: for instance, F. Mändler, *Erinnerungen aus meinen Feldzüge in den Jahren 1809 bis 1815*, ed. F.J.A. Schneidawind (Nuremberg, 1854), pp. 126–8.

70 Planert, *Mythos vom Befreiungskrieg*, p. 600.

71 C. Küther, *Räuber und Gauner in Deutschland* (Göttingen, 1987), pp. 19–20.

72 Sikora, 'Desertion und nationale Mobilmachung', pp. 116, 120, 133. For the left bank of the Rhine, see also C. Hudemann-Simon, 'Réfractaires et déserteurs de la Grande Armée en Sarre, 1802–1813', *Revue Historique* CXI (1987), pp. 11–45; J. Smets, 'Von der "Dorfidyllle" zur preussischen Nation: Sozialdisziplinierung der linksrheinischen Bevölkerung durch die Franzosen am Beispiel der allgemeinen Wehrpflicht 1802–1814', *Historische Zeitschrift* CCLXII (1996), pp. 695–738.

73 M. Junkelmann, *Napoleon und Bayern: von den Anfängen des Königreiches* (Regensburg, 1985), pp. 326, 341. Also, K. Uebe, *Der Stimmungsumschwung in der bayerischen Armee gegenüber den Franzosen 1806–1812* (Munich, 1939). On the lack of desertion in the Prussian *Landwehr* from the Neumark and elsewhere, in contrast to that from Silesia, see B. v. Knobelsdorff-Brenkenhoff, *Briefe aus den Befreiungskriegen* (Bonn, 1981), p. 37.

in 1813 and with Munich disposing of 50,000 troops in October 1813, including 10,000 in the National Guard, and 60,000 in April 1815.⁷³ Although ‘desertion’ – which had been redefined by extension (articles 1 and 6) as state ‘treason’ in the revised military code of 1808 rather than as an internal army matter – was endemic in the Prussian *Lützower* corps of volunteers, comprising 15 per cent of all troops and 25 per cent of infantrymen, as educated or prosperous idealists and a mixed group of other combatants experienced the realities of a campaign, the desertion rate for Prussia’s *Freiwillige* as a whole – from 8,000 troops by June 1813 and 30,000 by mid-1814 – was low, at between 1 and 5 per cent.⁷⁴ Notwithstanding much higher levels of recruitment, fewer exemptions, the transitional character of military and state institutions, and the changing meaning of ‘desertion’, which now included the flight of young men before actual enlistment, average rates of desertion in Prussia, Bavaria, and elsewhere in Germany in the 1800s and 1810s were lower than in the eighteenth century. During the last phase of its old system, Prussia had experienced 9,500 desertions in the mobilization of 1805 and the short campaign of 1806 alone.⁷⁵

Many contemporaries doubted the conversion of Prussian and other German officers to a patriotic cause. Certainly, the contortions and realignments of their princes had shown that military loyalty to a particular ruler or dynasty was conditional, occasionally overridden by a conception of the state or even *Volk* and its interests, as Clausewitz spelled out in his ‘Bekanntnisdenkschrift’ in February 1812, which sought to justify his decision to fight on Russia’s side against Prussia:

I believe and profess that a *Volk* can acknowledge nothing higher than the worth and freedom of its own existence ..., that the honour of the king and government is one with the honour of the *Volk* and the sole safeguard of its well-being.⁷⁶

After the Prussian king had signed an alliance with France in the same month, about a quarter of Prussian officers had resigned from their commissions.⁷⁷ Yet their preoccupations seem to have been military ones, comprehensible only in the context of the near collapse of the Prussian army. As Clausewitz revealed in 1813, in an essay comparing 1813 with 1806, even the most entrenched institutions and practices in Prussia had been shown by the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars to be flimsy:

In the unfortunate days of Jena and Auerstädt, the Prussian army lost its glory; in the retreat it fell apart. Its fortresses were given up, the state was conquered, and after four weeks of fighting little was left of either state or army ... The [armistice] completed the misery ... Within a year, Prussia’s glittering military state, a joy to all lovers of soldiers and war, had disappeared.

74 Sikora, ‘Desertion und nationale Mobilmachung’, p. 134; Brandt, ‘Einstellungen, Motive und Ziele’, pp. 211–33.

75 Sikora, ‘Desertion und nationale Mobilmachung’, p. 117; idem, ‘Verzweiflung oder Leichtsin? Militärstand und Desertion im 18. Jahrhundert’, in B.R. Kroener and R. Pröve, eds, *Krieg und Frieden: Militär und Gesellschaft in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Paderborn, 1996), pp. 237–64.

76 W. Hahlweg, ed., *Carl von Clausewitz: Schriften – Aufsätze – Studien – Briefe* (Göttingen, 1966), vol. 1, pp. 688–9.

77 Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army*, p. 58.

Admiration was replaced by reproach and censure, homage often by humiliation. An oppressive sadness weighed on the army's morale. Finding confidence in the past was not possible; nor was hope for the future. Even that ultimate source for regaining courage, trust in particular leaders, was absent, because in the brief war no one had achieved prominence, and the few who had distinguished themselves were divided among factions holding different opinions.⁷⁸

Having been captured in the 'various capitulations' of 1806 and then released, 'a great number of officers', wrote Julius von Grawert in September 1807, had been obliged to 'go back to the provinces' and, receiving nothing from the state, 'had to seek out a means of living, helplessly, for many months, without any support'.⁷⁹ Some soldiers had fled with Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher towards Lübeck or with the king and much of the general staff towards Silesia and East Prussia; others were captured and sent home, or – like Boyen – evaded capture and made their way back to Prussia clandestinely.⁸⁰ The impression which such insiders give is of an army – or 'remnants of an army', in Boyen's phrase – close to dissolution.⁸¹ The subsequent reform of the Prussian army, including the introduction of a more humane disciplinary code (*Kriegsartikeln*) in 1808 and support, in the same year, for promotion according to talent and education (in reorganized military academies), took place against this background. Some observers, like the Austrian envoy in Breslau, where Prussian military reformers were plotting the coming war against France at the start of 1813, believed that 'the military and the heads of different sects' had 'taken complete control of the reins of government' merely 'under the mask of patriotism'.⁸²

Many officers, confronted by the need to reform existing practices, found themselves in the company of uncomfortable bedfellows. August von Gneisenau, writing to Friedrich Wilhelm III to resign his duties on the Military Reorganization Commission, complained that 'the necessary innovations in the army weigh us down with the hatred of all those who are bound, through habit or interest, to the old things'.⁸³ Ludwig Yorck von Wartenburg – who continued to work with Stein in 1813 in spite of rejoicing at his dismissal, as a chance of controlling 'mad heads' and removing 'nests of vipers', in November 1808 – was in favour both of radical measures such as the arming of a *Landwehr* in 1810–11 and of maintaining preferential noble access to commissions in the army, as an 'older privilege of the class that had borne this duty'.⁸⁴ He also favoured serfdom, 'that so-called slavery of the peasants etc.', opposition to which was 'nothing but philanthropic babbling'.⁸⁵ Other officers, especially those from the *Rheinbund* states

78 C. v. Clausewitz, 'Der Feldzug von 1813 bis zum Waffenstillstand', in Paret, *Cognitive Challenge*, pp. 74–5.

79 Grawert memorandum, 27 September 1807, in Vaupel, *Reorganisation des Preussischen Staates*, part 2, vol. 1, p. 110.

80 Boyen, *Denkwürdigkeiten und Erinnerungen*, vol. 1, pp. 212–13. The general staff was constituted unofficially in 1806 and by law in 1814.

81 *Ibid.*, p. 203.

