The Napoleonic Wars

The Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815) were a series of major global conflicts pitting the French Empire, led by Napoleon I, against an array of European powers formed into various coalitions. They revolutionised European armies and played out on an unprecedented scale, mainly owing to the application of modern mass conscription. The wars were a continuation of the Revolutionary Wars, which broke out in 1792 during the French Revolution. Initially, French power rose quickly as the armies of Napoleon conquered much of Europe.

In his military career, Napoleon fought about 60 battles and lost seven, mostly at the end of his reign.[22] The great French dominion collapsed rapidly after the disastrous invasion of Russia in 1812. Napoleon was defeated in 1814, and sent into exile on the island of Elba; he then escaped and returned to power, only to be defeated at the Battle of Waterloo, and was exiled again, this time to Saint Helena.

During the successive conflicts, also known as the Coalition Wars, France defeated five consecutive coalitions arrayed against it, before suffering defeat against the sixth and seventh. The first two coalitions were defeated during the French Revolutionary Wars, while the third (at Austerlitz), the fourth (at Jena, Eylau, and Friedland) and the fifth coalition (at Wagram) were fought under the leadership of Napoleon. These victories gave Napoleon's Grande Armée a sense of invulnerability, especially when it approached Moscow and occupied it after the Russians abandoned it.

After the retreat from Russia, the French forces were defeated by Russian winter weather and by the sixth coalition at Leipzig and in France itself, and by the seventh coalition at Waterloo. Following Napoleon's final defeat, the Allies then reversed all French gains outside its 1789 borders at the Congress of Vienna.

The wars resulted in the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire and sowed the seeds of nationalism that led to the consolidations of Germany and Italy later in the century. The global Spanish Empire began to unravel as French occupation of Spain weakened Spain's hold over its colonies, providing an opening for nationalist revolutions in Spanish America. As a result of the Napoleonic wars and the losses of the other great powers, the British Empire became the foremost world power for the next century,[23] thus beginning Pax Britannica.

Scholars disagree about when the French Revolutionary Wars ended and the Napoleonic Wars began. Bonaparte's coup seizing power in France was on 9 November 1799, and 18 May 1803 was when renewed war broke out between Britain and France, ending the year-old period of general peace following the Treaty of Amiens. Most fighting ceased following Napoleon's final defeat at Waterloo on 18 June 1815, although skirmishing continued as late as 3 July 1815 at the Battle of Issy. The Treaty of Paris ended the wars on 20 November 1815.

[reference and more information](#)