The French Revolution and Napoleonic Era, 1789-1815

When asked in the 1950s about the importance of the French Revolution, Chinese revolutionary Mao Zedong responded, "It's too early to tell." The revolution that gripped France, the European continent, and ultimately the world stands as the crossroads of your course. It is considered the model for all revolutions; it gave us our modern ideologies and our political geography of left and right. Unlike the American Revolution, which today in the United States is considered an accomplished and successful fact, the French public still debates, the significance and meaning of this defining event in their nation's existence. This chapter examines the causes and phases of the revolution and also traces its development through the Napoleonic Era. As you study this complex event, you should focus on the following issues: (1) What interaction of factors brought about the French Revolution? (2) What were the accomplishments of the various phases of the revolution? (3) How and why did the revolution become more violent after 1791? and (4) To what extent did Napoleon uphold the ideals of the French Revolution?

• SKILL SET

The historiography on the French Revolution might take a dedicated scholar a lifetime to master (INTR), especially since it grows every year. Though you need not be familiar with particular schools of interpretation fort he AP exam, you should appreciate how and why this seminal event provokes such strong historical debate. Further, as you read, consider how you might frame an argument on any of the guiding questions from the introduction above.

Causes of the French Revolution

Observers and historians have debated the causes and meaning of the French Revolution since it began. This debate often revolves around A) which factors keyed the revolution-political, social, intellectual AND B) the legacy of the revolution-positive or negative overall. The revolution seized the attention of Europe and the world because France itself was important. After Russia, France was Europe's most populous nation, the center of Enlightenment culture, and, despite the problems of its monarchy, considered prestigious and stable. For most, the revolution came as a surprise, though it could have been foreseen given the constellation of circumstances facing France in the 1780s.

• SKILL SET

The historiography on the French Revolution might take a dedicated scholar a lifetime to master (INTR), especially since it grows every year. Though you need not be familiar with particular schools of interpretation for the AP exam, you should appreciate how and why this seminal event provokes such strong historical debate. Further, as you read, consider how you might frame an argument on any of the guiding questions from the introduction above.

Social Causes: The Three Estates

France remained separated into three estates, each With its own legal status and privileges. The First Estate, the clergy, amounted to less than 1% of the population, or about 100,000 clerics of different types. Though the position of the church ~ad declined in previous centuries, it remained a social, cultural, and economic force. The church owned about 10% of the land in France and collected the tithe, a tax that amounted to about 3%-5% of individual income. In an age of increasing secularism, many resented the privileges and high social status of the upper clergy – bishops and cardinals – even if many sympathized with their parish priests, known as cures.

Nobles comprised roughly 2% of the population, about 400,000 members, though they often differed widely in income, and owned approximately 25% of France's land. Counter to Marxist interpretations, which emphasize the rigidity of the class structure, bourgeois members of the Third Estate could ascend into the Second Estate, often by purchase of a government office. In fact, about 40% of nobles in 1789 had earned their status in the previous 150 years. Aristocratic status depended on **inherited privilege** (right to hunt on common land, separate courts, right to wear distinctive clothing, etc.) and exemptions from certain taxes. Members of the nobility monopolized positions in government and the military. After the death of Louis XIV in 1715, nobles reasserted their power and as part of a feudal reaction, attempted to support their increasingly extravagant lifestyles by reviving feudal dues and strictly enforcing their collection. Some members of the nobility, particularly the old nobles of the sword, attempted to limit the further entry of the middle classes into their privileged station with the Segur Law (1781), which restricted military positions to those who could trace their noble lineage back four generations.

The vast majority of French people (about 24 million) belonged to the Third Estate, obviously not a monolithic group. Members of the Third Estate varied

from the wealthiest merchants down to the few serfs or landless laborers still eking out a living from the soil. The bourgeoisie increased in numbers and economic power significantly in the 17th and 18th centuries with the growth of commerce. In addition to their mercantile and professional interests, the bourgeoisie owned about 25% of the land fu France. Many resented the privileges of the aristocracy while at the same time envying their status and imitating their fashions and interests. The petty bourgeoisie of artisans, shopkeepers, and small business owners felt the pinch of, on one hand, rising prices for goods, while on the other, stagnant wages. These *sans-culottes* ("without breeches" – breeches were worn by the well-to-do) favored equality and played a major role in the radicalization of the revolution. Peasants formed the largest social class. Most were small landowners who wished to be free from the plethora of service obligations, taxes, tithes, and feudal dues that could eat away over 50% of their livelihood. Owning about 40% of the land, peasants tended to be conservative in outlook, wishing simply to be free of the feudal system.

