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1750–1850

# Napoleonic Governance in the Netherlands and Northwest Germany

## Conquest, Incorporation, and Integration

Martijn van der Burg



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## Praise for *Napoleonic Governance in the Netherlands and Northwest Germany*

“Van der Burg presents an innovative trans-regional study of Napoleonic governance in the often-overlooked northern periphery of the Empire. This book carefully examines the Empire’s administrative structure in the north, focusing on the heterogeneous community of prefects and subprefects as ‘tools of incorporation’, binding the regions to the central state. His rich comparative analysis highlights the incomplete integration of the north and makes important contributions to our understanding of the Empire and its legacy of state building.”

—Katherine Aaslestad, *West Virginia University, Morgantown, USA*

“Martijn van der Burg makes a vital contribution to the burgeoning scholarly literature on Napoleonic Europe in this well researched, carefully constructed volume. His analysis of this somewhat neglected, but important, part of Napoleon’s hegemony will become essential reading for all students and specialists of Napoleonic Europe. Van der Burg brings the riches of recent Dutch and German scholarship on the Napoleonic period, hitherto denied to an Anglophone readership, to say nothing of his own insight into Napoleonic rule in these complex regions. He delineates the course of Napoleonic rule here with clarity and acute attention to detail. This is a worthy addition to the Napoleonic renaissance in historiography.”

—Michael Broers, *University of Oxford, UK*

“A thorough, transparent and important comparative study into the content, dynamics, limits and results of Napoleonic governance, and the role of the (sub) prefects here within, in the Netherlands and Northwest Germany. Original, well-written and a very welcome contribution to the historiography of these still understudied areas in the Napoleonic years, as well as to Napoleonic historiography in general.”

—Johan Joor, *International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, The Netherlands*

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## CHAPTER 1

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# Introduction: Napoleonic Governance and the Integration of Europe

**Abstract** This study is concerned with the ways in which the present-day Netherlands and Northwest Germany were integrated into the Napoleonic Empire, by replacing local institutions and traditional governing practices with French ones. This process of running the Empire is referred to as Napoleonic governance. Traditionally, little attention was given to the dynamics of French rule in conquered Europe. Nationalistic tendencies long obstructed a neutral view of Napoleon's treatment of conquered Europe, certainly when it came to the Dutch and Northwest German regions. It was assumed French reforms were accepted unconditionally by local populations. Recent research shows that in newly acquired lands, officials often had to proceed differently. However, the northern periphery of the Napoleonic Empire is not yet fully explored. The premise of this study is that a (trans)regional perspective can lead to new interpretations. Napoleonic governance is analyzed by distinguishing between the phases of conquest, incorporation, and integration. In a broader sense, the study aims to gain a better understanding of the difficulties that have been inherent to workings of the Napoleonic Empire.

**Keywords** Napoleonic governance • Netherlands • Northwest Germany • Historiography • Empire-building

## EMPIRE-BUILDING AND ITS LIMITS

By 1810, the Napoleonic Empire, almost at the height of its power, encompassed much of Continental Europe. The vast European Empire was the outcome of more than a decade of French power politics. Soon after general Napoleon Bonaparte had seized power in 1799, he strove to unite Europe under the leadership of the French. Initially, he formed alliances and founded vassal states, but increasingly he sought to bind the nations of Europe to France by conquering them and transforming them into French departments.<sup>1</sup> Napoleon continued a policy that was developed earlier by French revolutionaries. Present-day Belgium and the German territories situated on the left bank of the Rhine had already been conquered by French forces and incorporated into the French Republic. After that, large parts of Central Europe and Italy gradually followed. As his Empire grew, Bonaparte began to fantasize about a unified Europe—an entity organized according to his principles. His desire to rule from above and to destroy local diversity was a recurring element in his policy.<sup>2</sup> Admittedly, Napoleon never had a definite masterplan for Europe, but undeniably he did start to regard uniformity as essential.<sup>3</sup>

In the North, the Kingdom of Holland and the Hanseatic cities and principalities of Northwest Germany, in 1810, were not yet incorporated into the Empire. Although they were within the Napoleonic sphere of influence, Napoleon Bonaparte long believed a certain autonomy for these regions was in his interest. Other measures, like military pressure and invoking *coups d'état*, were considered sufficient. Nevertheless, driven by ambitions and growing fears of British interventions at the North Sea Coast, he eventually put an end to the Dutch state, Hanseatic city-states, and many German principalities in Northwest Germany. Soon after, Catalonia and the Illyrian Provinces in the northern Balkans, would also, albeit briefly, be incorporated, expanding the French Empire to its maximum territorial extent, comprising no less than 130 departments.

Throughout his reign, Napoleon's reforms focused on the construction of a centralized bureaucratic state, characterized by uniform and rational

<sup>1</sup>Jean Tulard, 'Les politiques européennes de Napoléon', in: T. Lentz ed., *Napoléon et l'Europe* (Paris 2005) 427–429.

<sup>2</sup>Annie Jourdan, *L'empire de Napoléon* (Paris 2000) 125.

<sup>3</sup>Thierry Lentz, 'Imperial France in 1808 and beyond', in: M. Broers, P. Hicks and A. Guimerá ed., *The Napoleonic empire and the new European political culture* (Basingstoke 2012) 34–35.

structures in the French style. On the one hand, it was simply efficient for the governability of the Empire to introduce French institutions and personnel in the newly acquired territories.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, many French officials were convinced that they were the sole driving force behind the ‘modernization’ (understood as ‘Francization’) of Europe.<sup>5</sup> Certainly, hardliners among them felt contempt for local traditions. The intended export of the French model was without doubt partly an expression of feelings of cultural superiority.<sup>6</sup> However, it was tremendously difficult for the Napoleonic government to immediately create support for the formation of a new modern state without taking into account local circumstances and wishes. Although scholars disagree over the extent to which the central government was willing to compromise, for the French officials ‘the price of collaboration was’, in the words of historian Stuart Woolf, ‘the acceptance of limits’.<sup>7</sup>

## NAPOLEONIC GOVERNANCE IN THE REGIONS

This study discusses the ways in which Napoleon tried to integrate the present-day Netherlands and Northwest Germany into the French Empire, by replacing local institutions and traditional governing practices with French ones. More specifically, it deals with the imposition of a French system of governance on the conquered Dutch and German territories. By *Napoleonic governance* I do not narrowly refer to the administrative structures of the Empire, but more broadly the process of governing this entity—or less abstractly: the ways in which the expanding Napoleonic Empire was run, not merely at the top, but also in the regions. Recent scholarship increasingly emphasizes that governance goes beyond the authority of the central state, and acknowledges the diversity of governing practices in past and present. To quote scholar Mark Bevir: ‘Governance is explained by the narratives that the relevant actors first inherit as historical

<sup>4</sup>D. G. Wright, *Napoleon and Europe* (Harlow 1984) 65–67.

<sup>5</sup>Stuart Woolf, ‘Napoleon and Europe revisited’, *Modern & Contemporary France* 8 (2000) 471. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713685288>

<sup>6</sup>Michael Broers, ‘Napoleon, Charlemagne, and Lotharingia: Acculturation and the boundaries of Napoleonic Europe’, *The Historical Journal* 44 (2001) 178. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3133664>; Aurélien Lignereux, *L’Empire des Français: 1799–1815* (Paris 2012).

<sup>7</sup>Stuart Woolf, *Napoleon’s integration of Europe* (London and New York 1991) 115.

traditions and then revise in response to dilemmas’, which, according to Bevir, gives governance a greater explanatory power than other terms.<sup>8</sup>

This approach sets *governance* apart from *regime*—a term that is frequently used when referring to the rule of Napoleon and his collaborators. I have chosen *Napoleonic governance* over *Napoleonic regime*, since governance explicitly sees the running of a state as a dynamic process, with multiple actors, and not as a somewhat static set of regulations dictated by an omnipotent leader—the latter being the more institutional approach stressing the primacy of the central government. Moreover, in daily speech, the term regime carries a negative connotation, implying a position in scholarly debates on the nature of Napoleonic rule. Such an a priori assumption might yield biased results. Instead of stressing the, unquestionably very authoritarian, leadership of Napoleon Bonaparte, I focus on lesser-known individuals who were tasked with empire-building in the regions. Undeniably, there has been large-scale suffering because of Napoleonic measures and exploitation; but my primary objective is analyzing how those measures reached the regions, were interpreted there, and interacted with existing governing practices.

Finally, using the governance concept has a practical reason. Working in four languages brings the problem of false friends. ‘Administration/administratie’ and ‘gouvernement/government’ have different meanings in Dutch, English, French and German. Nor do these fully correspond to Germanic equivalents like ‘Regierung/regering’, ‘Verwaltung’, or ‘bestuur’. And the concept of police/politie/Polizey could also be included, since it was not until the Napoleonic period that these concepts gradually became distinct from each other.<sup>9</sup> ‘Governance’ circumvents such translation difficulties.

Territories conquered by French were faced with the introduction of an extremely hierarchical and top-down state model. Yet, as Michael Broers has argued, the Napoleonic Empire was actually centralized like a ‘spider’s web’. There were five main lines along which the central government in Paris attempted to assert its power over the farthest corners of the Empire: the Ministries of the Interior, General Police, War, Finance, and Justice. These branches of government were firmly separated; each branch had its

<sup>8</sup> Mark Bevir, *A theory of governance* (Berkeley 2013) 1–5.

<sup>9</sup> Igor Moullier, ‘Police et politique de la ville sous Napoléon’, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* (2007) 117–139. <https://doi.org/10.3917/rhmc.542.0117>

own competencies, spheres of action, and mechanisms of self-regulation.<sup>10</sup> In this study, I explore a significant line from Paris: the prefectural system. This branch was part of the Ministry of the Interior and, in theory, the vehicle of choice for state power. So-called *préfets* (prefects) were the heads of a department, the main administrative units within the French state, and delegated tasks to the *sous-préfets* (subprefects). Conversely, local information had to come back to the ministries fast; the prefectural system has been called ‘the interface between a centralized state and a local society’.<sup>11</sup>

Complicating matters, Napoleonic officials in many incorporated territories often had to deal with an intermediary governance body set up by the French government, for instance in Hamburg and Amsterdam. Such intermediary *gouvernements généraux* had an ambiguous place within the structure of the Empire.

Emphasis on these specific aspects of the functioning of the Napoleonic state also relates to current discussions on the nature of Napoleonic interventions in Europe. Regarding the French treatment of the incorporated lands and subject states, there are essentially two opposing interpretations. Historians either stress, often depending on their geographical area of study, the positive reforming influences of Napoleon’s system of governance, or underline the negative effects of severe exploitation and harsh domination. Geoffrey Ellis has summed it up as the ‘continuing debates of the kicks and kindnesses of French rule’.<sup>12</sup>

For instance, Alexander Grab has stressed that Napoleon was more than an exploiting dictator and his reform programs left a great, often constructive impact on Europe, especially the export of the modern central state.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Brendan Simms has pointed out positive consequences of the Napoleonic experience. Napoleonic officials in Europe ‘created some of the preconditions for a capitalist, legally equal, religiously

<sup>10</sup>Michael Broers, ‘Pride and prejudice: The Napoleonic Empire through the eyes of its rulers’, in: U. Planert ed., *Napoleon’s empire: European politics in global perspective* (Basingstoke 2016) 309; Michael Broers, *Europe under Napoleon, 1799–1815* (London and New York 1996) 54–55.

<sup>11</sup>Gavin Daly, *Inside Napoleonic France. State and society in Rouen, 1800–1815* (Aldershot 2001) 64.

<sup>12</sup>Geoffrey Ellis, *The Napoleonic empire* (2nd ed.; Basingstoke 2003) 93–94. For the German case see T. C. W. Blanning, ‘The French revolution and the modernization of Germany’, *Central European History* 22 (1989) 109–129. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938900011468>

<sup>13</sup>Alexander Grab, *Napoleon and the transformation of Europe* (Basingstoke 2003) 205–206.

tolerant and rationally governed bourgeois society’, a requisite for the formation of the nation-state.<sup>14</sup> Michael Broers, however, has underscored the harshness and rigidity of Napoleonic personnel. Not denying the pragmatism (or even reasonableness) of individual Napoleonic state servants, according to Broers it was with the repressive forces, such as military and police, that power really lay. These men were hardly concerned with appeasing and enlightening the newly conquered subjects—certainly not during the closing years of the Empire.<sup>15</sup> And Pierre Horn, who has more recently investigated the cultural distance between French authorities and the populations of East Belgium, West Rhineland and Luxembourg, points to increasing exhaustion of the *pays réunies* and economic crises (such as poor harvests, inflation, taxation, and declining international trade). Horn’s study suggests that many officials may have been willing to listen to local concerns, but could not thwart negative measures from the imperial core.<sup>16</sup>

More historians could be quoted here—but the main point is that the perspective of researchers (top-down or bottom-up, center or periphery) plays a role in their position in the debate on ‘the kicks and kindnesses of French rule’, and thereby their evaluation of Napoleonic governance. The imperial authorities in Paris are often taken as the starting point for a study, not actors at a lower level in the hierarchy. But as Stuart Woolf has argued, Napoleonic representatives in the regions, such as prefects and their collaborators were ‘closer to the ground’ than other authorities. Due to the range of their responsibilities they provide good information on the local responses to French governance. Given the wide powers of the prefects and their role as the ‘eyes and ears’ of the central government, their archives harbor a wealth of information about local reactions to centralist measures, which unfortunately are not often used by historians.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Brendan Simms, *The struggle for mastery in Germany, 1779–1850* (Basingstoke 1998) 88.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Broers, ‘Cultural imperialism in a European context? Political culture and cultural politics in Napoleonic Italy’, *Past and Present* (2001) 152–180. <https://doi.org/10.1093/past/170.1.152>; Broers, *Europe under Napoleon, 1799–1815*, 67.

<sup>16</sup> Pierre Horn, *Le défi de l’enracinement napoléonien entre Rhin et Meuse 1810–1814: L’opinion publique dans les départements de la Roër, de l’Ourthe, des Forêts et de la Moselle* (Berlin 2017).