82 Cited in K. Hornung, *Scharnhorst: Soldat – Reformier – Staatsmann* (Munich, 1997), p. 269.

83 Gneisenau to Friedrich Wilhelm III, 14 January 1808, in Gneisenau, *Ausgewählte militärische Schriften*, p. 91.

84 Cited in Paret, *Yorck and the Era*, pp. 227, 229.

85 *Ibid.*

but also the 'French party' in Prussia, were forced to adapt to the demands and military conventions of their French overlord. Baden's '*Anschluss* with France' in 1805 had necessitated the dispatching of a corps of 3,000 troops to the French army, which was about to attack Austria, provoking several officers to resign and leaving the rank and file, who had been issued with French painted flags just before their departure, feeling 'that they had been sold out to France'.⁸⁶

As a result, 'desertion gained ground in a shocking fashion'.⁸⁷ Keeping their uniforms, which meant that they were occasionally shot at by their allies as 'Prussians', Badenese units subsequently fought alongside French ones, sometimes under direct French command, against Prussia in 1806 (8,000 troops), in Spain in 1808, against the Habsburg monarchy in 1809 (6,000 troops), as part of the Grande Armée in Russia in 1812 (6,766 troops), and against Prussia, Austria, and Russia in 1813.⁸⁸ In disarray, with soldiers 'very inadequately equipped' and an officer corps depending on 'Fremde' – mainly from Kurhessen – 'because of the rapid expansion of our troops in this country', the Badenese army was bound, especially in 1806, to toe the French line.⁸⁹ Although the army had been consolidated between 1807 and 1811, and acquitted itself well in 1809, it was destroyed in 1812, which forced Karlsruhe to rebuild it. 'The impression which I received was not the most favourable,' recalled the grand duke's brother in August 1813: 'The three battalions were composed of raw, very young soldiers who had scarcely been in the service for three months; there was a great lack of officers and, especially, NCOs.'⁹⁰ The cavalry units which joined the Badenese infantry in Saxony had only just received horses and they 'could barely stay on them', presenting 'a pitiful picture' to their peers.⁹¹ The same was true of other German armies.⁹²

The tutelage rather than enmity of France in many German lands makes it difficult to compare the metamorphosis of the armies of the medium-sized and smaller *Rheinbund* states with that of Prussia or the Habsburg monarchy. There were attempts, before 1806, to awaken patriotic sentiments in newly expanded states such as Baden, Württemberg, and Bavaria, of which laws of recruitment to the army were part. In Karlsruhe a decree of 23 March 1804, though perpetuating many exemptions, restated subjects' duty to serve in the militia and defined recruiting cantons along Prussian lines. A cadet school for officers was established in Ludwigsburg the following year. In Stuttgart the law of 1803, which had first mooted general conscription, was replaced by a law on 6 August 1806 which purported to bring such conscription into effect, albeit with familiar exclusions for the nobility, officials, state industries, well-to-do merchants, and only sons.

86 Wilhelm v. Baden, *Denkwürdigkeiten* (Heidelberg, 1906), ed. K. Obser, vol. 1, p. 32.

87 *Ibid.*

88 *Ibid.*, pp. 32–275. See also T. v. Barsewisch, *Geschichte des Grossherzoglich Badischen Leib-Grenadier-Regiments 1803–1871* (Karlsruhe, 1893), vol. 1; W. Meier, *Erinnerungen aus den Feldzügen 1806 bis 1815* (Karlsruhe, 1854).

89 Baden, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, pp. 41, 48.

90 *Ibid.*, p. 232.

91 *Ibid.*, p. 234.

92 On the difficulties of re-establishing and training an army during wartime in Bavaria, see Carl Philipp von Wrede, 9 November 1812, cited in Murken, *Bayerische Soldaten*, p. 143.

Having improved the system for replacing troops and having carried out manoeuvres in 1806, King Friedrich of Württemberg was able to raise an army of 8,000 troops and 3,500 reserves for the war against Prussia in the autumn of 1806 with little difficulty. As his army departed for Saxony, the monarch made an emphatic appeal for it to honour its king and fatherland.⁹³ In Munich, Max Joseph's call for support arguably derived from more reliable sources, drawing on anti-Austrian sentiment and popular acclamation, which had been evident at the time of his coronation as the first King of Bavaria on 1 January 1806.⁹⁴ The 'General Reglement on the Expansion of the Electorate's Army' on 30 April 1804 had brought to an end Bavaria's reliance on mercenaries. It was supplemented by the establishment of military cantons on 7 January 1805 and a declaration that it was the duty of every fit male subject between 16 and 40 years of age to serve in the military. Substitutions were still allowed and exemptions persisted, but the exclusion of foreigners and a formal oath to the elector had created a fundamentally new conception of a specifically 'Bavarian' army.⁹⁵

The idea of 'patriotic' or 'state' armies rather than the mercenary standing armies of princes could initially be held to be compatible with the close and one-sided alliances of the various states with France, not least because Napoleon Bonaparte enjoyed considerable support in southern and central Germany as a harbinger of peace and an enemy of the old order.⁹⁶ Over time, however, the Napoleonic Wars seemed to sever the connection between the states' armies and Bavarian, Saxon, Swabian, or Badenese patriotism.⁹⁷ The newly anointed monarchs and dukes of the Confederation of the Rhine, with their expanding territories and growing populations, remained beholden to the French emperor. As early as 1799 Max Joseph, on becoming elector, had professed his loyalty to the Directory, partly to expel occupying Austrian forces, massing to attack France, and partly as a scion – and former Duke of Zweibrücken – of the western German outpost of the

93 Sauer, *Napoleons Adler*, pp. 112–13.

94 F. Kramer, 'Bayerns Erhebung zum Königreich', *Zeitschrift für bayerische Landesgeschichte* LXVIII (2005), pp. 815–34. On anti-Austrian feeling in Bavaria, see Junkelmann, *Napoleon und Bayern*, p. 55.

95 Murken, *Bayerische Soldaten*, p. 28.

96 Planert, *Mythos vom Befreiungskrieg*, pp. 544–56; idem, 'From Collaboration to Resistance: Politics, Experience and Memory of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in Southern Germany', *Central European History* XXXIX (2006), pp. 681–6. See also E. Weis, 'Die ausenpolitischen Reaktionen der deutschen Staaten auf die französische Hegemonialpolitik: zwischen Widerstand und Anpassung', in K.O. Aretin and G.A. Ritter, eds, *Historismus und modern Geschichtswissenschaft* (Stuttgart, 1987), pp. 185–200; Junkelmann, *Napoleon und Bayern*; V. Press, 'Warum gab es keine deutsche Revolution? Deutschland und das revolutionäre Deutschland', in D. Langewiesche, ed., *Revolution und Krieg* (Paderborn, 1989), pp. 67–86.

97 This is not to say that patriotism disappeared completely in the *Rheinbund* armies, but that it diminished. For one example of persisting patriotism even in the new creation of the Kingdom of Westphalia, ruled by Jérôme Bonaparte, see H.O. Wesemann, ed., *Kanonier des Kaisers: Kriegstagebuch des Heinrich Wesemann 1808–1814* (Cologne, 1971), pp. 90–1: 'It is in no way our intention to fight for Napoleon's affair, but we wanted to remain true to our oath to take up arms only for our fatherland.'

Palatinate, which had provided Bavaria with its ruling dynasty in 1777: 'I was born in France, I beg you to take me for a Frenchman ... After every victory of the French army I have felt myself to be a Frenchman.'⁹⁸ By 1806, though, the new king was already fulminating against his envoy in Paris, who had been forced by the French, 'against his instructions', to sign too compromising a set of acts of confederation. 'If he had come within my sight, I would have put a bullet in his head,' threatened the monarch: 'The evil has happened. It is no longer to be prevented, notably because of the peace with Russia and because we have 150,000 Frenchmen in the country.'⁹⁹

The war of 1809 against the Habsburg monarchy divided the Bavarian population, with some Catholics supporting Vienna, and it destroyed the Bavarian army, with its best division losing 3,600 soldiers, or 60 per cent of its total, at Wagram on 5–6 July 1809 – the largest battle up to that point, involving 340,000 combatants.¹⁰⁰ The invasion of Russia in 1812 proved much worse, with Bavarian divisions split up and some regiments put under direct French command, which led the first minister, Maximilian von Montgelas, to complain of 'the most damaging influence' of the 'separation' on 'the morale of troops used to serving together'.¹⁰¹ The same troops had then marched all the way to Moscow and back again, with about 9 per cent of soldiers, or 3,200 out of 35,799, returning to Bavaria alive. 'The campaign which has just finished has cost the army of the king 30,000 men, of which enemy fire has killed the smaller part,' wrote Montgelas in February 1813: 'The greater part has succumbed to the cold, to hunger, and to the misery which is to be found at the hands of the enemy.'¹⁰² King Max Joseph complained to Napoleon that the monarchy was barely able to continue: 'It is not the vertigo and the discontentment of the people, it is the exhaustion of the resources of the government which is giving me serious cause for concern.'¹⁰³ Nevertheless, he had little choice, given his – and his *Rheinbund* neighbours' – earlier decisions, but to remain in the French camp until the eve of the battle of Leipzig in October 1813.¹⁰⁴

Baden and Württemberg were in a weaker position than Bavaria. The government in Karlsruhe had had to build an army virtually from scratch after the turn of the century, having gone to war against Prussia in 1806 with a cavalry without horses and an infantry with looted guns and the wrong sort of ammunition.¹⁰⁵ On grounds

98 Junkelmann, *Napoleon und Bayern*, p. 51.

99 *Ibid.*, p. 147.