France's social inequality is taken to be the most fundamental cause of the revolution. It would be a mistake, however, to portray the revolution as simply a drama of class struggle, with a discontented lower class overthrowing their oppressors. In fact, aristocrats and bourgeoisie often shared similar lifestyles and outlooks. Further, some members of the nobility influenced by the Enlightenment criticized the inequities of the Old Regime and led the initial phases of the revolution. Also, during the radical phase of the revolution, nobles and peasants shared distaste for the radical policies of Paris. Even with these caveats, the social inequality of the three estates drove the revolution forward and accounts for the depth of its radicalism.

• THEME MUSIC

The causes and events of the French Revolution reveal the tie between economic and social changes. As mercantile wealth expanded from the Commercial Revolution, there occurred a corresponding increase in the size and importance of the middle class (bourgeoisie). One need not endorse the Marxist view of class struggle (as do some historians) to recognize the ways in which the revolution attacked the privileges and political power of the aristocracy, whose wealth depended on the feudal order.

Political Causes

The conflict between the resurgent nobility and a theoretically absolute monarchy constitutes the fundamental political cause of the revolution. French aristocrats accepted and often admired the monarchy but wished it to evolve along English lines. To limit Bourbon pretensions to absolutism, nobles asserted the powers of the *parlements*, the 15 regional law courts, to check the king's ability to tax and legislate arbitrarily. During the weak reign of Louis XV (1715-1774), some progress was made in this regard. However, near the end of his reign in 1771, Louis reasserted royal power and dissolved the *Parlement of Paris*. As a gesture of goodwill, the young Louis XVI reconvened the body in 1774. This move only emboldened the nobility in their efforts to move France toward a constitutional monarchy.

Many condemned the capricious nature of the monarchy. Hated symbols of arbitrary government were the *lettres de cachet*, which allowed the king to arrest and imprison any individual without judicial procedures. No doubt the stories of an army of political prisoners rotting in the Bastille proved to be exaggerated, but Enlightenment principles of equality and justice spoke against the practice. Additionally, the personalities of **King Louis XVI** (1774-1793) and his Austrian wife, **Marie Antoinette** (d. 1793) acted as a magnet for discontent with the regime. By all accounts, Louis was a pious, well-meaning family man. However, he also had difficulty consummating his marriage, which when combined with Marie's promiscuous reputation, earned the couple ridicule and scandal. As events unfolded, it became clear that Louis lacked the energy and purpose to see his nation through its crisis. The king's behavior during key moments of the revolution often escalated conflict and fueled demands by radicals for a republic.

Intellectual Causes

The Enlightenment did not directly cause the French Revolution; however, it ensured that unfocused discontent and class anger crystallized into a more fundamental criticism of the Old Regime. Ideas from Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu, and other *philosophes* provided systematic tools for the expression of grievances, though most people gravitated to the salacious underground press with stories of the scandals of the royal couple. Even if readers for high-minded philosophy were lacking, a century of enlightened thought helped create a public concern over political issues, awareness of the larger world, and a strong spirit of criticism.

Economic and Financial Causes

Economic and financial causes for the revolution were distinct but related. France did not fall into revolution because of economic stagnancy; more accurately, the French state and legally defined social system coped poorly with 'rapid economic change. Between 1714 and 1789, French commerce expanded tenfold, faster than Britain's, and fed the wealth of the nation. However, this wealth was unequally distributed. Though France· stood out as one of the wealthiest nations in Europe, it was as if it had one hand tied behind its back.

Due to its semi-feudal nature, the French state never tapped effectively into the nation's wealth. We have already seen how France, unlike Britain, did not develop an extensive credit network. More importantly, France was plagued by an inefficient and regressive tax system. Tax rates varied widely based on geography, the highest class claimed exemptions, arid the task of collecting the· taxes was franchised out to the Farmers General. This group of wealthy financial families legally skimmed off as much as half of state tax revenue.

Louis XVI realized the dire need for tax reform. The debt of the French monarchy accumulated from numerous wars – most recently the American War for Independence (1778-1783) – threatened to choke the state budget. By 1785, the French treasury was bankrupt, and half of the budget went simply to pay the interest on the debt! Louis attempted several far-reaching efforts at reform but was blocked by restive nobles who insisted on more fundamental changes in the political structure before they would agree to new taxes. If Louis had pursued his plans more consistently or resolutely, he might have staved off disaster. Each time one of his finance ministers encountered opposition, he was dismissed by the king.

Louis began boldly by appointing the noted Physiocrat and economic liberal, Turgot (17741776), as Finance Minister. Turgot mercilessly attacked privilege. He proposed converting the corvée labor service of the peasantry into a cash payment, eliminated numerous government positions and pensions,· attacked government monopolies, slashed spending, advocated free trade, and moved to adopt a single direct tax on land to replace the multitude of confusing indirect taxes. Turgot pursued his 'plan ambitiously and, as a result, sparked wide opposition. When dismissed by Louis, he was replaced by the talented Swiss Protestant banker, Jacques Necker (1776-1781) (whose wife Suzanne hosted a salon). Necker published a complete accounting of the state budget, the *compte rentiu*, which revealed the incredible waste therein. Necker's plans for economy proved too much for entrenched interests, so he was dismissed in 1781. This well-respected symbol of reform was recalled by the king during the early phase of the revolution in 1789.