<sup>17</sup> Woolf, ‘Napoleon and Europe revisited’, 474.

## HISTORIOGRAPHY ON NAPOLEON AND EUROPE

Napoleonic governance, or administration in general for that matter, has never really captured the hearts and minds of historians the way, for instance, statesmen and generals have done. Compared to other aspects of Napoleonic history, there is little literature on the European dimension of Napoleonic governance. Up until the late 1980s, historiography on the Napoleonic Empire was dominated by military history, or by biographical studies of Bonaparte. Whether past historians criticized or admired Napoleon, many emphasized the vision of one man. Moreover, many publications were rather francocentric, assuming that French restructurings were accepted unconditionally by local populations. Little attention was given to the dynamics of French rule in conquered Europe. Since the 1990s, however, there has been a shift toward studies focusing on core-periphery relations and on the dynamics of integration into the Empire. It has become clear that there, French had to act differently, often more cautiously.<sup>18</sup> By exploring the impact of Napoleonic rule in Europe, scholars reveal responses of the Europeans to French imperialism.

Stuart Woolf's pioneering study *Napoleon's integration of Europe* or *Napoléon et la conquête de l'Europe* (1990/1991)—note the differences in title—is often cited as one of the first studies that examined the fundamental problems with Napoleonic attempts to force the heterogeneous European societies into a single mold.<sup>19</sup> It was intended to encourage historians to breach away from the excessive attention given to Bonaparte and metropolitan France. Woolf argued that the Napoleonic Empire could and should be examined by looking beyond the Emperor. Instead, integration attempts are explored by looking both through the eyes of the central government and at responses of local communities to Napoleonic measures. Woolf encouraged European historians to look beyond their national borders; regretting the 'hegemony [of] deep-rooted political and national imperatives of European historiography'.<sup>20</sup>

Historian Isser Woloch also contributed to a different understanding of governance in the Napoleonic Empire, by moving the attention given to

<sup>18</sup> Steven Englund, 'Monstre sacré: The question of cultural imperialism and the Napoleonic Empire', *The Historical Journal* 51 (2008) 216–217. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X07006656>

<sup>19</sup> Stuart Woolf, *Napoléon et la conquête de l'Europe* (Paris 1990); Woolf, *Napoleon's integration of Europe*.

<sup>20</sup> Woolf, *Napoleon's integration of Europe*, 477.



the Emperor, toward the men in the imperial entourage. Those have been influential and not necessarily staunch supporters of Napoleon.<sup>21</sup> And in *The New Regime*, Woloch calls for a shift from a ‘top-down’ to a ‘bottom-up’ view on the French state. Woloch questions the extent to which the state could impose its will on local communities. By studying state formation from the bottom up, Woloch argues that Napoleon (and his Revolutionary predecessors) succeeded mainly by pragmatism and negotiation—a legacy he left to the Restoration monarchs.<sup>22</sup>

Likewise, Oxford historian Michael Broers has examined (dis)continuity in his influential studies *Europe under Napoleon* (1996) and *Europe after Napoleon* (1996).<sup>23</sup> The Emperor was well aware of diversity in Europe, and, Broers argues, this understanding entailed a form of cultural imperialism.<sup>24</sup> Broers has suggested that the Napoleonic Empire consisted of a well-integrated ‘inner empire’, an intermediate zone, and an ‘outer empire’ where Napoleon’s rule was constantly contested. Broers argues that many of the incorporated territories were, in fact, better integrated into the Empire than large parts of the French rural areas.<sup>25</sup>

Many scholars have embraced the ‘New Napoleonic History’. Geoffrey Ellis, Annie Jourdan, Alexander Grab, and Aurélien Lignereux (to name but a few) have written well-documented, studies on the Empire from a European viewpoint.<sup>26</sup> However, in monographs and conference volumes, the imperial North Sea coast and its hinterland are not well represented, certainly not when it comes to Napoleonic governance. Partly this can be contributed to historians’ scant knowledge of Dutch or German, but even in German-language and Dutch-language scholarship, relatively few studies have been published on the period of French rule. Long, both in Northwest Germany and in the Netherlands, the influence of traditional anti-French historiography was significant. The period was seen as an interlude, which at most would have served as the starting point of a modern national

<sup>21</sup> Isser Woloch, *Napoleon and his collaborators: The making of a dictatorship* (New York 2001).

<sup>22</sup> Isser Woloch, *The new regime. Transformations of the French civic order, 1789–1820s* (New York 1995).

<sup>23</sup> Broers, *Europe under Napoleon, 1799–1815*, 4; Michael Broers, *Europe after Napoleon. Revolution, reaction, and romanticism, 1814–1848* (Manchester 1996).

<sup>24</sup> Broers, ‘Cultural imperialism’.

<sup>25</sup> Broers, ‘Napoleon, Charlemagne, and Lotharingia’.

<sup>26</sup> Ellis, *The Napoleonic empire*; Jourdan, *L’empire de Napoléon*; Grab, *Napoleon and the transformation of Europe*; Lignereux, *L’Empire des Français*.

consciousness. This characterization is a legacy of nineteenth-century historians who emphasized the foreignness of the Napoleonic period.

### *German Historiography*

In Germany, the creation of a unified state under Prussian leadership intensified the neglect of the Napoleonic period. The creations of federal states under Napoleon (the so-called Confederation of the Rhine) and after Napoleon (the German Confederation) were considered historical ‘errors’ that did not fit national history.<sup>27</sup> However, more and more historians aim to approach the period more neutrally, recognizing the diversity of German experiences.<sup>28</sup> When it comes to a possible reappraisal of the Napoleonic era in Northwest Germany, the main difficulty has always been the territorial and geopolitical reordering, contributing to a historiographical fragmentation (see also the problems with archival sources, below). There has been little institutional continuity before and after the years 1806–1814, therefore studies on the Revolutionary and Napoleonic era in North(west) Germany tend to focus on specific towns or regions.

In the early 1970s, Antoinette Joulia wrote a well-documented doctoral thesis on the Ems-Supérieur department and several articles on the Hanseatic departments.<sup>29</sup> Concurrently, Jean Vidalenc, who primarily worked on Old France, published two articles on Napoleonic governance in the Hanseatic departments.<sup>30</sup> In 1981, the first edition of Elisabeth Fehrenbach’s *Vom Ancien Régime zum Wiener Kongress* was published, presenting a thorough and concise analysis of the Revolutionary Period in Germany. She shifted emphasis from Prussia to the Confederacy of the

<sup>27</sup> Andreas Fahrmeier, ‘Centralisation versus particularism in the “Third Germany”’, in: M. Rowe ed., *Collaboration and resistance in Napoleonic Europe. State-formation in an age of upheaval, c. 1800–1815* (Basingstoke 2003) 107–120.

<sup>28</sup> For example, Alan Forrest and Peter H. Wilson ed., *The bee and the eagle. Napoleonic France and the end of the holy roman empire, 1806* (Basingstoke 2008).

<sup>29</sup> Antoinette Joulia, ‘Les institutions administratives des départements hanséatiques’, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 17 (1970) 880–892; Antoinette Joulia, *Le département de l’Ems-Supérieur 1810–1813. Étude de la mise en place du système administratif en milieu allemand* (Ph.D. thesis Strassbourg 1972); Antoinette Joulia, ‘Ein französischer Verwaltungsbezirk in Deutschland: Das Oberemsdepartement (1810–1813)’, *Osnabrücker Mitteilungen* 80 (1973) 21–102.

<sup>30</sup> Jean Vidalenc, ‘Les notables des départements hanséatiques’, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 17 (1970) 777–794; Jean Vidalenc, ‘Les “départements hanséatiques” et l’administration napoléonienne’, *Francia* 1 (1973) 414–450.

Rhine, with some coverage of Northwest German areas outside the Confederacy. The book also explored the study of cultural transfer in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic period—an early transnational approach that received an impetus, late twentieth century.<sup>31</sup> Concurrently, Thomas Nipperdey published his *Deutsche Geschichte 1800–1866* (1983) in which Napoleon's impact received serious attention, starting with the sentence: 'Am Anfang war Napoleon' ('In the beginning was Napoleon').<sup>32</sup>

From an urban-historical perspective, in his study *Hamburg im Zeitalter der Französischen Revolution und Napoleons*, Burghart Schmidt examined many aspects of Hamburg in the time of the French Revolution and Napoleon. He wanted to go beyond a simplistic interpretation German-French relations, stating that previous historians were too much influenced by national(ist) interpretations. Schmidt wanted to distance himself from the strong distinction between 'victims' and 'oppressors' that is present in traditional historiography. Schmidt acknowledges that Germans suffered under many harsh measures taken by the French authorities, but he also points to the positive effects of modernization, and to cooperation.<sup>33</sup>

Of great interest is the work of Katherine Aaslestad on Northwest German culture in the Napoleonic period, with an emphasis on the city-state Hamburg, specifically its impact on local, regional and national identity formation. In her book *Place and politics*, Aaslestad investigates transformations in civic culture and republicanism, against the background of socio-economic changes. In the Napoleonic period, local identities remained important, but also regional ones emerged, within the context of German national thought.<sup>34</sup> Her research provides insights into how local populations responded to Napoleonic governance, in a time of

<sup>31</sup> Elisabeth Fehrenbach, *Vom Ancien Régime zum Wiener Kongress* (4th ed.; München 2001); Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink and Rolf Reichardt ed., *Kulturtransfer im Epochenumbruch: Frankreich-Deutschland 1770 bis 1815* (Leipzig 1997).

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1800–1866: Bürgerwelt und starker Staat* (München 1983) 11.

<sup>33</sup> Burghart Schmidt, *Hamburg im Zeitalter der Französischen Revolution und Napoleons (1789–1813)* (Hamburg 1998) 741–743.

<sup>34</sup> Katherine Aaslestad, *Place and politics: Local identity, civic culture and German nationalism in North Germany during the Revolutionary Era* (Leiden 2005) 10–11; Katherine Aaslestad and Karen Hagemann, '1806 and its aftermath: Revisiting the period of the Napoleonic Wars in German Central European historiography', *Central European History* 39 (2006) 547–579.

economic crisis and military exploitation. Aaslestad argues that reactions to Napoleon's measures were, first and foremost, motivated by local circumstances. State interventions actually 'generated new forms of regionalism', such as a broader Hanseatic identity, simultaneously such regional tendencies would inspire nineteenth-century national thinkers.<sup>35</sup>

Lastly, Helmut Stubbe da Luz, an expert on civilian-military relations, has worked on occupation, during the Napoleonic period in Northwest Germany, but also in a broader sense.<sup>36</sup> Stubbe da Luz has extensively published on the three Hanseatic departments as a whole. His '*Franzosenzeit*' in *Norddeutschland* is one of the few monographs on the matter, and it devotes ample attention to Napoleonic governance.<sup>37</sup> Importantly, in his edited volume *Statthalterregimes*, Stubbe da Luz initiated a comparison of different intermediary governments in Italy, the Netherlands and Germany (the *gouvernements généraux*) in Napoleonic Europe. Basing himself on several case studies written by international historians, Stubbe da Luz analyzes the diffusion of the *gouvernement général* as an instrument of integration, though he prefers the term *Besetzung* (occupation) as the lens to study cases through.<sup>38</sup>

### *Dutch Historiography*

There are notable differences and similarities between German and Dutch historiography on the years of Napoleon's rule. An obvious difference is, of course, the continuity between the Dutch departments and the later Kingdom of the Netherlands, and Belgium, opposed to the discontinuity in Germany. Virtually all Dutch departments were converted into provinces and, apart from the rupture between North and South in 1830, state borders changed little. This stability facilitated the emergence of a national historiography. Strikingly similar to Germany (taking Prussia as *pars pro toto*), the establishment of the new monarchy in 1814–1815 was

<sup>35</sup> Katherine Aaslestad, 'Paying for war: Experiences of Napoleonic rule in the Hanseatic Cities', *Central European History* 39 (2006) 675. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938906000215>

<sup>36</sup> Helmut Stubbe da Luz, *Okkupanten und Okkupierte: Napoleons Statthalterregimes in den Hansestädten (6 vols.) 2004–2013* (München 2004).

<sup>37</sup> Helmut Stubbe da Luz, '*Franzosenzeit*' in *Norddeutschland (1803–1814). Napoleons Hanseatische Departements* (Bremen 2003).

<sup>38</sup> Helmut Stubbe da Luz ed., *Statthalterregimes—Napoleons Generalgouvernements in Italien, Holland und Deutschland (1808–1814)* (Hamburg 2016).

accompanied by a process of collective amnesia. Only events that could be interpreted as a prelude to the nineteenth-century nation-state with the House of Orange-Nassau were remembered. The Napoleonic period did not ideologically fit in with the newly constructed Dutch monarchy. Historian Matthijs Lok has made clear how from 1813 onward, the Napoleonic period was simply ignored. This was somewhat more straightforward than in Germany since, in contrast to Germany, there was a single monarch, William I, whose government pursued an unofficial policy of ‘forgetting’. Many of the actions during the Napoleonic period were blamed on the French, and the contributions of the Dutch forgotten or glossed over.<sup>39</sup>

Due to this historical amnesia, until the twenty-first century, there were only two monographs on the Napoleonic period in the Netherlands. Firstly, Johanna Naber’s well-received book *Overheersching en vrijwording* (first edition 1909; revised edition 1913) which offered a nuanced view of the period.<sup>40</sup> Naber carefully investigated many aspects of the years of integration and the end of Napoleon’s rule in the Netherlands. A few years later, *Inlijving en opstand* (1913) was published by Herman Theodoor Colenbrander. According to Colenbrander the Dutch under Napoleon had been characterized by a state of passivity. Colenbrander, a nationally orientated historian, focused on the House of Orange and its connections with Dutch history. The Napoleonic period was interpreted as merely a prologue to the establishment of the Dutch nation-state.<sup>41</sup> Colenbrander seems to have based significant parts of his book on *Overheersching en vrijwording*, without really acknowledging the work of Naber. Colenbrander’s book was also less thorough, but as a Leiden Professor his prestige was greater than the women’s rights activist Johanna Naber, therefore his evaluation of the Napoleonic period in the Netherlands would long be influential.<sup>42</sup>

The 1960s and 1970s saw a wave of new research into the years of Revolution and, to a much lesser extent, the Napoleonic period in the

<sup>39</sup> Matthijs Lok, *Windvanden: Napoleontische bestuurders in de Nederlandse en Franse restauratie (1813–1820)* (Amsterdam 2009) 166–167.