100 Planert, *Mythos vom Befreiungskrieg*, pp. 556–72.

101 R. Braun, 'Die Bayern in Russland', in H. Glaser, ed., *Krone und Verfassung: König Max I. Joseph und der neue Staat, 1799–1825* (Munich, 1980), pp. 260–71. For Montgelas, see Murken, *Bayerische Soldaten*, p. 31.

102 Montgelas to Mercy-Argenteau, 18 February 1813, in Murken, *Bayerische Soldaten*, p. 40. See also the first-hand accounts of J. Maillinger, 'Tagebuch', in Bayerisches Kriegsarchiv, ed., *Darstellungen aus der bayerischen Kriegs- und Heeresgeschichte* (Munich, 1912), vol. 21; Mändler, *Erinnerungen aus meinen Feldzüge*.

103 Max Joseph to Napoleon, 3 March 1813, in Murken, *Bayerische Soldaten*, p. 41.

104 It is worth noting that Montgelas and others tried to convince the king to distance himself from Napoleon earlier in 1813: E. Weis, *Montgelas, 1759–1838* (Munich, 2005), vol. 2, pp. 675–91.

105 Sauer, *Napoleons Adler*, p. 113.

of ‘cleanliness and comfort’, soldiers were no longer required to wear – and powder – wigs.¹⁰⁶ Crown Prince Karl, who had shortly beforehand been forced into a marriage with Napoleon’s adopted daughter Stéphanie de Beauharnais, had been put in charge of the Badenese forces, but he had been heavily criticized by the French and distanced from the troops. Even his own subordinate officer, Valentin von Harrant, had avowed that ‘it would have been better, on the whole, if the prince had stayed at home’.¹⁰⁷ By comparison with that of its western neighbour, Württemberg’s army had performed well in both 1806 and 1809, but it had done so under the direct command of the French general Dominique Vandamme against the wishes of King Friedrich, since it had been deemed too small to stand on its own.¹⁰⁸

In 1812, in order to avoid the imposition of another French general, Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm was chosen by the monarch to command the state’s contingent, but he was soon being accused by Napoleon, whom – his father was sure – he hated, of fomenting revolt. King Friedrich wrote to caution him that ‘I was put in a position to found the state, of which you should one day be the ruler, by him [Napoleon] alone.’¹⁰⁹ In a similar fashion, 20-year-old Graf Wilhelm von Hochberg, the grand duke’s younger brother, was put in charge of Badenese troops in 1812, yet his presence did not prevent the contingent being incorporated into the Third Army Corps under Marshal Michel Ney. Only 800–1,000 soldiers from Baden’s contingent of 7,166 and 387 or so from Württemberg’s force of 15,800 returned from Russia, contradicting, in the most damaging way, King Friedrich’s earlier prediction, in 1809, that ‘We are with Caesar, and everything will go well.’¹¹⁰ Although the monarch was aware, as he wrote to his foreign minister at the start of 1813, that ‘displeasure’ was increasing daily in Stuttgart and in the countryside ‘with everything that is French’, and that ‘calls to the people are being made, in different places, ... in which a freeing from the yoke with the help of Austria is spoken of’, he was obliged to continue to assure Napoleon, despite the difficulties which he encountered in raising a new army for the campaign of 1813, that he had done everything possible to fulfil his treaty obligations to France over the previous eight years.¹¹¹ Grand Duke Karl of Baden was even more explicit, as he wrote to Napoleon – his father-in-law – in January 1813: ‘My greatest ambition consists, as a consequence of my eagerness and my unchanging subjection, in gaining the support of Your Majesty.’¹¹² A month later he went on:

106 Ibid., p. 114.

107 Cited *ibid.*, p. 115.

108 For good primary accounts, see C. v. Martens, *Vor fünfzig Jahren* (Stuttgart, 1863), and B. Hildebrand, ed., *1812: Drei Schwaben unter Napoleon. Russlandberichte eines Infanteristen, eines Leutnants, eines Generals* (Aalen, 1967).

109 Sauer, *Napoleons Adler*, p. 264. See also *idem*, *Der schwäbische Zar: Friedrich, Württembergs erster König* (Stuttgart, 1984).

110 Friedrich to his daughter, 19 March 1809, in Sauer, *Napoleons Adler*, p. 125. For the numbers, see S. Fiedler, *Grundriss der Militär- und Kriegsgeschichte: das Zeitalter der Französischen Revolution und Napoleons* (Munich, 1976), vol. 2, pp. 224–5.

111 Sauer, *Napoleons Adler*, pp. 268, 274.

112 Karl to Napoleon, 4 January 1813, *ibid.*, p. 275.

I, who am bound by the sweetest and holiest ties to the great fortune of Your Majesty and of the house founded by you, am fully convinced of the necessity that all the allied states will also, for their part, make those efforts which the circumstances demand of them.¹¹³

It was more and more difficult for such rulers and their governments, confronted by popular scepticism and resistance, to pretend that their armies had a patriotic purpose.

The transfer of the states and armies of the Confederation of the Rhine to the Coalition against Napoleon in the autumn of 1813 proved to be painful for many of the participants, particularly officers and officials, and it was rarely accompanied by expressions of patriotic or 'German' feeling. Wilhelm, the commander of the Badenese contingent still trapped in Leipzig in mid-October, gave a vivid account of the travails of the remaining regimes allied to France. Having been told by Napoleon, whose forces had left the city on 19 October, that he no longer enjoyed French protection, the King of Saxony had already begun to negotiate with the Crown Prince of Sweden, who was acting on behalf of the Coalition, when he heard a 'vivat' outside the building in which the talks were taking place. Thinking that it might be for Napoleon, the monarch went into the square to witness a crowd rejoicing at the arrival of Tsar Alexander: 'With sadness', recorded Wilhelm, 'I noticed how no one made way for the worthy old gentleman, who was now abandoned by everyone, after fortune had turned against him.'¹¹⁴ The tsar, ignorant of the King of Saxony's presence, acknowledged the crowd and left the square with the crown prince, who had not bothered to tell him of the Saxon monarch's plight. 'I shall never forget the impressions which this day left me with,' wrote the later Margrave of Baden, having observed the Habsburg Kaiser ride into the market square, to a vivat from the Badenese troops, 'many of whom were former [Austrian] subjects':

In the morning, I saw Emperor Napoleon and his army, made up of so many different parts, withdraw, and now I was confronted by the same colourful picture of diverse nations and peoples (*Völkerschaften*), as I viewed the allied army.¹¹⁵

Cut off from the French forces but without orders to switch sides from Karlsruhe, 'whose situation' was 'very difficult because of the proximity of the French border', Wilhelm surrendered and was taken prisoner by the Prussian army, which also took control of the Badenese soldiers.¹¹⁶ On 21 October he had an audience with the King of Prussia, who assured him that he understood 'the painful situation of the grand duke fully and [understood] that other states, too, [had] recently been in the same position, and he would, therefore, ensure that all possible allowances were made'.¹¹⁷

On returning to Baden in December 1813, Wilhelm found that 'the mood' was an 'unusual' one:

113 Ibid.

114 Baden, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, vol. 1, p. 258.

115 Ibid.

116 Ibid., p. 261.

117 Ibid.

One was ill-disposed to anything French in its entirety, but people did not really trust themselves to voice their opinion, partly out of fear of a further turn in the fortunes of war, partly out of shame in front of the Grand Duchess. Everything which had to take place did so, therefore, but without enthusiasm for the so-called German business.¹¹⁸

The government and army of Württemberg were in a similar predicament, caught after 8 October, as King Friedrich explained in a letter to Napoleon, between an advancing Bavarian and Austrian army and a retreating French one. Friedrich's decision to declare his state's neutrality did not mean, he assured the emperor, that his feelings had changed, 'but my steps have to be guided by unchangeable necessities'.¹¹⁹ As in Baden, the king's decision seems to have produced mixed feelings among Württemberg's soldiers and to have met with few public expressions of patriotic sentiment, even though the very contortions of the governments of the *Rheinbund* states betrayed a perceived need, which occasioned increasing discomfort, to cast their participation in the Napoleonic Wars in a patriotic light. The principal changes had been forced on the German states, most of which had been required to fit into Napoleon's military system. In former ecclesiastical territories, small principalities, and city states, this meant the imposition of military service for the first time.¹²⁰ The next section assesses the extent to which they, along with the larger German states, managed to reform and expand their armies, with – potentially, at least – profound consequences for the place of the military in the German lands.