By 1787, the situation in France turned desperate, for two reasons. First, France stood at the verge of bankruptcy, and the efforts at financial reform were stalled by growing opposition across the nation. Second, during the years 1787-1789, which coincided with the early stages of the revolution, France suffered from the last great subsistence crisis of the century. Poor crops led to high bread prices, sending urban crowds into the streets. Louis sat upon an explosive situation, and little seemed left to do but call the Estates General, which the king did in 1788 after protests spread among the *parlements* to his policies.

The Liberal Phase, 1789-1791

Labeling the first phase of the French Revolution "moderate" or ''Liberal'' makes sense only if we keep in mind that the violence inherent from the outset paled in comparison to what came later. From the calling of the Estates General in 1788 until the onset of war in the spring of 1792, the revolution accomplished a major reordering of French state and society. Unfortunately, ideological divisions and the revolutionaries' inability to address major economic issues increased violence and strengthened the hand of radicals. For ease of study, the following three sections will provide a timeline with commentary.

Prior to the meeting of the Estates General, Louis XVI asked all French people to set down their grievances in notebooks, called the *cahiers de doléances*, most of which expressed moderate demands for tax equality and the gradual abolition of feudalism. The subsequent national election was France's first since 1614, and both the election and grievances helped politicize the entire country with the expectation of change. As the Estates General convened in 1789, immediate disagreements broke out over two issues: 1) whether to double the number of delegates to the Third Estate, seeing as it represented 98% of the nation, and 2) whether the delegates should vote as individuals ("heads") or by orders, with each of the three estates getting one vote. The first issue was easy enough to resolve, but the Third Estate and many liberal nobles, known as the Committee of Thirty, refused to budge on the second. The pamphlet *What Is the Third Estate?* by clergyman Abbé Sieyès (1748-1836) stoked discontent by arguing that the Third Estate was the assembled will of the nation and that the noble caste should simply be abolished.

June 17, 1789 – Unable to reach agreement on the issue of voting, the Third Estate declares itself the National Assembly.

June 20, 1789 – Finding themselves locked out of their meeting place, the National Assembly adjourns to a nearby tennis court and pledges not to disband until it has written a new constitution for France, an event known as the Tennis Court Oath.

Unsure what to do next, the king begins raising an army possibly to disperse the National Assembly. In addition, he dismisses Finance Minister Jacques Necker in July, signaling his movement away from reform.

July 14, 1789 – Fearing the king's military power, the crowds of Paris march to the Bastille, symbol of royal despotism, but also an armory. After accidentally firing on the crowd, the defenders are captured and several executed by beheading. The fall of the Bastille saves the National Assembly and demonstrates the power of mob violence. Soon after, revolutionaries form the National Guard to protect the revolution, appointing Marquis de Lafayette (1757-1834), called the "hero of two worlds" for this support for the American Revolution, as head.

The king is forced to recognize the National Assembly and orders the other two estates to sit with the new legislative body. However, rumors spread in the countryside regarding events in Paris and of plots to undermine the, revolution, leading to attacks on nobles.

June-August 1789 – In the Great Fear, peasants attack manorial courts and noble manors, directing anger against feudalism. To reestablish order, the National Assembly on the famous night of August 4 dismantles the entire feudal system. In one blow, ***feudal privileges***, the tithe, noble hunting rights, labor service, and serfdom are all ***destroyed***.

August 26, 1789 – The National Assembly completes the ***Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen***, an expression of Enlightenment principles such as legal equality, freedom of religion, judicial rights, and "liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression."

October 1789 – Angry over high bread prices and fearing the king's opposition to the Declaration of Rights of Man (and August 4 decrees), the women of Paris march on Versailles and break into the queen's chamber, killing several guards and forcibly bringing the royal family back to Paris, where they would remain as virtually prisoners of the revolution. The actions of women to protect the revolution are termed the October Days. By the end of 1789, the revolutionaries succeeded in radically 'restructuring the French state. One of the more important but underestimated actions the assembly took was the ***abolition of*** all feudal institutions, *parlements*, estates, ***provincial law codes***, and tariff and tax bodies, to be replaced by ***83 equal departments***, subdivided into cantons and communes. As a result, France became a centralized national government based in Paris in a way it never had been under royal absolutism.