<sup>40</sup> Johanna W. A. Naber, *Overheersching en vrijwording: geschiedenis van Nederland tijdens de inlijving bij Frankrijk, juli 1810–november 1813* (Haarlem 1913).

<sup>41</sup> H. T. Colenbrander, *Inlijving en opstand* (Amsterdam 1913) 127.

<sup>42</sup> Maria Grever, ‘Naber, Johanna Wilhelmina Antoinette’, *Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon van Nederland* (2015). <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/vrouwenlexicon/lemmata/data/Naber>

Netherlands. For instance, studies by Robert Palmer, Simon Schama, and C. H. E. de Wit—who all agreed the French model during the long Dutch Age of Revolution (c. 1780–1815) was less dominant than had been portrayed.<sup>43</sup> In the 1980s, new research focused mainly on late-eighteenth-century political thought: new research by historians like Niek van Sas, Wijnand Mijnhardt, Renger de Bruin, Stephan Klein, and Joost Rosendaal cleared the way for new scholars of Napoleonic history to re-evaluate the position of the Dutch within the Napoleonic Empire.<sup>44</sup>

Since 2000 more serious attention has been given to Napoleonic Netherlands. Johan Joor, in his *De Adelaar en het Lam* (*The Eagle and the Lamb*), made clear that the Dutch contested Napoleonic rule. Joor showed that in every corner of the Kingdom of Holland (1806–1810), and later the Dutch imperial departments, inhabitants challenged Napoleonic measures. Dutch uprisings were primarily local in nature, but such protests successfully destabilized the state. According to Joor, previous historians neglected these struggles because they only looked for conflicts that were explicitly pro-Orange and anti-French.<sup>45</sup> Literary scholar Lotte Jensen works on Dutch resistance literature, and its impact on Dutch national thought. According to Jensen, certain forms of protest or opposition did contribute to national feelings under Napoleon. She states that from a cultural and literary viewpoint, protest was embedded in a national context.<sup>46</sup>

Bart Verheijen's book *Nederland onder Napoleon* (*The Netherlands under Napoleon*) echoes the title of the earlier-mentioned work by Michael Broers. Verheijen studies political-cultural identity formation, and has shown that Frenchmen not necessarily worked together in good harmony, and, conversely, Dutchmen were certainly not all preoccupied with

<sup>43</sup>R. R. Palmer, 'Much in little: The Dutch Revolution of 1795', *The Journal of Modern History* 26 (1954) 15–35. C. H. E. de Wit, *De strijd tussen aristocratie en democratie in Nederland, 1780–1848: kritisch onderzoek van een historisch beeld en herwaarderung van een periode* (Heerlen 1965). Simon Schama, *Patriotten en bevrijders: revolutie in de Noordelijke Nederlanden, 1780–1813* (Amsterdam 1989).

<sup>44</sup>For example, N. C. F. van Sas, *De metamorfose van Nederland. Van oude orde naar moderniteit, 1750–1900* (Amsterdam 2004).

<sup>45</sup>Johan Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam: onrust, opruiing en onwilligheid in Nederland ten tijde van het Koninkrijk Holland en de inlijving bij het Franse keizerrijk (1806–1813)* (Amsterdam 2000).

<sup>46</sup>Lotte Jensen, *Verzet tegen Napoleon* (Nijmegen 2013).

proto-nationalism.<sup>47</sup> By taking political debate as a point of departure, Verheijen deepens the insights of Johan Joor, as well as those of Lotte Jensen: for instance, he links regional rural upheaval concerning national taxes with national thought of writers and poets.

Many aspects of the Dutch Napoleonic experience deserve further attention. Joor, Jensen, and Verheijen have given valuable insights into popular protest, state repression, identity formation and public debate, yet a critical study on how the Empire was constructed and run is lacking.<sup>48</sup> To quote Matthijs Lok: ‘A study of the administration of the Dutch provinces as part of the huge Napoleonic empire, which integrates the Dutch case in international research on this topic and does not regard the years 1810–1813 from the perspective of its outcome, is therefore urgently needed’.<sup>49</sup> This can also be said for the even lesser studied Hanseatic departments.

### *Transregional Perspectives*

As noted above, the history of the area under scrutiny was long written from nationally defined viewpoints, sharply discriminating between presumed ‘oppressors’ and ‘victims’. Consequently, neighboring Netherlands and Northwest Germany have often been studied in isolation. Changing spatial frameworks can however lead to new insights, both transnational and transregional, thus questioning the nation-state as a unit of analysis.<sup>50</sup> Particularly, a transregional study of Napoleonic governance can be relevant. Until recent, there have been few studies concerning its reception at lower levels, certainly not in conquered Europe. Yet the scope of Napoleon’s centralist reforms can perhaps best be measured regionally, since ‘Paris’ specifically wanted to destroy traditional diversity. Serious

<sup>47</sup>Bart Verheijen, *Nederland onder Napoleon: partijstrijd en natievorming 1801–1813* (Nijmegen 2017).

<sup>48</sup>An indispensable overview of institutional changes, literature and archives is Joke Roelevink, *Onderzoeksgids bestuur en administratie van de Bataafs-Franse tijd, 1795–1813* (Den Haag 2012). <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bataafsfransetijd>

<sup>49</sup>Matthijs Lok, ‘The bicentennial of ‘1813–1815’ and national history writing: Remarks on a new consensus’, *BMGN—Low Countries Historical Review* 130 (2015) 118. <https://doi.org/10.18352/bmgn-lchr.10148>

<sup>50</sup>Eric Storm, ‘The spatial turn and the history of nationalism. Nationalism between regionalism and transnational approaches’, in: S. Berger and E. Storm ed., *Writing the history of nationalism* (London 2019) 215–238.

clashes must have occurred between the pursuit of Napoleonic governance and the wishes of communities. Fortunately, fresh studies on state-building from the bottom-up provide new images of Napoleonic rule in the regions.

Historians increasingly pay attention to alternative regional narratives, such as Katherine Aaslestad and Michael Rowe, who stress the importance of regional approaches to nuance the one-sided image of Napoleonic times as only a period of burgeoning national consciousness. Transregional is Aaslestad's 'Lost neutrality and economic warfare', which treats the Napoleonic Netherlands, Northwest Germany, and Southern Denmark as a whole. She argues that around 1800, North Europeans were not unfamiliar with (economic) warfare and exploitative occupations, but the scale and scope were unprecedented. In combination with the legacy of Napoleonic governance, such dramatic events fostered regionalism.<sup>51</sup>

This goes for many regions. For instance, Michael Rowe has examined the connections between regional and national identities in the German Rhineland. Rowe has shown how a regional identity did not form in opposition to the French, but how 'Rhenishness', primarily after the years of Napoleonic rule, had a problematic relationship with Prussian concepts of German identity. The Rhenish elites used the Napoleonic framework to secure their position, taking advantage of the problematic nature of Napoleonic governance.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, Brecht Deseure and Diederik Smit have demonstrated for post-Napoleonic Low Countries how the Restoration government took regional variations into account, for example, by reintroducing the provinces. For the new rulers, the appropriation of early modern institutions and sentiments was a key instrument in the creation of a new unified state, as long as regional differences were acknowledged.<sup>53</sup>

Lacunae in national or regional historiographies should also be considered in relation to the availability and completeness of regional archival material. In the Netherlands, thanks to the relative institutional continuity

<sup>51</sup> Katherine Aaslestad, 'Lost neutrality and economic warfare. Napoleonic warfare in Northern Europe, 1795–1815', in: R. Chickering and S. Förster ed., *War in an age of revolution, 1775–1815* (Cambridge 2010) 394.

<sup>52</sup> Michael Rowe, 'Between Empire and home town: Napoleonic rule on the Rhine, 1799–1814', *The Historical Journal* 42 (1999) 643–674. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X9900850X>

<sup>53</sup> Brecht Deseure and Diederik Smit, 'Pre-revolutionary provinces in a post-Napoleonic state', *BMGN—Low Countries Historical Review* 133 (2018) 98–121. <https://doi.org/10.18352/bmgn-lchr.10589>



between the Napoleonic departments and the current Dutch provinces, most historical official records are well preserved in national, provincial, and regional archives.<sup>54</sup> In contrast, continuous redrawing of Northwest German borders dispersed regional archival sources. Regrettably, the German situation is also complicated because of twentieth-century war damages. The archives of the Ems-Oriental department are in Aurich, but unfortunately incomplete. The well-preserved records of the Ems-Supérieur department are in Osnabrück. Since the department of Bouches-du-Weser was split in 1815 between Hannover and Oldenburg, its archives are divided between Bremen and Oldenburg. Sadly, Bouches-de-l'Elbe's archive was damaged in 1942 due to Second World War bombings. Most of the Lippe department's archival material can be consulted in Münster.<sup>55</sup>

In view of the limitations of this study, use has been made mainly of secondary literature, published sources, and a limited selection of archival material, such as correspondence between officials (regional and local), formal reports, memoranda, newspapers, and memoirs. Given the fragmentation of German source material, the analysis of the German departments is, in comparison to the Dutch departments, relatively more dependent on literature and published source material.

## QUESTIONS OF DEFINITION

This study is concerned with the 13 imperial departments which nowadays are part of the Netherlands and Germany and were integrated in 1810–1811. I have tried to transcend national histories by looking at the French departments in the present-day Netherlands and Northwest Germany in conjunction—territories which were referred to as the *départements de la Hollande* and the *départements (h)anséatiques*, respectively. Unfortunately, these terms can be confusing. Napoleonic plans to integrate both areas entailed the (re)definition of Dutch and German territories. Officials in Paris not seldom had a hard time distinguishing between the two regions; consequently, even some contemporary historians

<sup>54</sup> See <https://www.archieven.nl/>

<sup>55</sup> See Archive in Nordrhein-Westfalen, <https://www.archive.nrw.de/>; Archive in Niedersachsen und Bremen, <https://www.arcinsys.niedersachsen.de/>; Staatsarchiv Hamburg, <https://www.hamburg.de/staatsarchiv>

accidentally mix up the two areas. Vague distinctions between ‘Dutch’ and ‘German’ complicate the evaluation of Napoleonic governance.

Administratively, the government in Paris discriminated between the departments of *Hollande* (which corresponded with the *Gouvernement général* of Charles-François Lebrun in Amsterdam), the Hanseatic departments (supervised by General-Governor Davout in Hamburg), and three Dutch and German departments that did not fall under the authority of Amsterdam or Hamburg (Map 1.1).

Not all territories part of the *départements de la Hollande* were actually Dutch. Ems-Oriental (the present-day region of Ostfriesland) was a former Prussian province that had been incorporated into the Kingdom of Holland in 1807. Nevertheless, this ‘Dutch’ department fell under the Imperial Court in Hamburg. Furthermore, the lands that would later make up the Lippe department were initially part of three adjacent Dutch departments, thus part of the *départements de la Hollande*. But resistance from the local elite in Münster led to the creation of a separate German-speaking Lippe department, not under the supervision of the French in Amsterdam or Hamburg (more on this in [Chap. 5](#)). Nevertheless, some actors within the Empire (for instance, the *gendarmérie*, and to a certain extent the



**Map 1.1** Administrative division of the Dutch and Northwest German departments

intermediary government in Amsterdam) treated Lippe as part of ‘Holland’, and sometimes it was viewed as ‘Hanseatic’. Lippe can also be seen as an extension of the bordering departments of the Rhineland. For instance, it fell under the Imperial Court in Liège, and not the one in Hamburg.

Conversely, some parts belonging to the former Dutch Republic became an integral part of the Empire. The departments south of the Rhine—Bouches-de-l’Escaut (formerly the Dutch province of Zeeland) and Bouches-du-Rhin (Dutch Noord-Brabant) were not qualified as Dutch. The district of Breda was even merged with the existing Belgian department of Deux-Nèthes, probably due to its strategic value between the estuaries of the rivers Scheldt and Meuse.<sup>56</sup> In official discourse, the French presented the river Rhine as their natural border, therefore in the eyes of the Ministry of the Interior, these former Dutch territories were not part of ‘Holland’. In brief, ad hoc decisions based on cultural-linguistic aspects on the one hand, and pragmatism, on the other hand, redrew sub-national borders in a complicated manner.

Given these imprecise definitions, a distinction is made between ‘German’ and ‘Dutch’ departments (Map 1.2), based on various considerations. Firstly, as a matter of convenience, ‘Dutch departments’ are defined as the departments that formerly belonged to the Dutch Republic, were predominantly Dutch-speaking and would later form the present-day Netherlands. ‘(Northwest) German departments’ are defined as the largely German-speaking lands, including Lippe and Ems-Oriental/Ostfriesland, which formerly belonged to the Holy Roman Empire and today are part of Niedersachsen or Nordrhein-Westfalen. Secondly, when I refer to actions of the intermediary governments in Amsterdam or Hamburg these concern, of course, specifically the departments under their respective jurisdictions. Therefore, when interpreting French official documents of the time, it should be borne in mind that *Hollande* denotes the seven departments supervised by General-Governor Lebrun, and *départements (h)anseatiques* usually refers to the three departments which General-Governor Davout oversaw from Hamburg.

Another question of definition concerns the key terms ‘conquest’, ‘incorporation’, and ‘integration’. In the past, the Napoleonic period in the Netherlands and Northwest German has often been referred to simply

<sup>56</sup>Since the district of Breda was added to the department of Deux-Nèthes, it is excluded in the present study.