III. The Levée en Masse and Conscription

The French levée en masse challenged contemporary assumptions about warfare. Although it failed to recruit more than half the cohort – even in 1794 – and later was restricted by Napoleon through the reintroduction of 'substitution' and preferment for the propertied classes, the system had allowed the mobilization of 750,000–800,000 men (1794), after the National Convention had introduced conscription for an additional 300,000 soldiers in February 1793, of whom about 75,000 were sent to fight in the Vendée. The French army in 1789 had numbered 180,000, but it had since shrunk as a result of desertion, the departure of foreign troops, and the flight of 60 per cent of active officers – 6,000 – into exile by the end of 1791.

The 80,000 or so Prussians, Austrians, Hessians, and émigrés who had crossed the French border in mid-August 1792 had met little resistance, and took the fortress of Verdun, the last major defence before Paris, on 2 September. The initial plan, drafted in Potsdam in May, had been for a force of 42,000 Prussians to enter France through Luxembourg, with 56,000 Austrians entering through Belgium on its right flank, and about 20,000 Austrians attacking from the Breisgau – of a total force there of 50,000 – on its left flank. It had been scaled down as a consequence of internal squabbling, with Vienna and Berlin not wanting to do the other's bidding, but also because of the

118 Ibid., p. 273.

119 Sauer, *Napoleons Adler*, p. 278. Also, O. Gerhardt, *Die Württemberger im deutschen Befreiungskampf 1813–1815* (Stuttgart, 1938), p. 85.

120 Planert, 'Innovation or Evolution?', p. 75.

Coalition's confidence that a smaller army would suffice to capture French fortresses, which was the military planners' main concern. The allies were shocked, therefore, to be stopped by a superior number of French troops under General Charles François Dumouriez – 64,000, including reserves, against the allies' 34,000, depleted by dysentery – at Valmy on 20 September.¹²¹ As Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who witnessed the battle, recorded at a much later date, 'the French could not be shifted':

The greatest consternation spread through the army. Only that morning all they had had in mind was skewering the French and eating them for breakfast. Indeed, it was this unconditional confidence in this army and its commander [the Duke of Braunschweig] which had seduced me into joining this perilous expedition. But now everyone kept his own counsel, did not meet the eyes of his comrades, and if he did give tongue, it was only to curse or complain.¹²²

Whether or not Goethe's claim that he had foreseen the beginning of 'a new epoch in the history of the world' was coloured by later events, Valmy at once reversed the allied advance and demonstrated the effectiveness of the rapidly recruited French volunteers, who had been described by *The Times* as 'a very motley group', with 'almost as many women as men, many without arms, and [with] very little provision'.¹²³ Some 100,000 such volunteers had already reached the front by the spring of 1792, when war had been declared.¹²⁴ The French army, having swollen to approximately 450,000 by autumn of 1792, fell to 350,000 by the start of 1793, from whom a total of about 220,000 were 'effectives'.¹²⁵ Such forces far outnumbered those of the Coalition.

The allies quickly recognized the value of France's numerical superiority, especially when combined with the patriotism of its soldiers, even if many allied leaders refused to accept the consequences of French levies and conscription.¹²⁶ A Prussian observer reported from Valmy:

The volunteers were not as straight as a die, as were the Prussians, and were not as polished, well-trained or skilled in handling a gun or marching in step; nor did they know how to tighten their belts around their tunics as the Prussians did, yet they were devoted to the cause they served in body and soul. Nearly all those I encountered at that time knew for whom and for what they were fighting and declared that they were ready to die for the good of their *patrie*.¹²⁷

121 Blanning, *French Revolutionary Wars*, pp. 73–9. On the unpreparedness of the Hessian troops in 1794, see C.C. Zimmermann, *Geschichte des 1. Grossherzoglich Hessischen Dragoner-Regiments* (Darmstadt, 1878), p. 27.

122 J.W. v. Goethe, 'Campagne in Frankreich' (1819–22), in Blanning, *French Revolutionary Wars*, p. 78.

123 *The Times*, 10 September 1792, in Bell, *First Total War*, p. 131.

124 Blanning, *French Revolutionary Wars*, p. 85.

125 The figures are inevitably estimates, because of the discrepancy between numbers on paper and in the field: Blanning, *Pursuit of Glory*, p. 627.

126 See, for instance, F. v. Varnbuler, *Beitrag zur Geschichte des Feldzugs vom Jahr 1796 in besonderer Rücksicht auf das schwäbische Korps* (Altona, 1797).

127 Cited in Blanning, *French Revolutionary Wars*, p. 87.

The poor training and equipment of French troops, the difficulties of integrating volunteers in the standing army of the *ancien régime* and of coordinating new divisions – usually only 5,000 or so strong instead of the intended 15,000 – meant that revolutionary armies often lost when their numbers were equal, but they won when they enjoyed a numerical advantage, which they regularly did. As a consequence of poor training and inexperience, revolutionary armies were less consistently victorious than Napoleonic ones, losing at Neerwinden in March 1792, Mainz in July 1793, and Kaiserslautern three times in 1793–4, but also – critically – winning at Valmy, Jemappes in November 1792, and Fleurus in June 1794, so that France's wars were, after 1792, conducted abroad rather than at home. Wilhelm, one of the margrave's sons, recounted that in the border region of Baden the 1790s had been characterized by flight from, and fear of, approaching armies, usually – in 1793, 1796, and 1799 – French ones.¹²⁸ The early threat of defeat in 1792 seemed to have galvanized the French population and its revolutionary government, altering war planners' expectations of combat. In 1797 Scharnhorst wrote:

The terrible position the French found themselves in, surrounded by several armies which sought (or so they believed) to enslave and condemn them to eternal misery, inspired the soldier with courage, induced the citizen to make voluntary sacrifices, gathered supplies for the army and attracted the civilian population to the colours.¹²⁹

In a defensive and patriotic war, France had been able to recruit greater numbers of troops than its opponents, which – despite the initial scepticism of allied commanders – had gone on to make a decisive difference in the Revolutionary Wars. 'Reduced to the defensive, we are continually harassed on two flanks of our positions in Flanders and on the Sambre by innumerable hordes who are in fact constantly defeated and repulsed,' lamented the Austrian leader Franz Maria von Thugut in 1794, 'but our army is vastly weakened by these partial victories while the enemy repairs its losses with the greatest ease.'¹³⁰ Although Bonaparte's later boast that he could afford 30,000 casualties per battle was an exaggeration, with the republican army's notional strength of 434,235 in 1799 concealing a deployable force of 181,000 once allied, interior, expeditionary, and absent troops had been subtracted, France certainly proved able in the 1790s and 1800s to field and replace a larger number of soldiers than its enemies.

German states' reactions to the *levée en masse* were tardy and disparate.¹³¹ Prussia had ended its war with France through the Peace of Basle on 16 May 1795 and had done little to reform its army before defeat at Jena and Auerstädt in 1806. The majority of

128 Baden, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, vol. 1, pp. 2–15. Given Wilhelm's age – he was born in 1792 – this early account was clearly influenced by other family sources.

129 G. v. Scharnhorst, 'Entwicklung der allgemeinen Ursachen des Glücks der Franzosen in den Revolutionskriegen', *Neues militairisches Journal* VIII (1797): the translation here is from Blanning, *Pursuit of Glory*, p. 640.

130 K.A. Roider, *Baron Thugut and Austria's Response to the French Revolution* (Princeton, 1987), pp. 153–4.

131 See R. Wohlfeil, *Vom stehenden Heer des Absolutismus zur Allgemeinen Wehrpflicht 1789–1814* (Munich, 1979).

Table 3. Strengths of German armies during the eighteenth century.

Year	Austria	Prussia	Saxony	Hanover	Palatinate	Bavaria
1702	110,000	26,000	27,000	18,900	18,000	27,000
1726	113,000	60,000	15,000	14,400	8,540	4,950
1740	108,000	81,000	27,800	22,700	8,390	9,000
1744	161,000	132,000	37,400	26,100	10,730	19,500
1750	150,000	137,000	22,320	21,940	12,500	6,290
1762	150,000	120,000	12,100	37,000	12,000	9,000
1765	170,000	150,000	26,620	14,000	11,590	8,000
1777	220,000	158,000	21,840	21,000	11,850	8,000
1790	281,850	200,000	22,900	17,000		15,750 ^a

^aThe Elector of Bavaria inherited the Palatinate at the end of December 1777.