November 1789-July 1790 – In a fateful move that divided the revolution, the National Assembly attacks the privileged position of the Catholic Church. First, the revolution confiscates the lands owned by the Catholic Church and issues paper currency, *assignats*, based on the value of the land, which results in rapid inflation. Later, the church is brought under control of the state-bishops are to be elected and paid by the state, their numbers reduced to 83, and the pope's influence over the clergy eliminated. In addition, after the pope condemns the revolution, the **Civil Constitution of the Clergy** requires all priests to swear an oath of loyalty to the revolution. About half ultimately swear the oath, while the nonjuring clergy (those who would not swear allegiance) later become a rallying point for counterrevolution.

June 1791 – The National Assembly completes the **Constitution of 1791**, a conservative document that creates a single legislative body with a ***constitutional monarchy*** possessing only the power to delay legislation. Active citizens are those who own substantial property (about half a million men), while those less well-to-do and women are deemed passive citizens. The document indicates that the revolution still rests in the hands of the wealthy bourgeoisie. Nonetheless, the king, under influence from his wife and émigrés who had escaped the revolution, decides to flee France. His "flight to Varennes" is stopped just short of safety, and he is brought back to the Tuileries Palace in Paris.

July 17, 1791 – A crowd gathers in a public park to demand the overthrow of the king and the declaration of a republic. The National Guard under Lafayette disperses the crowd with gunfire, killing 50. The Champs de Mars Massacre radicalizes public opinion and leads to further distrust of the monarchy.

Political culture in France now openly embraces symbols of the revolution – liberty trees, liberty caps, *citoyen* and *citoyenne* as forms of address, and the replacement of religious with revolutionary icons. Citizens join in clubs to discuss issues and agitate for change. The **Jacobin Club** grows in influence and later produces many of the most important leaders of the radical phase of the revolution.

By the summer of 1791, the revolution has achieved much. However, its *laissez-faire* policies have not solved the rapid inflation or government debt. Complicating matters are the behavior of the king and growing divisions over how far the revolution should go. The debate extends across Europe as writers, citizens, and governments choose sides. English conservative Edmund Burke (1729-1797) condemns the radical destruction of France's traditions and predicts in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) that the revolution will end in military dictatorship. Thomas Paine responds (see Chapter 9) with *The Rights of Man* (1791) in defense of the revolution. Émigrés from France heighten tensions by working against the revolution from abroad, a situation that seems ripe for war.

• SKILL SET

As subsequent chapters will demonstrate, the French Revolution helped create the political ideologies that dominated debate and fostered action throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. In anticipation of this theme, you may want to compare (COMP) how a supporter (Liberal – Paine, or a nationalist or a socialist) and an opponent (Conservative – Burke) of the French Revolution would

interpret the causes, key events, and outcomes of this transformative event.

The Radical Phase, 1792-1794

Why did the revolution become more radical after 1792? Several factors present themselves:

- ***Economic problems*** – Rapid inflation continued and the laissez-faire policies of the revolution angered workers stung by high prices and policies directed against union activity.
- ***The royal family*** – The king clearly harbored reservations regarding key events of the revolution, such as the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. His effort to flee the revolution undermined much of his remaining support.
- ***Counterrevolution*** – By now, several groups actively opposed the revolution-provinces jealous of the power of Paris, nonjuring clergy, émigrés, religious peasants-and worked to thwart it.
- ***War*** – War radicalizes politics. When France declared war in the spring of 1792, it strengthened the hands of those who called for an even more violent break with the past.

August 1791 – The Austrian emperor (brother of Marie Antoinette), along with the Prussian king, issue the Declaration of Pillnitz, promising to restore order in France if other nations provide support.

This declaration, as well as the actions of the king and émigrés, convince the Girondins party (a faction of the Jacobins Club from the provinces) that the only way to save the revolution is to spread it across Europe by force of arms. To the strains of Le Marseillaise, the revolutionary anthem, the first citizen-soldiers in modern European history depart for the front.

April 20, 1792 – France declares war on Austria. The king supports the declaration because he believes France will lose, and thus his power would be restored. July 25, 1792-With the war going badly for France, Austria and Prussia stand on the verge of invading France. Austria and Prussia issue the Brunswick Manifesto, threatening the revolutionaries with violence if any harm comes to the king and queen. The manifesto produces the exact opposite of its intended effect by inflaming violence against the monarchy.

By now, the working people of Paris, known as *sans-culottes*, and other cities oppose the half-measures of the Girondins and are open to the persuasion of radical leaders. The vehement journalist ***Jean-Paul Marat*** (1743-1793) with his *L'Ami du peuple* (*The Friend of the People*) newspaper demands the deaths of traitors and for heads to roll. The skilled politician ***Georges Danton*** (1759-1794), works to create a revolutionary government in the capital, the Paris Commune, which would playa major role in forcing moderates to adopt more aggressive measures.