**Map 1.2** ‘Dutch’ and ‘German’ departments as defined in this study, with *préfectures* (departmental seats of government)

as *inlijving*/*Einverleibung* (incorporation) or *bezetting*/*Besetzung* (occupation). Here, I differentiate between ‘conquest’, ‘incorporation’, and ‘integration’.

Firstly, *conquest* is characterized by a change of power, whether or not by force, making one country controlling, partially or fully, the territory of another country. This is not necessarily a definitive violation of a nation’s sovereignty, since it does not mark the legal transfer of power. In the early modern period this notion largely overlapped with ‘occupation’, in the sense of *occupatio bellica*.<sup>57</sup> As said, particularly German historians have made use of the notion of ‘occupation’ as analytical concept. However, I choose ‘conquest’ over ‘occupation’, firstly, because of Napoleon’s frequent referrals to *pays conquis* and his preoccupation with *droit de conquête*. Secondly, many of the earlier-mentioned historians have already extensively explored the concept of occupation. And thirdly, Stuart Woolf doubts the explanatory value of ‘occupation’, as it does little justice to

<sup>57</sup>Peter M. R. Stirk, ‘The concept of military occupation in the era of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars’, *Comparative Legal History* 3 (2015) 64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2049677X.2015.1041726>

sincere efforts many administrators made to build a new state and society, albeit with mixed results.<sup>58</sup>

Secondly, *incorporation* entails the constitutional transfer of sovereignty. I favor ‘incorporation’ as an analytical concept to ‘annexation’ because of its resemblance to Dutch *inlijving*, and German *Einverleibung*. In many ways incorporation is a legal act, often an imperial decree, on an exact date. Incorporation does not imply that all state institutions are straightaway imposed on the incorporated territory, let alone that new authorities are genuinely accepted.

In contrast, *integration*, to complete the trichotomy, does aim to render incorporated lands integral parts of the Empire, by extending the central government’s authority, and with it, implicitly or explicitly, reducing the mental distance between core and periphery. Unlike incorporation, integration was not a well-defined, single legal act, but a continuing process of molding *pays conquis* into *pays réunies*. It does so primarily through the implementation of imperial institutions and governing practices. In this perspective, Woolf speaks of Napoleonic integration as ‘a model of government and administration, an updated and far more powerful version of the mainstream ideals of Enlightenment writers and the practical reforms of some Enlightenment rulers and administrators’.<sup>59</sup> Such an idea of integration implied a strong opposition between local diversity and ‘modern’ uniformity, which affected the policies pursued in Europe. Although Napoleonic administrators did not use the term ‘modernization’, they regarded themselves as the modernizing force of Europe. Their view of the modern state consisted of the concentration of the exercises of power in the hands of state servants, to the detriment of traditional, less specialized institutions.<sup>60</sup> In other words, in this study, integration and modernization are strongly associated with the introduction of Napoleonic governance.

Obviously, historical developments are never linear and boundaries between abovementioned phases can be contested. As a matter of fact, one

<sup>58</sup> Stuart Woolf, ‘Napoleon: Politics of integration?’, *Bibliothek des Deutschen Historischen Instituts in Rom* 127 (2013) 22.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>60</sup> John Breuilly, ‘Napoleonic Germany and state-formation’, in: M. Rowe ed., *Collaboration and resistance in Napoleonic Europe. State-formation in an age of upheaval, c.1800–1815* (Basingstoke 2003) 135–142; Michael Rowe, ‘Napoleon and the ‘modernisation’ of Germany’, in: P. Dwyer ed., *Napoleon and his Empire. Europe, 1804–1814* (Basingstoke 2007) 205.

of the main conclusions of this study, as will be elaborated on in the final chapter ‘Incomplete integration’, is the lack of agreement between Napoleonic authorities on the timing and intensity of integration.

In sum, by proposing a comparative and (trans)regional approach to Napoleonic governance in the Netherlands and Northwest Germany, this study will hopefully fill a lacuna in the Dutch-German body of scholarly literature. Going beyond national historiographies is easier said than done, but nation-states should not be taken as the natural starting point for historical investigation.<sup>61</sup> Of course, cross-national history entails many practical and methodological issues, yet I believe its benefits outweigh the difficulties.<sup>62</sup> The overarching goal is to gain a better understanding of Napoleonic governance in its entirety, shedding light on the endeavor of Napoleonic France to create a modern Europe shaped in its own image.

<sup>61</sup> Peter van Dam, ‘Vervlochten geschiedenis. Hoe *histoire croisée* de natiestaat bedwingt’, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 125 (2012) 96–109. <https://doi.org/10.5117/tvgesch2012.1.dam>

<sup>62</sup> Jürgen Kocka’s argument for the comparative method is essential reading for all academic historians. See Jürgen Kocka, ‘Comparison and beyond’, *History and Theory* 42 (2003) 39–44.

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## CHAPTER 2

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# Revolution and Warfare: The North Before Conquest

**Abstract** This chapter lays the foundation for an understanding of Napoleonic governance in the Netherlands and Northwest Germany. Dutch and German lands were governed in many different ways in the early modern age. During the eighteenth century attempts at reform were made in both areas, with varying results. The French Revolution was both admired and feared, especially as it became clear that the ‘liberation’ of Europe entailed aggressive expansionism. France’s growth showed the difficulties of imposing rules and practices on a hitherto foreign population. Which policies were effective, which not? True, German secularization and mediatization (the historic *Reichsdeputationshauptschluss* of 1803), and repeated *coup d’états* in the Batavian Republic, restructured governance on the right bank of the Rhine. Yet, both in the Netherlands and Northwest Germany, the combination of awe of, and fear for, the French Empire strengthened identity formation, whether local, regional, or national, which was not necessarily beneficial for future integration into France.

**Keywords** Absolutism • Republicanism • Revolution • Warfare • Identity formation



## WARFARE AND THE SHAPING OF NATION-STATES

French interventions in Northwestern Europe in the years leading up to Napoleon's ascension to the imperial throne, caused drastic reorganizations of countries and societies. Millions of people changed state, and would repeatedly do so until after the definitive fall of Napoleon. During the process clashes occurred between longstanding traditions and revolutionary novelties. Yet, well before the Revolutionary period, the Netherlands and Northwest Germany were affected by waves of reformist thought. There were, however, significant differences in the extent of each region's revolutionary fervor, and the ways ideas translated into actual reforms. Political conjuncture, international relations, and the perseverance of traditional structures, thwarted change.

Dutch and German internal affairs were greatly complicated when Revolutionary France redefined warfare. Under the creed of ridding the peoples of Europe from 'despots', liberation, conquest, and exploitation went hand in hand. The old modes of military conflict and diplomacy gave way to new types of forms, in which nation-building and empire-building came to the fore.

Smaller states within the borders of France, such as Nice and the former papal enclaves, had been incorporated at an early stage, but when Revolutionary France went on the offensive, major geopolitical transformations ensued. The northwest corner of continental Europe had further acquainted itself with French expansionism around 1795, when the French troops conquered many parts on the Left bank of the Rhine and started incorporating present-day Belgium and the Rhineland. The integration of both areas is especially significant given the fact that the French experiences in these newly conquered lands would affect how Napoleonic governance would be later introduced in the Dutch and Northwest German departments.

By discussing the pre-Revolutionary and Revolutionary periods in the lands north of Old France, this chapter lays the foundation for a proper understanding of Napoleonic governance in the Netherlands and Northwest Germany.

## ABSOLUTISM AND REPUBLICANISM

Present-day Netherlands and Northwest Germany were very heterogeneous during the early modern period. The origins of the Dutch state can be traced back to the revolt against Habsburg rule. When loyalty to the

Spanish king Philip II was formally renounced, the United Provinces of the Netherlands, or Dutch Republic (1579–1795), was set up as a confederation of seven autonomous provinces. The provinces enjoyed a substantial degree of self-rule. Each sent delegates to the States-General in The Hague. Initially, the States-General became responsible for chiefly military and foreign matters. But quickly, their decisions came to apply to a wider sphere of government. Apart from the Provinces, the Dutch Republic also comprised so-called Generality Lands, ruled by the States-General. No delegates from these areas—with a predominantly Catholic population—were represented in The Hague. In practice, contrary to the republican ideal of equality, not all Provinces were equally powerful. The States of Holland dominated the Republic. And within the Province of Holland, Amsterdam soon became the most influential city.

Another binding factor were the Stadtholders. These nobles had been originally representatives from the Habsburg Emperor. One of them, William of Orange, had played a major role during the Revolt. From that moment, as no monarch could mediate between provinces, the individual Provincial States appointed Stadholders. These officials—often provinces chose different Stadholders—commanded the army, but also functioned as highest office-holders. In many towns the Stadtholder selected urban magistrates. In short, the Dutch Republic at a first glance was a league of sovereign provinces, but in fact was a unique political entity which operated as a powerful federal state.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, the area that would later become the Northwest German part of the Napoleonic Empire, was still distributed over many independent states. The largest state was Hanover, or the Electorate of Brunswick-Lüneburg, which stretched from the North Sea to Central Germany, and also governed adjacent areas, such as the County of Bentheim. The British king ruled Hanover and the United Kingdom in a personal union. The Duchy of Oldenburg, around the city of the same name, was also a personal union, namely with the Prince-Bishopric of Lübeck. During the eighteenth century, the Kingdom of Prussia had acquired more and more territories in the West, such as the province of Ostfriesland and the County of Lingen. The Prince-Bishopric of Münster, was an ecclesiastical state, ruled by a bishop, who not only exercised spiritual power but also secular

<sup>1</sup>Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic. Its rise, greatness, and fall. 1477–1806* (Oxford 1998) 276–306.

power. The same applied to the slightly smaller Prince-Bishopric of Osnabrück. Geographically much smaller, but long-time economic and political power factors, were the three Hanseatic cities (the Free Imperial Cities) of Lübeck, Bremen and Hamburg. In each, power was distributed between a Senate and Citizen's Councils. Notwithstanding subtle differences between cities, Hanseatic government, as in the Dutch Republic, was in essence collegial government, dominated mainly by urban merchant families.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike the Dutch, most of the inhabitants of Northwest Germany were affected by enlightened absolutism, which emerged during the second half of the eighteenth century. It envisaged a rational government safeguarding internal socioeconomic conditions. The idea of the *droit divin* gave way to a more secular approach to princely power, in which the promotion of societal happiness was the most fundamental task of the state.<sup>3</sup> Ambitious enlightened monarchs also tried to profile themselves internationally, continuing the earlier absolutist pursuit of a large and efficient army and civil service. For example, King Frederick William I had already reformed governance in his kingdom, severely curtailing the autonomy of provincial and local rulers. King Frederick II retained his father's effective state apparatus and increased Prussia international standing. The state grew in importance, and therefore that of its embodiment: the prince, who could maintain absolute control to monitor the greater good. This notion of governance has been characterized as a 'teleocratic style of governance'.<sup>4</sup>

In Northern Germany, Hanseatic city-states were islands of republicanism. There, civic tradition, Protestant aversion to exuberance, and new enlightened ideas went hand in hand, culminating in a variety of enlightened reforms. Respect for the city's history was part of civic community-building and republican self-identification. This had a strong anti-aristocratic character, even more so than in Dutch republicanism

<sup>2</sup>Mary Lindemann, 'Voluntarism in social welfare and urban government: The case of Hamburg, 1700–1799', *Journal of Urban History* 36 (2010) 316–331. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144209359143>

<sup>3</sup>Elisabeth Fehrenbach, *Vom Ancien Régime zum Wiener Kongress* (4th ed.; München 2001) 55.

<sup>4</sup>H. M. Scott, 'Introduction: The problem of enlightened absolutism', in: H. Scott ed., *Enlightened absolutism: Reform and reformers in later eighteenth-century Europe* (London 1989) 1–2, 16; Michael Spicer, 'Public administration: The history of ideas, and the reinventing government movement', *Public Administration Review* 64 (2004) 356. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2004.00379.x>

which—unlike the Hanseatic city-states—did not have to position itself vis-à-vis enlightened absolutist Princes.<sup>5</sup>

While many European states experienced centralizing tendencies, the Dutch Republic maintained its local particularistic state structure—a tightknit network of urban communities. Things changed at the end of the eighteenth century, with the Patriot movement of the 1780s. Following the military and economic decline of the Republic, republican patriots tried to reclaim what they thought were traditional rights. Having little say in political matters, the Patriots focalized their attention on the civic militias. Throughout the Republic, militias that had been dormant for decades, or centuries, were revived as symbols of civic pride. Middle-class patriots demanded that civic corporations, like militias and craft guilds, had to be consulted by the city government in public matters. Also, Patriots called for the election of urban councilors and town officials, as well as the right of (legislative) initiative.<sup>6</sup>

As many Dutch towns, the Hanseatic city-states developed a vivid public sphere, in the form of neutral enlightened societies, coffee houses, and reading societies, where citizens came together to discuss social issues. Gradually they formed a breeding ground for early democratic ideas. The most prominent enlightened society was the Patriotic Society (1765), in Hamburg, which was in close contact with the urban government, contributing to the reform of Hamburg's governance. Similar societies were established in many towns in Northwest Germany.<sup>7</sup>

As more and more Dutch towns and provinces embraced the Patriot cause, the Republic effectively was in a state of civil war. Following repressive actions of Stadtholder William V, factions within the Patriot movement started to call for popular sovereignty and new liberties, thus developing a new democratic republican discourse. This led to a rupture between moderate Patriots and democratic Patriots who increasingly attacked the perceived 'aristocratic' system of governance.<sup>8</sup> In September

<sup>5</sup> Katherine Aaslestad, *Place and politics: Local identity, civic culture and German nationalism in North Germany during the Revolutionary Era* (Leiden 2005) 58–59, 67.

<sup>6</sup> N. C. F. van Sas, *De metamorfose van Nederland. Van oude orde naar moderniteit, 1750–1900* (Amsterdam 2004) 214.