Source: T.C.W. Blanning, *The Pursuit of Glory: The Five Revolutions That Made Modern Europe, 1648–1815* (London, 2007), p. 608.

middling and small states, although formally at war under the aegis of the Holy Roman Empire with its contingent of 40,000, continued to maintain smaller armies in the 1790s than they had had in 1700 (Table 3). Attempts to introduce conscription and to organize militias failed.¹³² Principalities such as the electorates of Mainz and Cologne, with their ‘armies’ of 3,000 and 1,700 respectively, were mocked by Prussian observers for providing soldiers suitable merely for accompanying Corpus Christi processions.¹³³ Vienna’s main response to France before defeat at Austerlitz on 2 December 1805, given that the cantonal system introduced by Joseph II in 1786 remained a dead letter because of exemptions (clerics, nobles, notables, officials, transport workers, miners, workers in manufacturing, artisans and apprentices, peasants owning land), was to pressure St Petersburg to enter the war and to redeploy its existing forces.¹³⁴ Its hopes of Russian support were dashed when the tsarina, Catherine, who had just agreed to enter the conflict, died in 1796. In December that year Foreign Minister Thugut wrote to Franz de Colloredo-Waldsee, the *Kabinettsminister* since 1792:

Your Excellency can easily sense the incalculable consequences that could result from this fatal event, and in what embarrassment we might find ourselves in the midst of the great changes that might result: without an army, without finances, and with all of the internal disorder in the bureaucracy.¹³⁵

132 Rowe, *From Reich to State*, p. 161. On militias, see Planert, ‘Innovation or Evolution?’, p. 74.

133 Rowe, *From Reich to State*, p. 161. See also Wilhelm von Eberhardt’s mockery of the ‘Ländchen’ of Anhalt in M. v. Eberhardt, ed., *Aus Preussens schwerer Zeit: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen meines Urgrossvaters und Grossvaters* (Berlin, 1907), p. 127.

134 Planert, *Mythos vom Befreiungskrieg*, p. 390.

135 F.M. v. Thugut to F. de Colloredo-Waldsee, 10 December 1796, in Roider, *Baron Thugut*, p. 228.

Russia entered the war on 1 March 1799, after the formation of the Second Coalition in December 1798, too late to prevent the humiliating defeat of Austria in northern Italy in 1796–7. Left on its own in 1796, the Habsburg monarchy attempted not to recruit more troops, but to move 25,000 of Field Marshal Dagobert Sigismund Wurmser's troops from Germany to Italy in order to stop Bonaparte's and Masséna's advance. When French forces continued to move across northern Italy, in spite of reverses, the most common Austrian retort, lamented Thugut, was 'the cry of all our marshals and the War Ministry that all is lost, that we are absolutely at the end of our rope, and that all that remains for us to do is to surrender'.¹³⁶ The foreign minister was more optimistic when Austria went back to war in 1799, after losing its Italian territories through the Treaty of Campo Formio (1797), but his feelings were not shared, in the absence of increased recruitment and army reform, by military commanders, as Karl von Schwarzenberg confided to his wife from the army's headquarters during a ceasefire in 1800: 'I still hope that we are not so utterly senseless as to start [fighting] again, especially with our means in even worse condition than at the time we felt compelled to renew a less than honourable armistice.'¹³⁷ Little over one month later, on 3 December 1800, Habsburg forces – under the command of an 18-year-old Archduke Johann, after Archduke Karl had refused to countenance what he predicted would be the inevitable destruction of the army – were routed at the battle of Hohenlinden, and Austria was compelled to sue for peace.

Austrian commanders were forced to adapt to French reforms, most notably by creating a larger army, in spite of the near bankruptcy of the Habsburg state. Attempts to increase recruitment during the 'first reform period' (1801–5) under Archduke Karl – who had been given overall command of the army, at 29 years of age, after Austria's defeat at Hohenlinden – had met with only limited success, with the Hungarian Diet rejecting the introduction of conscription in 1802 and agreeing to increase its contingent in the standing army to 63,264, compared to 52,000 in 1798, for a period of three years. The new conscription law of 25 October 1804 regulated recruitment by appointing permanent officers in each district, but it contained many exemptions and applied merely to the Austrian lands, except the Tyrol, and to Bohemia and Galicia. No popular levy, reported one of the archduke's advisers, whether called a

militia, Landsturm, volunteers, Cerniden, insurrectio, or fencibles, in fact any armed force if it is not composed of trained troops, has any more hope of standing against our enemy than the papal soldiers or those of Cardinal Buffo – even if it were commanded by a Xenophon, Alexander, Turenne, Eugene, Montecuccoli, Condé, Friedrich or Bonaparte.¹³⁸

As a consequence, Vienna failed in 1805 to muster the 320,000 troops pledged in its negotiations with London, in return for £400,000 per annum and a subsidy to defray the

136 Thugut to Colloredo, 21 July 1796, *ibid.*, p. 213.

137 K. v. Schwarzenberg to his wife, 23 October 1800, *ibid.*, p. 357.

138 *Ibid.*, p. 73. Broers, 'Concept of "Total War"', p. 266, maintains that Francis I 'would never consent to introducing conscription', presumably meaning that the *Konskriptions- und Rekrutierungspatent* of 1805 contained many exemptions. In the process, he reveals the confusion that has surrounded the use of such terms, at the time and since.

costs of mobilization – payments which were never made because of the speed of Austria's defeat. Karl Leiberich von Mack, having become de facto commander of Habsburg forces in 1805 after promising Emperor Franz I the quick mobilization of a large army, was unable to provide the 89,000 troops in Bavaria, 53,000 in Vorarlberg, and 142,000 in Italy envisaged in the joint Russian and Austrian plan of 16 July: the main army in Italy, under Karl, numbered 95,000 and the army in Germany about half that initially, with further troops arriving from Italy and Switzerland. The chief of the quartermaster general staff, admittedly acting in support of Karl's effort to avoid war, estimated that the Austrian army could count on 60,000 fewer infantry and 20,000 fewer cavalry than at the start of its last campaign.

The measures introduced by Karl during the 'second reform period' (1806–9) remedied such deficits, with the introduction by decree of two reserve battalions per line regiment on 12 May 1808, which were to be manned by previously unneeded 'conscripts', and the creation of a *Landwehr* by imperial patent on 9 June 1808, which made service compulsory for all men aged between 18 and 45, except for a smaller number of exemptions. Although the anticipated 180,000 Austrian and 50,000 Hungarian troops never materialized, *Landwehr* companies did assemble, with some battalions fighting alongside the regiments of the regular army in 1809. Along with the fuller use of conscription, the creation of reserves and a larger contingent from Hungary, which provided an extra 20,000 soldiers, the establishment of the *Landwehr* allowed the monarchy to form a battlefield force of 283,401 and a sedentary contingent of 310,915 in 1809 (Table 4). After defeat at Wagram, Austria's force on the rolls fell to 259,918, with 171,066 immediately available. By early 1812 the army had been 'so extremely reduced and what remains of it is so badly paid, clothed and equipped that 60,000 men would be the most that the Government could at the present employ on active service', wrote the British agent in Vienna, John Harcourt King.¹³⁹ Yet the laws of conscription for the regular army, reserves, and *Landwehr* all remained in place, so that the Habsburg army could reconstitute itself in 1813 after Karl von Schwarzenberg had declared the neutrality of the Austrian corps on 30 January, having been cut off – with 7,000 killed in battle and 4,000 dying of illness or exposure to the cold – from the retreating Grande Armée in Poland. With Clemens von Metternich, the *Staatsminister* and foreign minister since 1809, wishing to come to terms with Paris and trying to balance the twin threats of Russia and France, Vienna maintained its neutrality until 27 June, when it joined Prussia, Russia, and Sweden, and formally entered the war on 12 August 1813. In the meantime, it called up its conscripts from January onwards, reservists on 22 June, and the *Landwehr* on 6 July, assembling a total force of 479,000, with 298,000 combatants by the end of August. The monarchy eventually mobilized a total of 568,000 troops, making it the 'first power' of the Coalition, in Metternich's view, with the other powers 'auxiliaries'.¹⁴⁰

The territories annexed by France and the states of the Confederation of the Rhine were forced to expand their armies before Austria or Prussia. The revolutionary authorities, which controlled the left bank of the Rhine from the end of 1794 onwards, had

139 G.E. Rothenberg, *Napoleon's Great Adversaries: The Archduke Charles and the Austrian Army, 1792–1814* (Bloomington, IN, 1982), p. 175.

140 *Ibid.*, p. 180. See also O. Regele, *Feldmarschall Radetzky* (Vienna, 1957), p. 118.