August 10, 1792 – In an event known as the Second French Revolution, an armed mob storms the Tuileries Palace and forces the arrest of the king. The Constitution of 1791 is abrogated and a more radical National Convention is elected to govern France.

September 1792 – Fearing that political prisoners will aid the advancing Austrian-Prussian army, revolutionaries break into prisons across France and massacre thousands, many of them innocent bystanders (September Massacres).

September 20-21, 1792 – After victory in the battle of Valmy, which stopped the invading armies, the National Convention abolishes the monarchy and declares France a **republic**, with 1792 as Year I of the new era.

January 21, 1793 – The king is placed on trial for treason and after being found guilty by the Convention and at the insistence of the Mountain (a faction of the Jacobins), is ***executed*** by guillotine. With the execution, France enters the **Reign of Terror**.

May-June 1793 – Under pressure from the sans-culottes, the Paris Commune arrests and executes the leaders of the Girondins. The Mountain, under the leadership of the radical **Maximilien Robespierre** (1758-1794), comes to dominate the Convention. The democratic Constitution of 1793, which calls for universal male suffrage, is passed, though is never put into effect because of the crisis situation.

Over the next year, France is ruled by the **Committee of Public Safety**, a 12-member executive body elected each month by the Convention, which steers France through the Reign of Terror. It is aided by the Committee of General Security, the police arm of the revolution. An entire province, the Vendee, rises in counterrevolution against the centralizing and anti-Catholic policies of Paris. War continues and justifies further radical measures.

Robespierre emerges as the dominant personality. An ambitious lawyer from northern France, Robespierre served in the National Assembly, gaining notoriety with his calls for universal male suffrage and the abolition (ironically) of capital punishment and slavery in the colonies. Obsessed with creating a new political culture, Robespierre argues that virtue must be combined with terror. Even if they condemn his methods, most historians consider Robespierre sincere in his beliefs;

indeed, he earns the nickname The Incorruptible in his lifetime~ As a result of the Mountain's policies, revolutionary tribunals arise across France; executing about 50,000 over the course of the terror, and "representatives on mission" ensure that the policies of Paris are followed. Though members of the clergy and aristocracy represent the largest segment of victims as a percentage of their numbers, in absolute terms peasants and the working class make up 70% of the victims.

• EXAMPLE BASE

You encounter numerous specific content references in this section. To avoid bogging down in detail, consider the following two interpretive questions: 1) To what extent did the revolution fulfill its stated principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity (nationalism)? AND 2) To what extent was the violence of the radical phase necessary to save the revolution during its crisis from 1791-1794?

Many view the Reign of Terror as a period of unnecessary and bloodthirsty excess. Others believe that the radicals enacted many creative reforms that helped see France through its time of crisis.

- ***Mass conscription*** (*Levée en masse*) – All French citizens are required to contribute to the war effort. Never before in European history has a nation marshaled so many citizens in arms, raising an army of over 1 million men who fought with passion for *liberté, egalité, fratenité*.
- ***Law of General Maximum*** – Abandoning free-market policies, the Convention establishes maximum prices for key commodities and punishes severely those who break the law. However, this battle against inflation is difficult to enforce.
- ***Abolition of slavery*** – Ratifying the ***massive slave revolt in Saint-Domingue*** (Haiti) led by **Toussaint L'Ouverture,** the Convention abolishes slavery in all French colonies. Napoleon was later unable to subdue the revolt, and Haiti gained its independence in 1804. Despite L'Ouverture's later capture and imprisonment(where he died), Haitian independence represents the first successful slave revolt in modem history, and it indirectly leads Napoleon to sell Louisiana to the new American republic.
- ***Revolutionary calendar*** – As part of a ***de-Christianization*** campaign, the Convention devises a new calendar with months and days renamed after weather conditions and agricultural products. Months are divided into 30 days of three decades, allowing for only 1 day of rest in 10, rather than 7. The new republican era begins with 1792 as Year I.
- ***Cult of the Supreme Being*** – De-Christianization leads to the elimination of saints' names on streets and Notre Dame becoming a Temple of Reason. Robespierre opposes these excesses and attempts to create a new deistic civic religion, which culminates with a Festival of the Supreme Being in June 1794.
- ***Standardization of weights and measures*** – Following a trend of the moderate phase and reflecting Enlightenment rationalism, the Convention promotes use of the metric system and, as above, restructures time along the same principles.
- ***Military victories*** – With these policies, France turns around her fortunes on the battlefield, invading the Netherlands in June 1794 and creating a sister Batavian Republic to replace the old Dutch provinces.

March 1794 – The Committee of Public Safety acts against extremism on the left. Radicals who advocated complete equality and terror known as Hebertists, or enrages, are sent to the guillotine.

May 1794 – Danton, the popular leader of the Paris Commune and a growing critic of Robespierre, is executed along with his supporters, known as Indulgents.