<sup>7</sup> Aaslestad, *Place and politics*, 68–75, 108–109.

<sup>8</sup> Mart Rutjes, 'Onderdrukt onbehagen. Het ontstaan van de repressieve staat in Nederland', in: P. van Dam, J. Turpijn and B. Mellink ed., *Onbehagen in de polder. Nederland in conflict sinds 1795* (Amsterdam 2014) 25.

1787, the Stadtholder—thanks to a military intervention of his Prussian brother-in-law Frederick II—regained his power. The unorganized Patriot militias were no match for a standing army. Urban governments and militias were purged of Patriots; many of whom fled to the Southern Netherlands or France, which caused a flight of capital.

Twenty years later, the counter-revolution played a part in discussions on the incorporation of the Netherlands. That William V had needed help from Prussian troops to overthrow the Patriots and re-impose his authority, was seen by Emperor Napoleon as a justification to incorporate the Netherlands. Effectively, the Dutch had already been conquered in 1787, Napoleon would argue (see [Chap. 3](#)).

Despite its military might, the Orangist counter-revolution of 1787 was not a real victory. In the long run, the repressive actions of the Stadholder only served to give the Patriot ideals more support. Remaining Patriots went underground in so-called reading societies. In spite of feelings of national solidarity, individual revolutionary groups were local in nature.<sup>9</sup> This made more and more Dutch Patriots realize that a national movement was of great importance.

The enlightened German citizens called themselves ‘Patriots’, but Katherine Aaslestad has argued that ‘public moralists’ is a more precise term, since their point of view was mainly ethical, or moral in nature.<sup>10</sup> Partly this also applies to the Dutch Patriots, but they gradually became more politicized, especially as some of them began to embrace progressive ideas about popular sovereignty. Dutch Patriots also had to take an explicit stance on the issue of local or provincial autonomy versus federal or national uniformity. Such an issue was one that hardly concerned Northwest German Patriots in 1780s.

While Stadholder William V was helped by his Prussian brother-in-law, French King Louis XVI struggled with political-theoretical criticism of *philosophes*, opposition to social and economic inequalities, and a mounting debt burden. This necessitated the convening of the *États généraux* (States-General) for the first time since 1614. The Third Estate called for a single assembly in which the citizenry would have a numerical majority, adorning itself with the title *Assemblée nationale*. The reluctant Louis XVI initially hesitated to intervene. In July and August, popular uprisings

<sup>9</sup> J. G. M. M. Rosendaal, *Tot nut van Nederland: polarisatie en revolutie in een grensgebied, 1783–1787* (Nijmegen 2012) 237–238.

<sup>10</sup> Aaslestad, *Place and politics*, 97.

showed the weaknesses of the monarchy. Louis XVI's reluctance hindered the establishment of a new constitutional framework. Due to his failed attempt to flee, in the summer of 1791, lack of unanimity among the revolutionaries, and constant war threat, the government steadily lost its grip on the population. Louis XVI, like Stadholder William V, had tried to appeal to the band of brothers-in-law to restore his authority, in his case Austrian Emperor Leopold II. The constitutional monarchy lost its credibility. After the adoption of the first French constitution in October 1791, dissatisfaction grew. When armed civilians entered the *Palais de Tuileries* on 10 August 1792, the constitutional monarchy was moribund.<sup>11</sup>

Subsequently, the brutality that characterized the rule of the powerful Committee of Public Safety, with Maximilien Robespierre as its most prominent member, culminated in an outburst of violence that claimed the lives of tens of thousands of French people, including Louis XVI and his family. The Terror had a decisive influence on the course of the French Revolution. Nationally, it made many people long for a definitive end to the revolution. Foreign sympathizers rarely could reconcile themselves with the extreme turn that the Revolution had taken.<sup>12</sup> This was at odds with France's growing ambition to rid Europe of the Old Regime 'despots'.

For instance, in 1789 many educated German citizens had initially greeted the French Revolution, due to widespread dissatisfaction with the situation in Germany. There were also close personal ties with French revolutionaries and Hamburg in particular was a lively meeting place for international 'Jacobins', as conservatives derogatorily, called revolutionaries.<sup>13</sup> On the one hand, there was a disappointment at the waning momentum of enlightened absolutism; on the other, worsening social conditions caused dissatisfaction. In particular in Northern Germany, which was a center of journalism and book publishing, a radical revolutionary movement arose that no longer only demanded freedom but also equality. While the Hamburg merchant citizenry was close to the Girondins, intellectuals and craftsmen sympathized with the Montagnards. For example, Jacobin Georg Conrad Meyer from Flensburg, in his periodical *Der neue Mensch*, propagated the equal distribution of goods, however nowhere in

<sup>11</sup> Annie Jourdan, *La Révolution, une exception française?* (Paris 2004) 49–50.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 371–374.

<sup>13</sup> Aaslestad, *Place and politics*, 118–122.

Northern Germany were any genuine attempts made to put the principles of the French Revolution into practice.<sup>14</sup>

Although the Revolution was admired from afar, there was also fear for its potential consequences. Skepticism prevailed. The German lands were said not to be ripe for a revolution. Even Heinrich Würzer, one of Northern Germany's most famous 'Jacobins', understood revolution to be nothing more than reform. Civil disobedience was acceptable, but a bloody uprising had little to do with a real revolution, he argued.<sup>15</sup> The violence of the First French Republic confirmed to civic Northwest Germans that the French lacked morality, and thus strengthened their belief in their own superiority.<sup>16</sup>

Dutch Patriots who had fled from the Republic to France, did not react unequivocally to the radicalization of the revolution. A small number of ultra-revolutionary exiles were in close contact with French kindred spirits, and united in the *Comité Révolutionnaire Batave*, hoping to reform the Dutch situation along French lines. However, Robespierre believed that the Dutch would not benefit from the French model as each people had its own customs and habits. Moreover, early 1793, the French had declared war on the Stadholder, thus justifying the war without compromising Dutch popular sovereignty. The majority of government members called for the usefulness of an independent Dutch Sister Republic. A small minority within the National Convention, however, believed that the Netherlands could simply be incorporated.<sup>17</sup> Many Dutch Patriots therefore lost their enthusiasm for the French cause during this period. Conversely, many Jacobins were suspicious of, the in their eyes *bourgeois*, Dutchmen.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Fehrenbach, *Vom Ancien Régime*, 65.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 61–63.

<sup>16</sup> Aaslestad, *Place and politics*, 127–129.

<sup>17</sup> Marc Belissa, "Faire la guerre au Stadhouder ou à la nation Hollandaise?": Le débat politique autour de la déclaration de guerre (décembre 1792–mars 1793)", in: A. Jourdan and J. Leerssen ed., *Remous révolutionnaires: République batave, armée française* (Amsterdam 1996) 69–80.

<sup>18</sup> Joost Rosendaal, "La liberté est une garce!" Les Bataves à Paris (1787–1795)", in: A. Jourdan and J. Leerssen ed., *Remous révolutionnaires: République batave, armée française* (Amsterdam 1996) 66–67.

## EXPORTING THE REVOLUTION

With the demise of the French monarchy, a long series of wars began that no longer involved the traditional balance of power, but placed the nation on a pedestal. The novelty of this concept of war lay in the fact that foreign policy could no longer be separated from domestic policy. Warfare acted as a nation-building instrument in a politically and socially divided France, turning into an outlet for internal tensions. Successive French revolutionary governments, prolonged and increased warfare, with growing missionary zeal. Defensive warfare turned into a war of liberation and conquest. The French threat was, however, not immediately recognized by European diplomats who only knew international power politics.<sup>19</sup>

In November 1792 French troops invaded the Austrian Netherlands, hoping to establish a Sister Republic. Officially, the Constitution of 1791 had determined that France renounced ‘the undertaking of any war with a view to making conquests, and [would] never use its forces against the liberty of any people’. And also in the years that followed it was official policy that ‘liberated’ peoples should, in principle, retain existing laws and institutions. But the actual behavior of generals and officials in conquered lands was not always in line with that.<sup>20</sup> The French thought that the Belgians, who were dissatisfied with their Habsburg sovereign, would be enthusiastic. Initially, Revolutionary France was indeed seen as a liberator, but it soon became apparent that opinions differed widely. Like the Dutch patriots of the 1780s, Belgians attached great value to the restoration of old, local privileges as protection against a centralist monarch. However, the French National Convention dismantled traditional bodies in December 1792 with the aim of an organization based on the French model.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, in the North, military advances of General Charles-François Dumouriez and Dutch exile Lieutenant-General Herman Willem Daendels were halted, and local support was meagre, forcing withdrawal.

After a brief restoration of Austria’s power, French troops finally prevailed in July 1794. A new *Conseil de gouvernement*, headed by

<sup>19</sup> Fehrenbach, *Vom Ancien Régime*, 42–46.

<sup>20</sup> Peter M. R. Stirk, ‘The concept of military occupation in the era of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars’, *Comparative Legal History* 3 (2015) 69–74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2049677X.2015.1041726>

<sup>21</sup> Brecht Deseure, ‘Etre libre de nom et esclave de fait’. De Brabantse constituties tijdens de Franse periode (Zuidelijke Nederlanden)’, *Noordbrabants Historisch Jaarboek* 29 (2012) 349–369.



Commissioner Louis-Ghislain de Bouteville, replaced extant governmental institutions and was to look after the implementation of the French system of governance in the nine ‘Belgian’ departments. Legal and administrative integration started, leading to rigorous reforms. Old Regime practices and institutions were abolished, and an end was put to all prerogatives of the Church. Consequently, many members of the Belgian elite lost their positions. With the introduction of elections, in 1797, the number of local administrators and magistrates increased, which somewhat improved the reputation of French governance and stimulated its acceptance. And when, with Napoleon’s rise to power in 1799, the Commissioner in Brussels disappeared, the Belgian departments were truly organized along French lines.<sup>22</sup>

Concurrently, the German Rhineland was conquered. The Peace of Basel, of 5 April 1795, stated that the French would occupy the Rhineland momentarily. When peace would return, a definite arrangement would be made. However, the secret articles of the treaty prescribed that Prussia and France would eventually come to an exchange. The French relatively quickly insisted on obtaining the Rhineland, something that the French monarchs had never demanded so explicitly. The Prussian king would give up his rights in the Rhineland in return for territorial compensation elsewhere, which would have to be specified at a later date.<sup>23</sup> A demarcation line was drawn, to the north of which all German states would remain neutral. The French promised not cross this line, thus increasing the influences of Prussia in Northern Germany.

In November 1797, four ‘Rhenish’ departments were established, with François Joseph Rudler as Commissioner to oversee their organization. From Parisian desks, the departments were further divided into districts, cantons, and municipalities, by the summer of 1798.<sup>24</sup> What made the situation in the Rhineland complicated, was that unwilling local elites were not eager to support French rule, and French were uncertain how to deal with traditional prerogatives and social inequalities. Hesitations on the

<sup>22</sup> Dirk Heirbaut, ‘De Franse overheersing in België’, in: A. Berkvens, J. Hallebeek and A. Sirks ed., *Het Franse Nederland: de inlijving 1810–1813. De juridische en bestuurlijke gevolgen van de ‘Réunion’ met Frankrijk* (Hilversum 2012) 17–23.

<sup>23</sup> Josef Smets, ‘Le Rhin, frontière naturelle de la France’, *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 314 (1998) 686–687, 697. <https://doi.org/10.3406/ahrf.1998.2206>

<sup>24</sup> Bernd Wunder, ‘L’administration territoriale des départements allemands annexés par l’Empire napoléonien’, in: M. Pertué ed., *L’administration territoriale de la France (1750–1940)* (Orléans 1998) 349–350.

side of the French, combined with local resistance, led to a slow start of integration, creating an uncomfortable situation for the intermediary French administrations.<sup>25</sup> Collaboration was not necessarily a signal that the population was fully accommodating to French rule. The French authorities had to comply with older patronage networks for strategic reasons. The French learn that existing practices could survive within the new system of governance.<sup>26</sup> Effective governance was extra welcome when late 1798, drastic French measures, such as the restriction of the power of the Church and the introduction of conscription, led to popular resistance in Belgium and the Rhineland, the *Boerenkrijg* or *Kluppelkrieg*. Given the different local circumstances, the Belgian and German regions were incorporated in different tempi. It was not until 1801, when the great powers ratified the Treaty of Luneville, that the left bank of the Rhine was permanently incorporated.<sup>27</sup>

## REVOLUTIONARY REPUBLICANS IN THE NORTH

The Dutch Patriots, or ‘Batavians’ as they were increasingly called, witnessed how the French emerged as conquerors in Belgium and Germany, and expressed doubts about French intervention. Alexander Gogel (later member of the Napoleonic intermediary government in Amsterdam) recognized, on the eve of the Batavian Revolution, that support from France was indispensable, but was keen to prevent the Netherlands from being regarded as a *pays conquis*; in his eyes, wherever possible Dutchmen had to take the lead.<sup>28</sup> With the invasion of French-Batavian troops (this time led by Jean-Charles Pichegru, with Dutch assistance by Daendels and Jan Willem de Winter) and in January 1795, Stadtholder William V fled to England, and all over the Dutch Republic, provincial and city governments were purged of Orangists. After the proclamation of the Batavian Republic, major differences of opinion emerged about what the new state should look like. Because of the devastating defeat that ended all patriot

<sup>25</sup> Smets, ‘Le Rhin’.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Rowe, ‘Between Empire and home town: Napoleonic rule on the Rhine, 1799–1814’, *The Historical Journal* 42 (1999) 643–674. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X9900850X>

<sup>27</sup> Kees Schaapveld, *Bestuur en bestuurders in Nedermaas, 1794–1814: met bijzondere aandacht voor het lokale bestuur in het kanton Wittem/Gulpen* (Hilversum 2017) 44.

