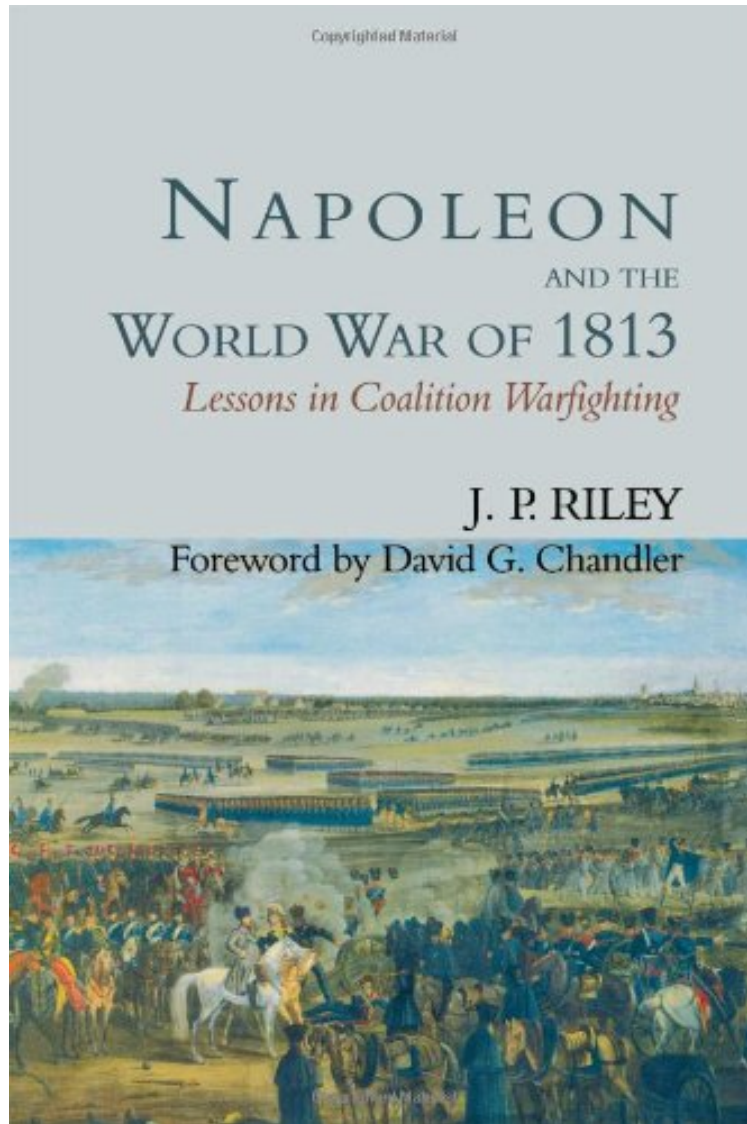


# Napoleon and the World War of 1813: Lessons in Coalition Warfighting

*J.P. Riley*

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**J.P. Riley : Napoleon and the World War of 1813: Lessons in Coalition Warfighting** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Napoleon and the World War of 1813: Lessons in Coalition Warfighting:

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Napoleon By Brasidas Napoleon and the world war of 1813: Lessons in coalition warfighting J.P Riley, a Brigadier in the British Army has undertaken a work of vast scope that focuses on a narrow question--how to coalitions work? Napoleon in fact led a world war in 1813, one that was fought with allies and partners, some willing and some reluctant, from the Great Lakes of North America to the barren windswept highlands of Spain, into the decisive theater of central Europe. Arrayed against Napoleon was the 6th Coalition, and grouping of strange bedfellows if ever there was one. As Riley so ably points out, though, by 1813 Napoleon was not sure just what he wanted from the war other than a continuation of policies that were already failing, especially the Continental System. The members of the 6th Coalition knew exactly what simple object they wanted to achieve--the destruction of Napoleon and his removal from power. To organize a work that tackles this topic, Riley breaks the war into three parts, North America, Spain and the Mediterranean, and Central Europe. After a brief introduction that assesses the Continental System, Napoleon as a coalition commander, and what made the 6th Coalition different from the preceding five, Riley sums up his introduction with a compelling case for examining 1813 not as a year that led up to and ended at Leipzig, but a year in which two continents and three theaters of war were intricately interwoven, and how the actions in one directly and dynamically affected the other two, creating in effect a world war. Riley then launches into a detailed examination of the campaigns of maneuver in Central Europe. He shows the caginess of the experienced leaders of the coalition armies, who seek to create pressure on Napoleon without becoming decisively engaged. To the division commander fighting a frontal attack in a small village at a bridgehead, he and his soldiers were no doubt decisively engaged. But to the corps, group and army group commanders, they "baited the bear" without getting too close. Riley does a fine job of showing the four decisive factors of 1813 in Central Europe. First, Napoleon no longer has all of his marshals with him, and no longer enjoys a superiority in numbers of battalions and artillery pieces. Second, the opposing commanders have suffered enough defeats to be very careful in dealing with Napoleon. Third, while members are reducing troop strength and contributions to Napoleon, the Russians and Austrians are committing whole divisions to the 6th Coalition, a coalition that just keeps gaining strength. Lastly, while Napoleon is trying to maintain his role as head of state and government as well as field commander, his enemies have no such confusion--they just want to defeat Napoleon. Riley could have added a fifth piece to this analysis. I believe that the decisive dynamic of 1813 was Tsar Alexander I. Young, determined, dynamic, he was in many ways the driving force and charismatic leader who drove the 6th Coalition to success in Paris. Napoleon, now in his 15th year of warfare, was still brilliant, determined and capable, but was also tired, older and distracted. Riley does a good job in pages 115-130 of exploring the Ten Weeks' Truce, and Napoleon's fall campaign design and implementation. Riley also spends the extra money to put great maps in this portion of the book to enable the reader to clearly see both the operational and tactical design. While the Central European Campaigns have been studied many times, the influence of tactics on strategy, and vice versa, is a first in Riley's work. Likewise the campaign in Spain and Italy, the Mediterranean Theater of Operations in 1813. While a great deal has been written about the Spanish Ulcer, it is the confluence of naval and land actions, the importance of coordinated coalition actions and the resultant impacts on Napoleon's ability to command, rule and influence strategy in Europe that is so important, and again Riley does a commendable job. Finally, in the North American campaign, Riley does a superb job of mapping out the actions there that were an extension of the war in Europe. Americans may have thought that this was a "local" action against the British, but to the 6th Coalition, what happened in Toronto was just as important as what happened in Spain and Prussia. Overall, this is superb book that very well examines the influences of politics, tactical actions and strategic intent in one book. Even with a deep knowledge of Napoleon and his wars, you will find this a hard read, but it is well worth it, especially as there are a great many lessons there for the conflict the United States finds itself in now. 1 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Nothing Special By Nicholas Roberts I was not impressed by this book one bit. It covers all of the major campaigns in Europe and America during the year 1813. The title is very misleading. The book is nothing more than a description of the campaigns that occurred at the time and there is not much new information included. There is nothing about coalition warfare that is new until literally the last two pages of the book. This is basically a very long essay. Get it if you want but I did not find anything special about it.

This analysis of the world war between Napoleon and the 6th coalition in 1813 covers operations in Europe, Spain and North America. It examines the differences between alliances and coalitions, comparing the long-term international relationships in alliances and the short-term union of coalitions.