Table 4. Strength of Habsburg armed forces, 1809.

	Troop numbers
Field forces	
Line infantry	181,109
9 <i>Jäger</i> battalions	10,200
34 <i>Grenzer</i> battalions	38,525
Reinforcements for third battalions	21,960
Light and heavy cavalry	31,697
	283,491
Sedentary troops	
Depot battalions	73,200
First reserve of 46 German regiments	27,600
Second reserve of 46 German regiments	32,200
Third battalion of <i>Grenzer</i> regiments	20,400
<i>Landwehr</i>	152,159
Reserve cavalry squadrons	5,356
	310,915
Overall total	594,406

Source: Adapted from G.E. Rothenberg, *Napoleon's Great Adversaries: The Archduke Charles and the Austrian Army, 1792–1814* (Bloomington, IN, 1982), p. 126.

elected not to impose conscription on the 'liberated' Rhinelanders and they had been unsuccessful in attracting volunteers, with Mont-Tonnerre (containing Mainz, Worms, and Speyer) furnishing a mere 57 recruits in the first half of 1799, for instance, out of a population of 400,000. The attempt to establish a 'Legion of North Franks' in July 1799 was little more effective, counting approximately 2,000 volunteers at its height, including Belgians and others, and experiencing 1,800 desertions.¹⁴¹ Formal annexation after the Peace of Lunéville (1801), however, permitted the introduction of conscription in 1802 and a rapid increase in recruitment in the Rhineland, with all those aged between 20 and 25 years classified as 'conscripts'. By 1810 the Rhineland was providing 5,554 conscripts per year, which was 42 per cent higher than the average for France as a whole, and amounted to 80,000 soldiers between 1802 and 1815 from a population of 1.6 million, or about 30 per cent of the eligible age group, rising to almost 60 per cent in 1813.¹⁴²

The states of the *Rheinbund* experienced a similar fate after 1806, and went on to contribute approximately 190,000 troops in 1812 to Napoleon's armies.¹⁴³ In the 1790s officials of the Reich had noted, in Württemberg and elsewhere, that 'the proclivity of subjects against the institution of a land's militia' was 'so great that they do not hesitate to voice their view openly'.¹⁴⁴ Yet such subjects were obliged to comply with the gradual

141 Rowe, *From Reich to State*, pp. 163–5.

142 *Ibid.*, p. 168.

143 The figures rose from 63,000 in 1806 and 119,000 in 1809: Blanning, *Pursuit of Glory*, p. 668.

introduction of conscription in the 1800s. In Baden, conscription for all those up to 30 years of age replaced a cantonal system in 1808–9, increasing the state's contingent from 6,550 to 8,000, then to 10,000 men; a new conscription law in July 1812 ended most exemptions – nobles, civil servants, the educated, and commercial middle classes – in order to meet French demands for troops during the Russian and German wars in 1812–13, at the end of which the Badenese contingent was 16,000, supplemented by 10,000 men in the *Landwehr*, which had been formed in 1813 to match similar measures in Prussia.¹⁴⁵ Württemberg was asked to supply France with 6,300 soldiers by the terms of Friedrich's alliance with Napoleon in October 1805, and 12,000 troops, from an expanded territory and population, on entry into the *Rheinbund* in 1806, which obliged the government to tighten the recruitment law of 1803, which had specified for the first time that all male subjects had a duty to serve in the army. Those liable for military service – eight years in the infantry, twelve in the cavalry during wartime – were not allowed to leave Württemberg, and in the case of evasion were stripped of political and legal rights, including the right of inheritance. Fathers could be punished in the absence of their sons. For its part, Bavaria had to provide 30,000 soldiers – double the number of its troops in 1790 – for the French army as a condition of entering the Confederation of the Rhine, a figure that rose to 62,000 men in arms by 1809. Some 33,000 Bavarian troops were dispatched to the Grande Armée in 1812, of whom only 3,000 returned, and a further 30,000 had to be found by the summer of 1813 in order to help Napoleon stop the advance of Prussia, Russia, and Austria in Saxony. Such levies went well beyond Napoleon's pledge, over dinner with the Grand Duke of Baden in 1806, to make 'the princes learn to defend their own lands'.¹⁴⁶

Partly because of its long military tradition, which impressed even Napoleon 'with the ancient glory' of its army in Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand's estimation, Prussia had done little to expand its forces during the years of peace after 1795 in order to meet the French challenge.¹⁴⁷ With Saxony – counting 20,000 troops – as its sole ally, the Hohenzollern monarchy went to war in 1806 with an army of 245,000 men, half of them foreign mercenaries, and a field army of only 140,000, once Anton Wilhelm von L'Estocq's defensive contingent in East Prussia and garrison and depot troops were deducted.¹⁴⁸ The Napoleonic army, re-formed in the years of relative peace between 1801 and 1803, consisted of 265 infantry battalions, 322 cavalry squadrons, and 202 batteries of artillery, or about 300,000 men, supplemented by 63,000 troops from the states of the *Rheinbund*.¹⁴⁹ Some 160,000 French troops advanced to Saxony from Bayreuth and Bamberg in three columns in early October 1806. By 1807, after the remnants of the Prussian army had retreated to East Prussia to join the two Russian armies – with 90,000

144 Cited in Planert, *Mythos vom Befreiungskrieg*, pp. 400–1.

145 Ibid., pp. 409–19; Sauer, *Napoleons Adler*, pp. 110–33, 255–306.

146 Baden, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, vol. 1, p. 36.

147 M.V. Leggiere, 'From Berlin to Leipzig: Napoleon's Gamble in North Germany, 1813', *Journal of Military History* LXVII (2003), p. 82.

148 G.E. Rothenberg, *The Napoleonic Wars* (London, 1999), p. 96.

149 C. Esdaile, *Napoleon's Wars: An International History* (London, 2007), p. 164.

troops in total – reconstituted from the defeated Russo-Austrian forces of Austerlitz (2 December 1805), the French army of observation in Germany and the Grande Armée in Poland, including foreign troops, numbered 400,000, from a European total of 600,000.¹⁵⁰ Although many Prussian officers had forecast victory in 1806, with Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher promising ‘One successful battle, and allies, money and supplies are ours from every corner of Europe,’ Napoleon himself could barely believe in September that Berlin would declare war, given the balance of forces:

The idea that Prussia could take me on single-handed is too absurd to merit discussion ... She will go on acting as she has acted – arming today, disarming tomorrow, standing by, sword in hand, while the battle is fought, and then making terms with the victor.¹⁵¹

The actual disposition of forces on the battlefields of Jena and Auerstädt on 14 October was more equal than the total figures would suggest, with Napoleon commanding 55,600 at the former – with a further 40,300 ready to join in the early afternoon – against Hohenlohe’s 40,000 men, and with Louis Nicolas Davout leading a corps of 27,300 against Braunschweig’s 50,000 retreating troops at the latter. Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte’s force of 20,000 had been ordered to join whichever battle was nearest but remained suspended between both, and Ernst von Rüchel’s 15,000 troops, who had been defending Weimar, arrived at Jena too late, during the afternoon. Together, therefore, France’s battlefield forces numbered 143,200 and Prussia’s 105,000. Arguably, however, the more important figure for the campaign as a whole, if Braunschweig’s army had not collapsed in the face of a force half of its size at the battle of Auerstädt, concerned the pool of trained replacement troops. Here, France enjoyed a clear advantage.

Prussian military reformers recognized France’s numerical superiority in 1806 and took steps to increase the size of the kingdom’s army. Such increases were prohibited by the Convention of Paris in September 1808, which limited the Prussian army to 42,000 troops for the next ten years, at the same time as reallocating half of Prussia’s territory to Saxony, Westphalia, and the Grand Duchy of Warsaw. To an extent the provisions of the convention were circumvented, in spite of the French occupation of Prussia, which allowed the early release of trained soldiers, whose records were kept, and the training of the next cohort. By August 1811, 74,413 trained soldiers were – if one estimate is to be believed – already available for immediate mobilization.¹⁵² The most important measures, though, were discussed within the Military Reorganization Commission and concerned what was to happen after the French occupation, which appeared, as a consequence of Russia’s uncertain stance, at least contestable. Early in 1810 the commission recommended the introduction of universal conscription without exemptions. It was opposed

150 Rothenberg, *Napoleonic Wars*, p. 103.

151 G.L. v. Blücher to Friedrich Wilhelm III, cited in E. Henderson, *Blücher and the Uprising of Prussia against Napoleon, 1806–1815* (London, 1911), pp. 10–11; Napoleon to C.-M. de Talleyrand, 12 September 1806, in J.M. Thompson, *Napoleon Bonaparte* (Oxford, 1988), p. 290.