<sup>28</sup> Jan Postma, *Alexander Gogel (1765–1821): grondlegger van de Nederlandse staat* (Hilversum 2017) 32–39.

experiments in 1787, and the French Revolution, nearly all Batavian revolutionaries demanded a true unitary state.<sup>29</sup> However, there was continual disagreement about the degree of participation of citizens and about how the state should be centralized. Paradoxically, the very democratic ideals that had mobilized the revolutionaries formed an obstacle for political reform.<sup>30</sup>

The optimism of the Dutch revolutionaries was tempered when the question of the future of the Batavian was raised. The French demanded compensation for their efforts: the Batavian Republic lost part of its territory in the South, it had to pay a sum of 100 million guilders to France, and maintain a French force. Mutual irritations soon caused dissatisfaction from both sides. Batavians wanted a friendly and commercial alliance, but were faced with a military alliance. They were offended by the French financial and military requirements which they saw as an attack on their autonomy. The French treated their revolutionary brothers with a high degree of prejudice and had little regard for the political sensitivities within the Batavian Republic. They often let their own interests prevail. However, the Batavians were also opportunistic, turning French interventions to their own advantage.<sup>31</sup>

In the years following France's expansion, the Hanseatic city-states benefited from their neutral status. Trade flourished. Especially Hamburg became an economic and financial center, at the expense of notably Amsterdam. But citizens realized that neutrality, without being backed by military power, was fragile. That Bremen was briefly occupied by Hanoverian and English troops demonstrated this, as did the growing Prussian ambitions in Northern Germany. That the cities were formally part of the anti-French Holy Roman Empire did not help either. On 11 May 1795, representatives from Hamburg, Bremen, and Lübeck convened in the first *Hansetag* (Hanseatic Conference) since 1669. The aim was to ensure Hanseatic neutrality, by emphasizing its positive effect for all European states, as a platform for free trade and prosperity. The

<sup>29</sup>Stephan Klein, 'De sprong naar '95. Van patriots naar Bataafs republikenisme', *De Achttiende Eeuw* 28 (1996) 39–46.

<sup>30</sup>See also Thomas Poell, *The democratic paradox. Dutch revolutionary struggles over democratisation and centralisation (1780–1813)* (PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam 2007). <https://dspace.library.uu.nl/handle/1874/22668>

<sup>31</sup>Annie Jourdan, 'Le rôle des agents français dans la constitution batave de 1798', *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 351 (2008) 99–119. <https://doi.org/10.4000/ahrf.11367>

cooperation forced by common dangers was accompanied by a program of regional identity formation.<sup>32</sup>

On 18 *fructidor* year V (5 September 1797) in France republicans seized power with the help of the army to counter the growing power of royalists. This coup, which showed the extent to which the army was becoming a decisive factor, prompted Dutch sympathizers to seek secret contact with the French. Supported by French troops, Batavians from the camp of the radical unitarians staged a coup d'état on 22 January 1798. The French ambassador Charles Delacroix had planned the coup together with mainly Amsterdam radicals. Moderate political opponents were imprisoned. Following an undemocratic referendum, a radical constitution was accepted that turned the Batavian Republic in a 'one and indivisible' unitary nation-state. Although the radical democratic government realized the ideals of a unitary state and civic liberties, at the same time it alienated a large part of the people from politics. In June 1798 the government was purged of radicals, and moderates regained power, yet the revolutionary constitution, and its accomplishments, were kept.<sup>33</sup>

## THE FIRST CONSUL AND EUROPE

General Bonaparte, after his Italian and Egyptian campaigns, came to power on 18 *brumaire* year VIII (9 November 1799). In the preceding year, Bonaparte became convinced he was the one who could regenerate the French Republic. Like many French citizens he was disillusioned with the Directory, given the defeats in the War of the Second Coalition, problems with conscription, and economic issues; to name but a few difficulties that severely hindered the effectiveness of the Directory. Politicians from different factions longed to revise the constitution but were in disagreement on how exactly to go about this. Together with Director Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, who strived for a stronger executive without destroying the Republic, Napoleon Bonaparte had planned the *coup d'état*. Much has been written on 18 *brumaire*, for instance, on the role played by brother Lucien Bonaparte, the newly elected president of the Council of Five Hundred, who arranged the council's 'consent' that was needed to legitimize the *coup*. The coup showed that the military leader possessed

<sup>32</sup> Aaslestad, *Place and politics*, 204–210.

<sup>33</sup> Martijn van der Burg, *Nederland onder Franse invloed. Culturele overdracht en staatsvorming in de napoleontische tijd, 1799–1813* (Amsterdam 2009) 44–45.

political talents and was capable of appeasing different groups within society while pursuing his own program.<sup>34</sup>

The new French constitution of the year VIII, 25 December 1799, foresaw a supposedly democratic government. But Bonaparte was able to curtail democratic institutions, not least because he was supported by an antiparty, technocratic elite; a group which would form a rich source of Napoleonic state representatives.<sup>35</sup> From the coup of *brumaire* on, legislation was made primarily in the newly created *Conseil d'État*, whose members were selected by Bonaparte. The *Conseil d'État* also nominated all high officials, such as prefects. The constitution introduced tricameralism; three legislative or parliamentary chambers were created: the *Sénat conservateur*, the *Corps législatif* and the *Tribunat*. Members of the highest and most important chamber, the Senate, were appointed for life by Bonaparte. Senators were mostly moderate veterans of the Revolution. They had at their disposal the procedure of *sénatus-consultum*, or *sénatus-consulte* which allowed the loyal Senate to approve constitutional changes proposed by the First Consul and thus bypass the already weak Legislative body and the Tribunal.<sup>36</sup> Importantly, the instrument of the *sénatus-consulte* would be used frequently during the process of empire-building, specifically a *sénatus-consulte organique* which amended the constitution.

Via a plebiscite held on 7 February 1800 the French citizens entitled to vote officially accepted the new constitution, although the government tampered with the figures. Together with Jean-Jacques Régis de Cambacérès and Charles-François Lebrun, Napoleon became Consul of the French Republic. As First Consul, Napoleon effectively ruled alone. Cambacérès and Lebrun had a purely consultative role. Cambacérès advised Bonaparte on legal matters, Lebrun on financial matters. In these two domains, the First Consul could use the assistance of experienced public servants.<sup>37</sup>

Napoleon inherited the ideological warfare policy of the Directory. Under the Directory, the idea of liberating Europe from feudal despots

<sup>34</sup> Annie Jourdan, *L'empire de Napoléon* (Paris 2000) 45–51; D. G. Wright, *Napoleon and Europe* (Harlow 1984) 16–18.

<sup>35</sup> Lynn Hunt, David Lansky, and Paul Hanson, 'The failure of the liberal republic in France, 1795–1799: The road to brumaire', *The Journal of Modern History* 51 (1979) 758–759. <https://doi.org/10.1086/241988>

<sup>36</sup> Geoffrey Ellis, *The Napoleonic empire* (2nd ed.; Basingstoke 2003) 24–25.

<sup>37</sup> Isser Woloch, *Napoleon and his collaborators: The making of a dictatorship* (New York 2001) 122–123.

had changed into the wish to extend France to its presumed natural borders. In his days as general, Napoleon had been an ardent supporter of expansionist measures. As First Consul, his ambitions grew larger and increasingly ignored long-accepted frontiers.<sup>38</sup> The notion of the Rhine as a natural border of France was not new. Long before the French Revolution, the idea existed that France could make historical claims on the (alleged) homeland of the Gauls, situated between the Pyrenees, the Alps and the Rhine, from 1792 onward was brought to the forefront again.<sup>39</sup> The year 1799 saw the consolidation of French rule in annexed territories, like a protective layer shielding Old France. Plus, the First Consul took over from the Directory a seasoned army, an efficient system of conscription and an organized *corps diplomatique*. All this enabled him to develop his European offensive politics, disguised as defensive (protecting the Republic from foreign threats).<sup>40</sup>

The First Consul faced little opposition from within the government. Napoleon's Minister of the Exterior Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand (who had been appointed under the Directory, in 1797) was comfortable with the First Consul directing foreign policy. He was primarily interested in commercial and financial aspects. For instance, it was not him but Joseph Bonaparte who had a large role in the peace negotiations of 1800–1802. Nevertheless, during the incorporation of northern Italy, Talleyrand did object to the continuing expansion of the Empire. France had to perfect its system of governance before imposing it on Europe; better yet, France needed allies, not more territory, he argued.<sup>41</sup>

In the Netherlands, revolutionary politicians from different parties, at first welcomed 18 *brumaire*. Some saw it as a return to the original liberal ideals of the Revolution, and assumed the former general, as a head of state, would pursue lasting peace. However, the First Consul primarily assessed the Dutch sister republic on its financial and military potential. Within a few weeks, Bonaparte demanded a financial contribution from the Sister Republic; in return, he would stimulate Dutch commerce. The First Consul was in great need of funds. In the end, the deal failed and

<sup>38</sup> Jourdan, *L'empire de Napoléon*, 113–114.

<sup>39</sup> Smets, 'Le Rhin', 676.

<sup>40</sup> Jacques-Olivier Boudon, 'L'Europe en 1800', in: T. Lentz ed., *Napoléon et l'Europe* (Paris 2005) 80–81.

<sup>41</sup> Emmanuel de Waresquiel, 'Talleyrand, une vision européenne', in: T. Lentz ed., *Napoléon et l'Europe* (Paris 2005) 134–135.

Napoleon would never forget the ‘arrogance’ of the ‘wealthy’ Dutch.<sup>42</sup> During his entire reign, Napoleon, taking no notice of the miserable state of the Dutch economy, assumed that the Dutch were almost literally sitting on millions of guilders but refused to fulfill their financial duties. This misassumption dated back to the early French Revolution.<sup>43</sup>

Napoleon’s rise to power also had its effects on Northwest Germany. The Hanseatic city-states struggled with their neutrality in 1799. The question of neutrality was considered of great importance for the future well-being of the urban communities. Politicians were greatly aware that neutrality, in practice, was only possible if the French and the British were convinced that their neutrality program served their own interests as well. The Hanseatic city-states were stuck between British and French demands and tried to offend neither party. For the time being, France was willing to respect their neutrality, as long as it was beneficial in (economic) warfare.<sup>44</sup>

In July 1800 a conflict started between the United Kingdom and neutral Denmark. The British demanded the right to search Danish vessels in open seas. Persuaded by 19 British warships in the Sound the Danish had to agree, whereupon Napoleon considered them to be unable to remain neutral. Napoleon urged Denmark to join forces with other neutral countries.<sup>45</sup> Russian Tsar Paul I, seeing an opportunity to enlarge his sphere of influence, encouraged the Danish and Swedish governments to discuss matters, and also Prussia was invited to join Russia. Problematic was that the three smaller countries involved were traditional rivals and had serious conflicts of interest. Thus, on 16 and 18 December 1800, the three countries signed bilateral Neutrality Conventions with Russia, establishing the League of Armed Neutrality intended to resist British interference.<sup>46</sup> The British, not amused, planned a preemptive naval attack on Copenhagen.

<sup>42</sup>François Crouzet, ‘Aspects financiers de la relation franco-batave’, in: A. Jourdan and J. Leerssen ed., *Remous révolutionnaires: République batave, armée française* (Amsterdam 1996) 56; Annie Jourdan, ‘La république batave et le 18 brumaire: la grande illusion’, *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* (1999) 763–764. <https://doi.org/10.4000/ahrf.301>

<sup>43</sup>Annie Jourdan, ‘Les Gaulois en Batavie: des relations diplomatiques machiavéliques’, in: A. Jourdan and J. Leerssen ed., *Remous révolutionnaires: République batave, armée française* (Amsterdam 1996) 102.

<sup>44</sup>Aaslestad, *Place and politics*, 214.

<sup>45</sup>Eric Lerdrup-Bourgeois, ‘Napoléon et le Nord. Le Danemark-Norvège et la Suède’, in: T. Lentz ed., *Napoléon et l’Europe* (Paris 2005) 343–346.

<sup>46</sup>Ole Feldbæk, ‘The foreign policy of Tsar Paul I, 1800–1801: An interpretation’, *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 30 (1982) 21–26.

British military superiority and the decease of Tsar Paul on 23 March 1801 made the league fall apart.

In their conflict with the British, between 29 March and 5 April 1801 Danish troops occupied Hamburg, Lübeck, and Travemünde and confiscated some British goods in the warehouses. However, after some weeks Prussia demanded the Danish withdraw, while the Prussians themselves intensified their presence in Northern Germany.<sup>47</sup> Although brief, the Danish intervention ignited the public debate on the sustainability of neutrality. Several internal tensions came to the surface, which were linked to the question of whether or not to openly choose a side in the European wars.<sup>48</sup>

In the Netherlands, unease grew with the hostile tone of Napoleon. When the Batavians repeatedly proved unable to meet his demands, the First Consul decided to intervene. An orchestrated coup in September 1801 met with little resistance. Both French and Dutch hoped in particular that a new constitution would be sustainable and thereby guarantee peace. Napoleon rejected the idea of simply copying the French Constitution; to stress the autonomy of the Batavian Republic, the constitutional change had to be presented as genuinely Dutch, and aimed at political reconciliation. As in France, legislative power transitioned from the members of the Legislative Body to the executive, the collegial *Staatsbewind*—or ‘Regency of State’, consisting of 12 directors. This collegial government was in line with administrative tradition. The state was renamed ‘Batavian Commonwealth’, to give it a somewhat less revolutionary ring. Early modern symbols and institutions reappeared; for instance, the pre-revolutionary borders of the provinces were restored. Old elites also re-emerged. When former Stadholder William V gave up his claims to the Netherlands for a financial or territorial compensation, the way was paved for appeasement between moderate revolutionary and Orangists. Despite appearances, ‘1801’ was not a radical break from the revolution. Although democratic institutions were largely abandoned, the Enlightenment ideals of freedom and equality were still praised by Dutch politicians. Moreover, the central government succeeded in firming its grip on local and provincial administrations.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Ole Feldbæk, *The battle of Copenhagen 1801: Nelson and the Danes* (Barnsley 2002) 230.

<sup>48</sup> Aaslestad, *Place and politics*, 220–221.