By the summer of 1794, France seems to have emerged from its crisis. Counterrevolution has been defeated, French armies are advancing on the battlefield, and the worst of the inflation seems to have passed. Despite these successes, the pace of executions quickens in the summer of 1794. When Robespierre announces in the Convention a new law that allows looser standards for proof of treason and a new list of proposed executions, fearful opponents ally against him

July 27, 1794 – The Convention arrests Robespierre and his supporters. After a failed attempt at suicide, Robespierre, along with his associates, is guillotined. This event ends the Reign of Terror.

Thermidor and the Directory, 1795-1799

The period following Robespierre's fall is known as the Thermidorian reaction (Thermidor, or "heat," was the revolutionary month of Robespierre's execution). Revolutionary violence takes a breather as the Terror subsides and extreme policies are reversed. Jacobin Clubs are closed and a "white terror" instigated against former radicals. To provide order while maintaining republicanism, the Convention once again writes up a plan of government, the Constitution of Year ill (1795). Though all males can vote, their votes are filtered through well-to-do electors who in turn choose representatives for the two-chamber assembly. For day-to-day governing, this assembly appoints five directors as an executive body. The regime known as the Directory governs France for

four years. During this time, aristocratic fashions return as French politics remain divided over the future course of the revolution. These divisions plague the weak Directory, which faces opposition from both the left and the right.

Spring-Summer 1796 – Extremists led by Gracchus Babeuf attempt to establish a socialist government with the Conspiracy of Equals, but they are arrested, tried, and executed.

September 4, 1797 – After free elections create a majority for royalists, the Directory, assisted by Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821), annuls the results and maintains power in the *coup d'etat* of Fructidor.

With little popular support, the Directory remains dependent on battlefield victories to maintain itself in power. The situation seems ripe for an ambitious and successful military leader to overthrow the government and restore order.

The Rise of Napoleon

Some have labeled **Napoleon Bonaparte** the first modern man. His rise to power owed nothing to traditional ecclesiastical, aristocratic, or political institutions. Napoleon was self-made and possessed of immense talent and ambition, qualities that account for both his stunning successes and his crushing defeats. Born into a minor Italian noble family on the island of Corsica, which the French had annexed in 1768 (a year before his birth), Napoleon set out to prove he was the equal of every Frenchmen he encountered in his military academy and the army. Napoleon combined a quick mind that excelled in practical subjects, such as engineering, history, law, and administration, with supreme confidence in his talents and destiny.

Napoleon earned his first fame with the Italian campaign. Defying traditional rules of warfare, the general outmaneuvered and outfought the larger Habsburg army, and then proceeded to negotiate with the Austrian emperor on his own. The subsequent treaty (1797) established several new Italian republics and spread revolutionary ideas throughout the long-divided peninsula. Napoleon followed up his success with a bold move-the invasion of Egypt in 1798-1799. Though his strategic goals were unclear, Napoleon initially defeated the Ottoman army at the Battle of the Pyramids. 5 However, the British fleet cut off Napoleon's supply lines after crushing the French fleet. With bigger stakes in mind, Napoleon abandoned his men in Egypt and found his way back to France, in time to take part in an overthrow of the moribund Directory. Joined by two other conspirators, Napoleon's *coup d'etat* of Brumaire succeeded in creating a new government, the Consulate (with three Consuls). Chosen as First Consul, Bonaparte quickly outmaneuvered the other two consuls and in 1801 proclaimed himself First Consul for life. At the age of 32, Bonaparte commanded France and set out to institutionalize the principles of the revolution.

• THEME MUSIC

Even when resented by those occupied, Napoleon's invasions exercised a profound impact on conquered nations, often triggering internal reforms or at minimum, debates over revolutionary ideas and modernizing policies. The Egyptian campaign launched Napoleon to power in France, while also stimulating European interest in the Middle East-both strategically and culturally. In addition, the campaign revealed the weakness of the Ottoman Empire (the "sick man of Europe") and stimulated nationalism among the Balkan peoples (INT &SP).

Napoleon's Domestic Policies, 1799-1814

Soon after being named First Consul, Napoleon consolidated his power, culminating with his proclamation of the French Empire in 1804 and his crowning as emperor. It is generally believed that Napoleon promoted equality and nationalism during his rule; however, he implemented his policies from the top down with little democratic input and disregarded individual rights, such as freedom of the press or privacy, whenever it suited his interests. The following provides an 'idea of the nature of Napoleon's domestic policies in several areas. As you read, consider the extent to which Bonaparte either fulfilled or twisted the ideals of the revolution.