152 Paret, *Yorck and the Era*, p. 139. Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army*, pp. 49–50, is more cautious, claiming that only 65,675 officers and men were ready by 1813.

by Stein's successor as interior minister Alexander zu Dohna-Schlobitten; by prominent reform-minded advisers such as Ludwig von Vincke and Barthold Georg Niebuhr, who denounced conscription as an enemy of culture; by the commercial classes of cities such as Königsberg, which were the most ardent opponents, according to Friedrich Wilhelm von Goetzen; and by much of the aristocracy, which saw universal conscription – in the words of one East Prussian petition – as 'the child of a revolution that had smashed all existing arrangements and conditions in France' and 'can be based only on the concept of universal equality', which would 'lead to the complete destruction of the nobility'.¹⁵³

As usual, the king was undecided. Having avowed the necessity of 'eine allgemeine Konskription' he refused to sanction its passage into law in December 1808 and blocked it again in 1810.¹⁵⁴ As soon as the French had withdrawn, however, after the catastrophic failure of the Grande Armée's invasion of Russia in 1812, and before Prussia had formally declared war on France on 16 March 1813, the recommendations of reformers – within a new committee set up by the king in Breslau and led by Scharnhorst – were rapidly put into effect. Notably, these were universal conscription for the army of the line on 9 February 1813; the establishment of volunteer *Jäger* detachments for the propertied classes, able to pay for their equipment and uniforms, on 3 February; the formation of a *Landwehr* for all men aged between 17 and 40 not serving in the regular army or *Jäger* on 17 March; and the creation of the *Landsturm*, or home-defence force, for all remaining men, either too old or physically unfit to serve in the *Landwehr*, in April 1813.

The Prussian forces brought into being by conscription in 1813 differed in kind from those of the old standing army.¹⁵⁵ While it is true that the *Kantonreglement* (1733) made military service compulsory in theory, it did so by assigning each regiment of the army a recruitment district, from which it found its quota of 'native' troops. All young males in the district were enrolled on regimental lists, but only a small proportion was enlisted and numerous exemptions were granted, covering the nobility, the clergy, civil servants, the educated and propertied, some prosperous artisans and peasants, and workers in industries of interest to the state. From a total population of 8.7 million in 1799, 530,000 men were exempt and 1,170,000 resided in Prussian territories beyond the cantons.¹⁵⁶ In the Teltow district of Kurmark, for example, there were 29 resident soldiers in army service and 224 serving sons out of 5,552 enrolled men in 1750, and 216 resident soldiers and 235 serving sons out of 6,627 in 1801.¹⁵⁷ If an insufficient number of volunteers came forward, 'native' recruits were selected, after 1763, by a staff officer from the regiment and a rural commissioner, both of whom often came from, or were

153 Cited in Paret, *Yorck and the Era*, pp. 135–6. See also D. Gerhard and W. Norvin, eds, *Die Briefe Barthold Georg Niebuhrs* (Berlin, 1926), vol. 1.

154 'Regulativ über die allgemeine Konskription', 20 December 1808, in Paret, *Yorck and the Era*, p. 136.

155 See D. Walter, 'Reluctant Reformers, Observant Disciples: The Prussian Military Reforms, 1807–1814', in Chickering and Förster, *War in an Age of Revolution*, p. 92.

156 K. Hagemann, *'Männlicher Muth und Teutsche Ehre': Nation, Militär und Geschlecht zur Zeit der Antinapoleonischen Kriege Preussens* (Paderborn, 2002), p. 33.

157 O. Büsch, *Military System and Social Life in Old Regime Prussia, 1713–1807: The Beginnings of the Social Militarization of Prusso-German Society* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1997), p. 17.

closely connected to, local noble landowners. They were joined by a large number of mercenaries from abroad, since the proportion of ‘natives’ to ‘foreigners’ – those recruited, frequently by guile or force, from outside the recruiting district, mostly also from outside Prussia – was deliberately kept roughly equal in order to maintain the domestic, largely agricultural, labour force. Although on active duty for only two months per year, in April and May, under the furlough system, soldiers served for life until 1792, when the period of service was reduced to 20 years.

Such a system was unequal and authoritarian, resting on the discipline, often resented, of noble-dominated rural localities and of the noble-officered regiments: ‘we have to fight over every recruit with his lord’, wrote Yorck in August 1811, and ‘miserable egotism is the only dominant passion’.¹⁵⁸ The system also led to the recruitment of those least able to resist, prompting officers’ complaints about their poor ‘quality’. ‘Transgressions against discipline continue to be very frequent despite all efforts of the commanding officers, and this, too, is the result of the bad composition of the troops,’ Yorck had written to the king a year earlier: ‘The *Kantonreglement* protects everyone who is not a complete vagabond or beggar.’¹⁵⁹ The reforms of 1813, which created a system of conscription – with the word itself being contrasted by reformers with the term ‘canton system’ – for all adult males without exemptions, transformed the Prussian army, creating 12,000 *Jäger*, who often replaced officers of the line, by the end of 1813, and 120,000 soldiers of the *Landwehr*, who were organized in separate regiments with their own uniforms but who fought alongside regiments of the regular army during and after the autumn of 1813.¹⁶⁰ Prussia’s 270,000–280,000 mobilized troops in 1813 were added to those of Russia, Austria, and other allies to create a combined force of about 800,000 or 570,000 in the field, compared with 600,000 in the French-led ‘army of the nations’, of whom 410,000 could be used in battle.¹⁶¹ Not only did such levies give the Coalition an overall numerical advantage for the first time since 1792, they also altered the individual armies and changed soldiers’ experiences of warfare, with more than one in four adult males in Prussia sent into the field in 1813 alone.

Paradoxically, the size of the Coalition armies between 1813 and 1815 permitted their commanders to mimic the strategy of their eighteenth-century predecessors. Josef Radetzky von Radetz, the author of the allied Trachtenberg Plan adopted in July 1813, favoured ‘a system of defence combined with offensive operations on a small scale over a general offensive movement, which might win much, but also might lose all’.¹⁶² As in Russia in 1812, allied armies were to retire if attacked by Napoleon, while the other Coalition forces arrived, wearing the French corps down through attrition and hemming

158 Yorck to Scharnhorst, 22 August 1811, in J.G. Droysen, *Das Leben des Feldmarschalls Grafen York von Wartenburg* (Berlin, 1851–2), vol. 1, p. 285.

159 Yorck to Friedrich Wilhelm III, April–June 1810, cited by Scharnhorst, in Paret, *Yorck and the Era*, p. 137.

160 H. v. Jordan, *Erinnerungsblätter und Briefe eines jungen Freiheitskämpfers aus den Jahren 1813 und 1814*, ed. Ludwig von Jordan (Berlin, 1914), p. 250.

161 Rothenberg, *Napoleonic Wars*, pp. 178–9.

162 G.E. Rothenberg, *Napoleon’s Great Adversaries: The Archduke Charles and the Austrian Army, 1792–1814* (Bloomington, IN, 1982), p. 181.

them in, before a final concentric allied advance with superior numbers of troops. Such strategic manoeuvring took place in Saxony in the autumn of 1813, after early defeats inflicted on Blücher at Grossgörschen (2 May), Peter von Wittgenstein at Bautzen (20–1 May), and Schwarzenberg at Dresden (26–7 August), with 335,000 troops of the allies eventually facing 190,000 French-led soldiers at Leipzig (16–19 October). The strategy for the Coalition's invasion of France in early 1814 proceeded in a similar fashion: Schwarzenberg advanced cautiously with the army of Bohemia through Switzerland in order to avoid French forts to the north, before linking up with the army of Silesia in the Marne. Napoleon attacked Blücher near Brienne, but the Prussian commander withdrew until reinforced at La Rothière (29 January); he defeated Schwarzenberg at Montereau (17–18 February), but the Austrians retreated to Troyes in order not to risk being destroyed. Further assaults by Napoleon against the superior numbers of the army of Silesia, backed up by the army of the north, near Laon on 8–9 March – with 37,000 troops against Blücher's 85,000 – and against the army of Bohemia at Arcis-sur-Aube on 20 March, with 30,000 against 100,000, were repulsed.