<sup>49</sup> L. de Gou ed., *De Staatsregeling van 1801: bronnen voor de totstandkoming* (’s-Gravenhage 1995) XX–XXVI.; Matthijs Lok and Martijn van der Burg, ‘The Dutch case: The



The idea of introducing a single head of state, in contradiction to Dutch tradition, was seen as unwanted. French ambassador Charles-Louis Huguet de Sémonville noticed the Batavians' aversion to a strong executive power. Governance in the Netherlands was not to be too 'French', Talleyrand and the First Consul stressed.<sup>50</sup> Napoleon certainly remained keen to entice the Batavians to cooperate, as oppose to the use of force. He welcomed the new Batavian Ambassador Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck with great pomp and circumstance, as did the Cambacérès and Lebrun; the latter would a few years later become a key player in the integration of the Netherlands into the Napoleonic Empire.<sup>51</sup>

### THE REORGANIZATION OF GERMANY NORTH OF THE RHINE

Concerning the German lands, Bonaparte's approach was unconventional, certainly compared to the more prudent Talleyrand. Disregarding traditions, he developed many geopolitical redesigns in rapid succession following his victories on German soil. Of great importance was the *Reichsdeputationshauptschluss*, passed by the Imperial Diet of the Holy Roman Empire (*Reichstag*) on 25 February 1803, which was ratified a month later by Francis II, the last Holy Roman Emperor. This decision of the Diet, made under pressure from France and Russia, was a direct consequence of the French annexing of the Rhineland. Prussia and Austria had accepted the loss of these German lands but insisted that the princes who had been deprived of their lands would be compensated elsewhere in the Holy Roman Empire via the secularization of ecclesial possessions. During his Consulship, Napoleon actively intervened in the rearrangement of Germany prior to the Imperial Recess. Instead of merely secularizing German land, all ecclesiastical principalities were disbanded and Germany was 'mediatized'. Mediatization meant that almost all German states lost their 'imperial immediacy' (*Reichsunmittelbarkeit*). Prior to 1803, many free imperial cities and states had been placed under the immediate authority of the Holy Roman Emperor, without interference of

Kingdom of Holland and the imperial departments', in: M. Broers, P. Hicks and A. Guimerá ed., *The Napoleonic empire and the new European political culture* (Basingstoke 2012) 100–111. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137271396\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137271396_10)

<sup>50</sup> Jourdan, 'Les Gaulois en Batavie: des relations diplomatiques machiavéliques', 107; L. de Gou ed., *De Staatsregeling van 1801*, XX–XXIII.

<sup>51</sup> Edwina Hagen, *President van Nederland: Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck, 1761–1825* (Amsterdam 2012) 171, 182.

local princes. Given the political weakness of the Emperor, these states were virtually autonomous. The *Reichsdeputationshauptschluss* ended this traditional, feudal, mode of imperial governance, which for decades had been a thorn in the eyes of enlightened critics. Another goal was to draw borders more logically and create less dispersed states. For the time being, only the Hanseatic towns of Bremen, Hamburg, and Lübeck remained independent city-states, in addition to Augsburg, Frankfurt am Main and Nuremberg.<sup>52</sup>

Without a doubt, Prussia benefited from the restructuring. It received the northern parts of the former Duchy of Kleve (the parts on the left bank of the Rhine had been incorporated into France). In Northwest Germany the largest ecclesiastical state was the Prince-Bishopric of Münster. The *Reichsdeputationshauptschluss* secularized the region and divided it between the Duchy of Oldenburg (ruled by an uncle of the Tsar) and Prussia. Hanover was occupied by French forces. Two significant new principalities were established in the Northwest: the Duchy of Arenberg-Meppen was created, to compensate the Dukes of Arenberg who lost all Rhenish possessions to the French, which was also the case with the principality of Salm, ruled by the House of the same name. The Prince-Bishopric of Osnabrück was awarded to Hanover. Therefore, the British king also benefited, even though he had not lost any possessions on the left bank of the Rhine whatsoever. More to the South-east, Prince William Frederick of Orange, the son of the former Stadholder, received the former ecclesiastical principality of Fulda and some (even smaller) possessions, as a territorial compensation for the losses of the House of Orange due to the Batavian Revolution and the enlargement of France. Much to the disappointment of William Frederick, who had become an admirer of Bonaparte, his family would not receive financial compensation, nor was he awarded a more substantial principality.<sup>53</sup>

At first, mediatization did not seem all that harmful to the Hanseatic cities since their constitutional status remained virtually unchanged. However, they failed to get their neutral status recognized internationally. In May 1803, war broke out again between Great Britain and France. Hanover was occupied by French forces in June 1803, a clear violation of the North German demarcation line. Commander Jean-Baptiste

<sup>52</sup> Michel Kerautret, 'Les Allemagnes napoléoniennes', in: T. Lentz ed., *Napoléon et l'Europe* (Paris 2005) 325–328.

<sup>53</sup> Jeroen Koch, *Koning Willem I, 1772–1843* (Amsterdam 2013) 125–135.

Bernadotte, future king of Sweden, was appointed Governor of Hanover. Prussia would briefly gain Hanover as a reward for not siding with the Russians and Austrians during renewed hostilities.<sup>54</sup> The French violated the neutrality of the Hanseatic cities, by seizing the district of Ritzebüttel, upon which Britain blockaded the Elbe, Weser, and Eider. This proved disastrous for the economy. Nevertheless, collectively the Hanseatic city-states continued to display their neutrality and peacefulness, hoping to stay out of harm's way.<sup>55</sup>

### BLUEPRINTS FOR NAPOLEONIC GOVERNANCE IN EUROPE

French revolutionary expansionism was an expression of interconnected ideas on nation, universal rights and the state, but revolutionary warfare in Europe also blurred the lines between 'liberation' and 'conquest'. The enlargement of France showed the difficulties of imposing rules and practices on hitherto foreign populations. The extent to which France had to impose itself was not determined. In the long term, Revolutionary France's expansion showed multiple ways in which *pays conquis* could be incorporated and integrated. Which policies were effective and which were counterproductive depended on local circumstances, but also on its implementation by various French actors. Thus, in an improvised manner, various types of governance blueprints were gradually conceived.

Europe was no *tabula rasa*. Well before Napoleonic interference, Dutch and Germans pondered how to improve state and society. Lack of consensus, or lack of means, had long obstructed durable changes. However, both for the Netherlands and for the Hanseatic city-states can be said that many foundations for later reforms were laid before the French intervened. The actions of Dutch Patriots, the open public sphere and discussion culture in Hamburg, and the willingness of local governments to learn, made that (urban) governance was certainly not 'archaic'. Differences were that the disputes in the Netherlands were more explicitly political in nature and more closely related to French developments. And, evidently, the question of centralization was much less prominent in Northwest Germany.

<sup>54</sup> Wright, *Napoleon and Europe*, 48.

<sup>55</sup> Aaslestad, *Place and politics*, 222–224.

Meanwhile in France, Napoleon Bonaparte won people over to his cause and managed to secure the instruments for increased state-building. During the Consulate, he had assured Austrians and Prussians France would not intervene in German affairs, in return for recognition of French rule on the left bank of the Rhine. And as long as neutral Prussia kept behind its side of the North German demarcation line, Napoleon allowed Prussian territorial expansion in the East. Also, Napoleon's interventions in the Netherlands initially took place mainly in the background. For the time being, the First Consul seemed satisfied with indirectly influencing other states by increasing the French sphere of influence. The historic *Reichsdeputationshauptschluss*, and successive *coup d'états* in the Batavian Republic, restructured governance North of the Rhine sufficiently, to his taste. Actual incorporation of Northern and Central Europe was not yet in France's interest. But progressively, supposedly natural borders in Europe became less relevant, which made the status of the Netherlands and Northwest Germany far from certain. Concurrently, the military was assigned a more pronounced role in the territorial ambitions of Napoleonic France.

In Belgium and the Rhineland, the French learned that foreign supporters were not ready to immediately accept all their beliefs. Given the drastic French measures, initially not too many locals were willing to collaborate. It had also become clear that hesitations could lead to delays. Winning the trust of the political elite was a pre-requisite, but also the general population could pose a threat, as became apparent when in both areas popular uprisings took place. In the first decade of the nineteenth-century, new institutions would rather successfully be introduced, and a new generation would grow accustomed to them. On their turn, 'Belgian' and 'Rhenish' Frenchmen would later be sent to the Netherlands and Northwest Germany to promote integration. But first, the North had to be conquered and incorporated. The manner in which Dutch and Northwest German autonomy was lost, and its consequences for the subsequent implementation of Napoleonic governance, will be explored in the next chapter.

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## Conquest and Incorporation: *Pays Conquis* or *Pays Réunies*?

**Abstract** This chapter investigates how the (nominally) independent states in the Netherlands and Northwest Germany were slowly but surely seized by French troops, and subsequently incorporated by imperial decree. The conquest and incorporation of the northern lands brought about radical political changes, as well as dilemmas. How were new territories to be fitted in: as dependencies taken by force (*pays conquis*), or as new departments on equal footing (*pays réunies*)? And to which extent did ‘on equal footing’ mean eradicating regional diversity within the Empire? Whether uniform structures were imposed too promptly, or not, was contested. The Emperor sent confidants northbound, to investigate existing conditions. Vice versa, Northerners visited Paris, to exert influence on the status of their projected departments. For Dutch and German dignitaries it was of the utmost importance to acknowledge Napoleon’s *droit de conquête*, while lobbying for an integration form that did justice to local circumstances. Eventually, both areas were given a full status within the Empire, taking into account national peculiarities to a certain extent, but only as long as that did not harm the interests of Old France.

**Keywords** Right of war • Conquest • Incorporation • Imperialism

## BETWEEN COERCION AND COOPERATION

Although Napoleon, during his final years exiled on Saint Helena, stressed the civic gains of his rule, such as his legal heritage, most Europeans vividly remembered the intrusion of military aspects in day-to-day life as a defining feature of the Napoleonic state. Enlargement of Empire was not seldom preceded by warfare, with disastrous effects for the local populations. However, the transition to ‘modern’ governance in Europe (equating ‘modernization’ with ‘Francization’) would have been more difficult without preparatory work by the military. Significantly, military officials increasingly received governing tasks, which blurred the lines between civil and military aspects of Napoleonic governance.<sup>1</sup> The conquest and incorporation of present-day Belgium and the German Rhineland had shown the French how foreign territories could be integrated into their state. Whereas the French Directory was led by the belief that Greater France had clear natural limits (in the north, the river Rhine), during the Consulate, after a brief period of consolidation, the French again looked beyond their borders. As Napoleon’s might grew, so did his desire for interventions in Dutch and Northwest German matters.

Transitions from one government to another, driven notably by international political considerations, coupled with the growing prominence of the Napoleonic system of governance. Its gradual introduction conflicted with local conditions. Age-old governing practices and the legitimacy of administrative traditions were challenged by the French. The establishment of the Empire in 1804 intensified this process, eventually leading to the construction of the Kingdom of Holland and the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire. A general wish for a stable, albeit less ‘democratic’, organization of state and society facilitated (coerced) acceptance of the Napoleonic system of governance. Cooperation appeared to be the most productive way of satisfying different actors’ needs under the given circumstances. For pragmatic reasons, attempts were made to render the French model applicable to Europe, which did not mean that extant ways of governing were easily put aside. This chapter shows how the Netherlands

<sup>1</sup> Alan Forrest, ‘La guerre, les perceptions et la construction de l’Europe’, in: F. Antoine et al. ed., *L’Empire napoléonien. Une expérience européenne?* (Paris 2014) 84–96.

and Northwest Germany lost the remainders of their independence, focusing on ideas about the status that the new areas should be given within the Empire.

## EMPERORS AND KINGS

On 18 May 1804 the French Empire was proclaimed via *sénatus-consulte*. Bonaparte, thanks to his charisma and successful propaganda, was seen by many as a guarantee of law and order. Two years earlier he had been proclaimed Consul for life. Significantly, Article 55 of the 1802 Constitution had already stipulated that Napoleon, when circumstances required, could place departments ‘outside’ the Constitution, which could be used to treat incorporated departments in a different manner. Proposals and support of the legislative chambers gave an air of legality to the gradual transition from republic to Empire. During the enlargement of Revolutionary France, the term ‘empire’ had come into use to designate French hegemony. Also, General Bonaparte became presented as *imperator*, a title awarded by the Romans to victorious generals. With Napoleon’s installation as Emperor, a new political constellation was created which combined revolutionary achievements with concepts from the *ancien régime*.<sup>2</sup>

The new imperial constitution did not bring much change to the executive, apart from a (theoretical) strengthening of the control of the Senate.<sup>3</sup> However, one truly new feature of the new constitution would later affect the way in which Napoleon shaped his Empire, namely the introduction of the *grandes dignités de l’Empire*, the Grand Dignitaries, many of whom would later play a role in the enlargement of the Empire. These honorific titles were bestowed on important men in the close circle of Napoleon, such as his brothers (in-law). They received some (representative) tasks, notably *archichancelier* Jean-Jacques-Régis de Cambacérès, who replaced Napoleon in official meetings was in the absence of the Emperor.<sup>4</sup> Former Third Consul Charles-François Lebrun was appointed *architrésorier*.

<sup>2</sup>Annie Jourdan, ‘Le Premier Empire: un nouveau pacte social’, *Cités* (2004) 51–64. <https://doi.org/10.3917/cite.020.0051>

<sup>3</sup>Aurélien Lignereux, *L’Empire des Français: 1799–1815* (Paris 2012) 86.

<sup>4</sup>Nicole Gotteri, *Grands Dignitaires, Ministres et Grands Officiers du Premier Empire. Autographes et notices biographiques* (Paris 1990) 10.