Governance and administration – Keeping with the tradition of the revolution, Napoleon created a constitution for the Consulate and then the Empire. In reality, Napoleon concentrated power in his own hands. Laws were enacted by the Legislative Corps but could not be debated. The body acted in effect as a rubber stamp for the emperor's will. Unlike absolute monarchs, Napoleon succeeded in centralizing administration through the creation of a ***centralized professional bureaucracy***. Prefects ran each of the 83 departments but reported directly to Paris. To present himself as a man of the people, Napoleon used plebiscites, or referenda, on specific issues often after the fact, such as whether the people agreed with Napoleon's proclamation of the empire (they did, by a large majority). However, Napoleon would not countenance opposition to his rule. The ***press was censored***, and under the watchful eye of Joseph Fouche (1763-1820), a ***secret police*** infiltrated intellectual circles to identify opposition to the regime. Eventually Napoleon became occupied with the trappings of imperial rule,

which was reflected in the nation at large with a new Empire Style of architecture and decor.

Legal and social policies – Napoleon announced "***careers open to talent***" for those like himself who came from middling or lowly station but wished to rise through talent and ambition. Napoleon created a Legion of Honor to recognize the contributions of those who served in the revolutionary wars. It is the **Civil Code** that represented the revolution's ideals of merit and equality and arguably Napoleon's single most significant accomplishment. Guided by the enlightened impulse toward rational systemization, Napoleon created a single legal code for all of France, as well as the many nations he conquered, which stands to this day. However, the Civil Code reinforced patriarchy in the home and ***limited the rights of women*** related to divorce, property, and male infidelity.

Economic and financial policies – To enhance industry, Napoleon modernized the infrastructure of France – building/repairing roads and bridges, beautifying the nation with monuments, and establishing the Bank of France. The bank helped in finally eliminating the budget deficit and modernizing the tax system. Napoleon's efforts at industrial simulation-tariffs, loans, public works-proved less successful, as his failed Continental System (see below) against Great Britain hindered French trade.

Educational system – In an effort to modernize France and promote opportunity, Napoleon established a nationwide system of secondary schools, called the *lycée*, open to all social classes. A national system of technical universities was founded, reflecting the emperor's interest and belief in scientific progress.

Religious policies – Napoleon finally ended the war between the revolution and the Catholic Church in his **Concordat of 1801** with Pope Pius VII (1800-1823). By the agreement, the pope regained some control of the French clergy, and Catholicism was recognized as the majority religion of France. However, the Church acknowledged the loss of its properties, and the French government retained a veto power over clerical appointments. Of skeptical mindset himself, Napoleon manipulated popular religious belief to his advantage, proclaiming in Egypt, "I am a Muslim," but also extending religious toleration to those in conquered nations.

Napoleonic Warfare, 1796-1814

Regardless of how Napoleon is viewed politically, he revolutionized the practice of warfare. It will not be necessary for you to grasp the complexities of Napoleonic battles and shifting coalitions except in general outline, but you should understand the role of warfare in Napoleonic diplomacy and the legacy it left in the 19th century.

Though Napoleon met ultimate defeat and blundered strategically, he did not lose a battle on land until 1814. What accounts for his stunning success?

- **Movement** – Conventional military wisdom emphasized maneuver to conserve manpower and guard supply lines and fortresses. Napoleon turned this wisdom oil its head and made the enemy army his target by striking quickly.
- **Defying traditional limits** – Napoleon's armies ignored customs regarding when to fight: Sundays, winter, night – all were fair game. The French army learned to live off the countryside, cut off from supply lines.
- **Offensive** – With no patience for drawn-out campaigns, Napoleon aimed to defeat his opponents in a decisive battle, by concentrating force at the enemy's weakest spot.
- **Propaganda** – Napoleon presented himself as a liberator. He proclaimed republics in conquered nations and ended feudalism for peasants.
- **Citizen armies** – The French Revolution helped establish, and Napoleon advanced, the notion that warfare was an affair for free and equal citizens, not paid mercenaries – an idea that remains to this day.

In the period 1792-1815, France fought a number of different coalitions of nations. Despite the general agreement among rulers that the French Revolution should be quarantined, great power politics continued. Nations pursued traditional territorial and political objectives, even if in a more complex revolutionary environment. Britain most consistently opposed French designs, pursuing its traditional objective of preventing the emergence of a dominant power on the continent.

France emerged victorious against the first two coalitions, which failed to stop the advance of the French revolution and its expansion into neighboring nations. In 1802, Napoleon negotiated peace with Britain, the final holdout from the Second Coalition. It would not last, as Napoleon's expansionist designs inevitably clashed with British mercantile interests. During the War of the Third Coalition (1805-1807), Napoleon masterfully defeated each of his continental opponents in turn – Austria, Prussia, and Russia – establishing himself as master of the continent. All major continental nations were either annexed to France, allied with it, or a friendly neutral. Napoleon's plans to defeat Britain outright were thwarted at the Battle of Trafalgar (1805), as a Franco-Spanish invasion fleet was destroyed by the British navy under Horatio Nelson.