As Napoleon marched east to threaten the allies' lines of communication, the combined armies of the Coalition continued in the other direction with 200,000 men and occupied Paris by 30 March, prompting Napoleon's senior commanders to mutiny rather than back the emperor's last-ditch march back to the capital with 36,000 soldiers. Thus, although the Coalition had conducted a war of attrition and manoeuvre, it had done so with mass armies of raw conscripts, with under a third of Austrian soldiers fully trained – 'peasants in uniform', in Radetzky's words – and the majority 'drenched to the bones, most of them without shoes, many without great coats', according to the report of one British military observer in August 1813.¹⁶³ In such circumstances the Austrians had been obliged to simplify their tactics, to pay less attention to lines of supply, to live off the land to a greater extent, to keep their forces together, to escape from and catch up with the enemy – at a speed of 15 miles per day in pursuit of the French in late 1813 – through forced marches, to accept large-scale losses, and to rely, with an overwhelming number of troops, on decisive battles. All such changes at once reflected and reinforced the transformation of contemporaries' conception of war during the Napoleonic period.

IV. Conclusion

Even in Austria, which remained the most independent of the German states, warfare had become broader in scope after 1792, with mass armies requiring more money and men, and it had become more intense, with a greater number of battles and higher rates of killing, compared with the previous conflicts of the eighteenth century. War was an everyday or recurring reality for many subjects, and became a central part of their dealings with the state and other authorities. As one pamphleteer put it in July 1813, 'Europe's

163 Ibid., p. 179. R. Wilson, *Private Diary of Travels, Personal Services and Public Events during Missions and Employment with the European Armies in the Campaigns of 1812, 1813, 1814*, ed. H. Randolph (London, 1861), vol. 2, p. 89.

population has been turning itself into an army for the last twenty years, and its cities and villages have become one great camp.¹⁶⁴ The continuing conflicts had not merely become a more regular feature of subjects' daily lives, they had also become a more important one, defining conscripts' and civilians' very existence, in many cases. Thus, even a previous bystander such as the Rhinelander August Varnhagen von Ense, who had rejoiced at the 'blessed' circumstances of his life in 1803 and had lacked 'true political elan' even after the defeat of Austria in 1805, had been moved by France's occupation of Prussia after 1806 and by its defeat of the Habsburg monarchy in 1809 to enlist in the Austrian and, later, the Russian and Prussian armies, and pronounced himself 'ready for anything' by 1812, after the vanquishing of the Grande Armée.¹⁶⁵ For such contemporaries, battles of 'annihilation' and 'national' or 'patriotic' defence, combined with a revolutionary or Napoleonic redefining of territorial states and reordering of the European states' system, had brought into question the very existence of most German states and, from many educated observers' point of view, the future of a putative German nation. 'Austria faces a terrible crisis,' Archduke Karl warned his brother, the emperor, after defeat at Austerlitz in 1805:

Your Majesty stands alone at the end of a short but horrible war; your country is devastated, your treasury empty, your credit lost, the honour of your arms diminished, your reputation tarnished and the economic well-being of your subjects ruined for many years. The devotion of your people is shaky, you have no allies.¹⁶⁶

The evidence suggests that, in the German lands at least, the advent, duration, and nature of mass warfare during the Napoleonic period had produced political effects which were difficult to foresee or control. These effects were largely the corollary of new types of mass warfare and conscription, forced on military and official elites, who often remained in power, by French victories. Military reforms were undertaken out of necessity, not because of a wider 'ideological' or 'political' dynamic, and notwithstanding public support for reformed German military organizations and forces, which contrasted with earlier criticism of 'absolutist' standing armies.¹⁶⁷ In this respect, Broers's criticism of Bell is justified.¹⁶⁸

The human costs and economic burdens which resulted from mass warfare were nevertheless unexpectedly heavy, with more significant consequences than those described by Planert. In Prussia, to reformers such as Gneisenau, 'invasion' by the enemy was synonymous not merely with the 'annihilation' of an army in a decisive battle, but

164 Anonymous pamphlet, July 1813, cited in H.-B. Spies, ed., *Die Erhebung gegen Napoleon 1806–1815* (Darmstadt, 1981), p. 304.

165 K.A. Varnhagen von Ense, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, 6 vols (Mannheim, 1837–42), vol. 1, pp. 104, 169–71, and vol. 2, p. 135.

166 Rothenberg, *Napoleon's Great Adversaries*, p. 104.

167 Many commentators opposed both positions, of course. For more on this question, see M. Hewitson, 'Belligerence, Patriotism and Nationalism in the German Public Sphere, 1792–1815', *English Historical Review* CXXVIII (2013), pp. 839–76.

168 Broers, 'Concept of "Total War"'.

with the annihilation of the state.¹⁶⁹ If the French ‘tyrant’ had not yet toppled the throne of the Prussian monarch, ‘we should thank the circumstance that Austria has not yet been subjugated and the plans of the French cabinet against Russia are not yet ready to be carried out’, he had written in a memorandum of 1808: ‘Sooner or later, we should expect to be removed from the ranks of independent peoples (*Völker*).’¹⁷⁰ Since the kingdom’s standing army was not sufficient on its own to offer the prospect, or even the ‘probability’, ‘of a successful outcome’, it was necessary to contemplate ‘sources of resistance which governments have until now neglected or feared’, namely, ‘the arming of the people’.¹⁷¹ The motto that ‘You are either with us or against us’, with any cooperation classified as ‘high treason’ and punished with execution, would have radically altered previous conventions, as would the orchestration of a ‘popular uprising’ (*Volksaufstand*) against an invading or occupying army, blurring the boundary ‘between combatants and non-combatants, with the possibility that civilians would be killed like soldiers on the battlefield’.¹⁷² Militia units were to hide in the woods or mountains and to operate during the night, attacking and unsettling an occupying power. The named militia leaders were to be given, ‘during an enemy invasion’, ‘the right over life and death, the goods and blood of the inhabitants for the purpose of the defence of the country’.¹⁷³

In the event, such plans were not put into effect, because when the war with France came, as Gneisenau and others were sure it would between 1807 and 1811, it occurred in concert with Austrian and Russian allies and after the collapse of the Grande Armée in 1812, making a military victory over Napoleon seem more likely and the necessity of a popular ‘insurrection’ more remote.¹⁷⁴ The fact that the leaders of the reformed Prussian army were willing to think in such terms, however, with the expressed aim of extending their plans to the 15 million inhabitants of the ‘German nation’, betrays *in extremis* the extent to which warfare had changed. No other German power countenanced this type of uprising and conflict, involving the entire populace, but most had already accepted or adapted to the transition towards *Volkskriege* or ‘people’s wars’. War was not ‘total’ in the twentieth-century meaning of the word, but it had become ‘popular’ and participatory. The raising of mass armies of conscripts in revolutionary and Napoleonic France had compelled the majority of German states, either through compliance with French requests or through imitation, to adopt similar measures themselves, prompting a transformation of the ways in which wars were fought – and, therefore, experienced – and entailing fundamental political, social, and economic adjustments on the part of governments and most sections of the population during the period of the wars themselves and during their immediate aftermath.

169 Gneisenau to Hardenberg, 8 August 1811, in Gneisenau, *Ausgewählte militärische Schriften*, p. 167.

170 Gneisenau memorandum, summer 1808, *ibid.*, p. 117.

171 *Ibid.*

172 *Ibid.*, p. 118; Gneisenau to Hardenberg, 8 August 1811, *ibid.*, pp. 163–89.

173 *Ibid.*, p. 180.

174 *Ibid.*

Although the impact of combat remained uneven, many onlookers – perhaps, even, most – had come to view ‘war’ as a new, enduring and defining feature of their lives. From this point of view, the majority of German polities and societies, it can be held, stood under the shadow of war between 1792 and 1815, whereas they had existed in an ambiguously defined state of peace or had avoided many of the worst consequences of conflict for much of the preceding century. After 1815, under the stabilized political forms of the German Confederation and during an era of more strictly delimited and enforced peace, it could appear that the changes of the revolutionary and Napoleonic periods had been reversed. Yet popular and elite conceptions of warfare had altered, with fears of revolutionary violence – at home and abroad – and of civil war helping to perpetuate a purported ‘restoration’.¹⁷⁵ In this limited but immeasurable sense, in spite of the case put forward by Planert and others about the continuity of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century conflicts, the majority of the German lands had experienced a second military revolution.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

175 Many aspects of this question have not been examined in detail. Even Kevin Cramer’s *Thirty Years’ War and German Memory in the Nineteenth Century* treats the links between ‘civil war’ and memories of the Thirty Years War and of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars largely in passing. A good starting point is C. Clark, ‘The Wars of Liberation in Prussian Memory: Reflections on the Memorialization of War in Early Nineteenth-Century Germany’, *Journal of Modern History* LXVIII (1996), pp. 550–76.