To subdue Britain, Napoleon forced continental nations to embargo British goods, known as the Continental System. The plan proved difficult to enforce, harmful to continental trading interests (including France), and highly unpopular. By 1810, Russia had withdrawn from the system, compelling France to launch the fateful Russian campaign. Though many of Napoleon's policies within conquered nations proved popular, his actions also ***aroused nationalism,*** especially in Germany. These factors, in addition to a decline in Napoleon's tactical skill, led to his final defeat. The Grand Army's retreat from Moscow cost 90% of the men who had set out. Though Napoleon was able to raise another army, he was defeated again in 1814 in Germany (the largest battle prior to the 20th century) and ultimately at Waterloo in 1815.

Napoleon's Foreign Policies, 1799-1814

In foreign policy, Napoleon pursued two goals: 1) institutionalize the ideals of the Enlightenment and French Revolution in conquered lands and 2) gain territory and influence for the French nation. At first, Napoleon captured the imagination of intellectuals across Europe, such as Beethoven and Goethe, as well as the support of the common people for his abolition of the Old Regime. However, his exploitation of subject lands and ruthless imposition of "French values" alienated a critical mass of nations bent on stopping him. In the last analysis, Napoleon was done in by the same superabundant ego that had led to his amazing rise to power. As you review Napoleon's policies below, again consider his adherence to revolutionary principles.

Reforms – Napoleon proclaimed the liberation of conquered nations and implemented many of the revolution's policies. To win over peasants, he announced the abolition of feudalism and the Old Regime, including guilds, old town charters, internal tariffs, and local weights and measures. In their place, Napoleon promoted rational government based on enlightened principles of religious toleration, efficient centralized administration, and equality under the Napoleonic Code. Among progressives, such policies gained support, at least until opinion against Napoleon turned.

Creation of new diplomatic system – Napoleon paid little respect to diplomatic traditions. As he conquered, he created republics in Italy, the Low Countries, and Switzerland, appointing his relatives to ruling positions (a practice of nepotism seemingly at odds with his ideas of merit). After defeating Austria again in 1806, Napoleon simply abolished the long-standing Holy Roman Empire, replacing it with the 35-state Confederation of the Rhine. To gain the support of Polish leaders; Napoleon recreated a smaller version of Poland, the Duchy of Warsaw. Once Napoleon felt secure in his domination of the continent, he attempted to wrap himself with dynastic legitimacy. In 1804, he convinced the pope to attend his coronation as emperor, and when he and Josephine were unable to produce an heir, he married a young Habsburg princess, Marie Louise (which made him by marriage the nephew of the deceased Louis XVI).

Continental System – As noted above, Napoleon attempted to cut the continent off from British trade. This proved difficult because Britain's colonial products could not be easily replaced. Transportation difficulties and differing tariffs among the member states prevented continental trade from taking up the British slack. Not only did the Continental System fail in its objective, it aroused opposition toward a French-dominated Europe.

Peninsular war – In 1808, Napoleon coerced the Bourbon king of Spain to abdicate and replaced him with his own brother Jerome. The Spanish resented Napoleon's high-handed tactics and toleration of religions other than Catholicism. With British support, the Spanish bogged the. French down in a guerrilla war, sapping resources and men.

Coda: Women and the Revolution

• SKILLSET
Though women did not realize the promise of their participation, the French Revolution marks a turning point in the status of women and the feminist movement (PER). To evaluate this claim, you will need to draw upon your understanding of previous movements of change (e.g., Reformation or Scientific Revolution) and anticipate the outcomes for women during the 19th century. You may wish to create a simple timeline or chart that demonstrates these changes and continuities over time (CCOT).

Women played a central role in the French Revolution. But did this participation yield tangible results? It was during the moderate phase that women gained the most-the right to divorce, inherit property, and child custody. Also at this time, **Olympe de Gouges** (1748-1793) published the *Declaration of Rights of Women and the Female Citizen* to counter the similarly titled document by the National Assembly, but she was guillotined in 1793 for her revolutionary activities. During the radical phase, some women formed the Society for Revolutionary Republican Women, which agitated for equal rights. The club was banned by the Mountain, because they believed it violated Rousseau's ideals regarding women's domestic role. Finally, the Napoleonic Code, often viewed as a blow for equality,

generally excluded women from the principle. The code limited female property rights, restricted divorce, and reinforced the sexual double-standard for adultery. Most women who participated in the revolution· probably did so on behalf of their class rather than their gender. Nonetheless, it seemed that once again a movement promising change and equality left women excluded from the revolutionary application of its principles. Taken together, the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, however, established the agenda for the feminist movement over the next century.