In 1805 the French government asked the Batavian ambassador in Paris, Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck, to draft a new constitution and become *Raadpensionaris* (Grand Pensionary) of the Batavian Commonwealth. ‘President’ Schimmelpenninck’s reign left little room for popular sovereignty, but it was a guarantee for the Batavian autonomy, which was still the most important consideration. Moreover, Napoleon did not support a direct copy of the French constitution either in 1801 or in 1805. He was convinced, on the one hand, that the Dutch national identity was too different from the French, and on the other hand, that he had an interest in letting the European powers continue to regard the Batavian Republic as an independent state.<sup>5</sup> Schimmelpenninck appointed both moderate and radical revolutionaries to prominent positions, among them Alexander Gogel as Minister of Finances. One of his achievements was the introduction of new fiscal legislation, drawn up by Gogel, which entailed economic reforms in the spirit of the revolution. A notable success was the creation of a new system of primary education, based upon progressive pedagogical ideas. Both reforms would be long-lasting.<sup>6</sup>

Soon after, being dissatisfied with Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck, Napoleon decided the Batavians had to ‘invite’ his brother Louis to become king. The foundation of the Kingdom of Holland was fraught with difficulties: a centuries-old republic, with a strong tradition of decentralized institutions, had to be transformed into a hereditary monarchy. During the negotiations in Paris between the Batavians diplomats and Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand, the Dutch had already argued that monarchy was incompatible with Dutch national identity. Louis Bonaparte was certainly no enthusiast of republicanism, and convinced that monarchy was a superior form of government. Louis stressed that the Dutch had to be persuaded to accept monarchism. He believed his government could unify the Dutch nation.<sup>7</sup> Given the poor circumstances, Louis Bonaparte’s

<sup>5</sup> Martijn van der Burg, *Nederland onder Franse invloed. Culturele overdracht en staatsvorming in de napoleontische tijd, 1799–1813* (Amsterdam 2009). Cf. <https://hdl.handle.net/11245/1.272472>

<sup>6</sup> Matthijs Lok and Martijn van der Burg, ‘The Dutch case: The Kingdom of Holland and the imperial departments’, in: M. Broers, P. Hicks and A. Guimerá ed., *The Napoleonic Empire and the new European political culture* (Basingstoke 2012) 100–111. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137271396\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137271396_10)

<sup>7</sup> Martijn van der Burg, ‘Transforming the Dutch Republic into the Kingdom of Holland: The Netherlands between republicanism and monarchy (1795–1815)’, *European Review of History* 17 (2010) 164–165. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13507481003660811>

reign was rather effective. By authoritarian means, he implemented and consolidated many reforms which dated from the revolutionary era, such as national cultural institutions. Also, he initiated new reforms, such as the codification of civil law, and introduced French institutions, and uniformity in subnational administration. Often, French examples and Dutch tradition were aligned.<sup>8</sup> Against all odds, Louis' monarchy functioned, albeit not in the way the Emperor wished.

Simultaneously, Napoleon was initiating considerable transformations in Germany. In theory, most German lands still formed part of the Holy Roman Empire, but in actual fact, the age-old Empire was a hollow shell. Anticipating the dissolution of Germany, the Habsburg Emperor Francis II had created the Austrian Empire out of his Central European lands in 1804. Napoleon had further rendered the Holy Roman Empire irrelevant by creating the Confederation of the Rhine, consisting of 16 sovereign German states, of which he became the 'Protector'. Within two years, the Confederation doubled in member states.<sup>9</sup> Emperor Francis II abdicated on 6 August 1806, which signified the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire.

Between 1795 and 1805 Prussia had remained a neutral power. In return, Napoleon supported Prussian territorial growth in the East. However, internal power struggles, and growing problems with other states, led to escalation. Moreover, it became clear during peace-negotiations that Napoleon was willing to return Hannover to the British crown, even though Prussia had annexed Hannover. On 26 September 1806, Frederick William III presented Napoleon with an ultimatum: French troops should leave German lands north of the Rhine immediately. But within three weeks, on 14 October, the inferior Prussian armies were defeated at Jena and Auerstedt (by Marshal Davout, the later Governor in Hamburg). People in Northwest Germany realized that now France could do as it pleased. The following year, Prussia was forced to sign the

<sup>8</sup> Martijn van der Burg, 'Cultural and legal transfer in Napoleonic Europe: Codification of Dutch civil law as a cross-national process', *Comparative Legal History* 3 (2015) 85–109. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2049677X.2015.1041727>

<sup>9</sup> Michel Kerautret, 'Les Allemagnes napoléoniennes', in: T. Lentz ed., *Napoléon et l'Europe* (Paris 2005) 330–331.; Bernhard Struck and Claire Gantet, *Revolution, Krieg und Verflechtung, 1789–1815* (Darmstadt 2008) 103.

humiliating Peace of Tilsit; all territories in Northwest Germany came into French hands.<sup>10</sup>

On 21 November 1806, exactly one year after the destruction of the French-Spanish fleet at Trafalgar, which had made Great Britain the dominant naval power, Napoleon implemented the *Blocus continental* (Continental System). The Continental System is essential for a proper understanding of Napoleon's European politics. In essence, this trade embargo against Britain was a form of commercial warfare. Napoleon legitimized the Blocus by his interpretation of the *droit de guerre*, or *droit de conquête*.<sup>11</sup> Although Napoleon often considered himself to be above the law, or at least was able to interpret legislation as he pleased,<sup>12</sup> he did give weight to law during wartime, the *jus in bello*, and incriminated the British. His dominance on land was legitimized by (his conception of) the law of war. French troops respected the *jus in bello*, he claimed. In contrast, Great Britain was supreme on sea and therefore, in his view, did not adhere to the law of nations, as maritime dominance violated the freedom of the seas.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, Napoleon gave a new meaning to commercial warfare. Gradually, the Continental System was forced upon many peoples that did not belong to the Empire or states ruled by the Bonaparte family. Secondly, the Continental System had a distinctly offensive character. Eventually, all ships having stopped over in British ports, as well as their cargo, were confiscated, regardless of their nationality, as the Emperor considered them to be 'denationalized'.<sup>14</sup> Apart from that, the Continental System can also be seen as an attempt to create a common European market of which the Empire could benefit. By boycotting British imports, Napoleon believed France could become the main economic center in Europe. But he probably overestimated the fragility of the British economy.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Jeroen Koch, *Koning Willem I, 1772–1843* (Amsterdam 2013) 165–168; Struck and Gantet, *Revolution, Krieg und Verflechtung*, 103–104.

<sup>11</sup> Silvia Marzagalli, 'Le Blocus continental pouvait-il réussir?', in: T. Lentz ed., *Napoléon et l'Europe* (Paris 2005) 103–105.

<sup>12</sup> Donald R. Kelley, 'What pleases the prince: Justinian, Napoleon and the lawyers', *History of Political Thought* 23 (2002) 288–302.

<sup>13</sup> Bruno Colson, *Napoleon on war* (Oxford 2015) 28, 38.

<sup>14</sup> Silvia Marzagalli, 'Napoléon, l'Europe et le blocus continental. Application et réactions à partir de l'étude de trois villes portuaires: Bordeaux, Hambourg et Livourne', in: J.-C. Martin ed., *Napoléon et l'Europe. Colloque de la Roche-sur-Yon* (Rennes 2002) 71–90.

<sup>15</sup> Martijn van der Burg, 'Napoleonic wars', in: K. Hendrickson ed., *The encyclopedia of the industrial revolution in world history* 3 (New York 2015) 657–659.

With the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire, the question arose of what to do with the former free imperial cities. Legally, they had become sovereign states, but the new French Empire was to take over the constitutional void.<sup>16</sup> Hoping to preserve their independence, the Hanseatic towns joined forces and formed the Hanseatic federation. However, soon after, French troops took control of Lübeck, Bremen, and Hamburg.<sup>17</sup> In the South of Germany, the free imperial cities were awarded to Napoleon's allies: Augsburg and Nuremberg to the new Kingdom of Bavaria; Frankfurt am Main to the Principality of Aschaffenburg. Bremen, Hamburg, and Lübeck however, received the status of *pays réservé*, a territory of which the future status was still undecided. Merging the towns and their surroundings into a single North German member state of the German Confederation was highly probable.<sup>18</sup>

Concurrently, Napoleon decreed a territorial restructuring of newly conquered Prussian lands between Rhine and Elbe. In the interim, the territories were reshuffled into five temporary administrative units, headed by a *gouverneur* or *gouverneur général*—as Napoleon tended to designate the Governors. Like the Hanseatic cities, the lands became *pays réservés*. The Governors, all generals, administrated from the towns of Braunschweig, Erfurt, Minden, Münster, and Fulda (taken from Dutch Prince William Frederick who had sided with his Prussian family members). Each was aided by an *intendant* who oversaw financial matters. Next to the *pays réservés* established on 23 October 1806, there were many more, some very short-lived, *pays réservés* in this period.<sup>19</sup> Subsequently, as part of the creation of a new European state system, the Grand Duchy of Berg and the Kingdom of Westphalia were established. Both were mergers of the above-mentioned former bishoprics, Prussian territories or other minor (ecclesiastical) states.

<sup>16</sup> Barbara Dölemeyer, 'Frans recht in Noord-Duitsland. De inlijving van de noordwestelijke gebieden van Duitsland bij het Franse keizerrijk', in: A. Berkvens, J. Hallebeek and A. Sirks ed., *Het Franse Nederland: de inlijving 1810–1813. De juridische en bestuurlijke gevolgen van de 'Réunion' met Frankrijk* (Hilversum 2012) 35, 41.

<sup>17</sup> Katherine Aaslestad, 'Lost neutrality and economic warfare. Napoleonic warfare in Northern Europe, 1795–1815', in: R. Chickering and S. Förster ed., *War in an age of revolution, 1775–1815* (Cambridge 2010) 379–380.

<sup>18</sup> Swantje Naumann and Helmut Stubbe da Luz, *Die französischen Besatzer in Hamburg. Zeugnisse zu den Jahren 1811–1814* (Hamburg 2013) 31.

<sup>19</sup> Annie Jourdan ed., *Correspondance générale. Tome dixième. Un Grand Empire, mars 1810–mars 1811* (Paris 2014) annexes.

Not respecting historical borders, new administrative entities were created, meanwhile abolishing traditional corporations and feudal privileges. So-called *intendants* were appointed and studied extant systems of governance. Like in France, newly created departments received names based on mountains or rivers.<sup>20</sup> Certainly ‘model state’ Westphalia, ruled by Jérôme Bonaparte, had to serve as a positive example of Napoleonic governance in Germany. Jérôme, however, was unable to meet the high expectations of Napoleon, who came to prefer the more efficient system of the Grand Duchy of Berg, which was ruled by Marshall Joachim Murat.<sup>21</sup> Both new Napoleonic states were influential concerning the implementation of Napoleonic governance after 1810 since they bordered, and partly overlapped, the later Northwest German departments.

Remarkably, the former Prussian province of Ostfriesland, together with Jever, Varel and the neutral mini-state Kniphausen, was left to Louis Bonaparte. In 1808, it was added to the Kingdom of Holland as the department of Oost-Friesland. Prior to incorporation, Count Willem Gustaaf Frederik Bentinck, former Lord of Kniphausen and Varel was so presumptuous as to send the king a draft decree to regulate the relations between his seigniories and the Kingdom of Holland. Bentinck opted for a kind of separate status, and spoke of Kniphausen’s and Varel’s population as ‘his subjects’. Louis, however, made him clear that he, as sovereign, exercised full authority over Holland in its entirety.<sup>22</sup> The Dutch government looked down upon the population of the East-Frisian Peninsula, therefore the local German-speaking population disliked the efforts of King Louis’ collaborators to impose Dutch culture and institutions. For instance, Dutch officials considered the regional dialect as an inferior *langue intermédiaire*: ‘the tongue of the East Frisians and Jeverans is actually a deformed and low Dutch’, they claimed.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Ute Planert, ‘Resistance to Napoleonic reform in the Grand Duchy of Berg, the Kingdom of Westphalia and the South German states’, in: M. Broers, P. Hicks and A. Guimerá ed., *The Napoleonic empire and the new European political culture* (Basingstoke 2012) 149; Nicola P. Todorov, ‘The Napoleonic administrative system in the Kingdom of Westphalia’, in: M. Broers, P. Hicks and A. Guimerá ed., *The Napoleonic Empire and the new European political culture* (Basingstoke 2012) 174–175.

<sup>21</sup> Todorov, ‘The Napoleonic administrative system’, 183.

<sup>22</sup> Archives nationales, Paris, AF IV 1813, pièce 6.

<sup>23</sup> Archives nationales, AF IV 1816, pièce 13.

## LAST STRONGHOLDS OF REPUBLICANISM

As the Holy Roman Empire fell into disrepair, the urban elites of the three Hanseatic cities started nourishing a Hanseatic regionalism. In September 1806, urban representatives convened in Lübeck and founded a Hanseatic Federation. Nonetheless, they insisted that their association should be seen as a revival of the centuries-old ties between the three cities, based on their common history and interests, rather than a new political entity. But this made no impression on the French. On 6 November 1806 Napoleonic forces surrounded Lübeck, stormed the city gates, and defeated the fatigued Prussian troops in the streets. French soldiers plundered the neutral town, burn down houses, and harassed citizens. Subsequently, Bremen and Hamburg surrendered without a fight. Napoleon ordered the occupation of the three Hanseatic cities, as well the surrounding North Sea shores.<sup>24</sup> Historian Katherine Aaslestad labels these events ‘a turning point that brought the French Wars into [the Hanseatic] cities, harbors, warehouses, shops, and homes’.<sup>25</sup> For instance, Hamburger lawyer Karl Gries wrote his traveling brother Johann Diederich that ‘Lübeck’s devastation has been our rescue [...] I tell you, our city is miraculously saved from the horrific fate of that unfortunate town [...] Where will it go with Germany, now that the last dam in which we had placed our hope to halt the thirst for power, is breached’.<sup>26</sup>

On 18 December 1806, Marshal Guillaume Marie-Anne Brune was appointed *gouverneur-générale* of the Hanseatic towns. Urban governments tried to maintain the appearance of political independence. They reassured each other that they were still in control, and the French governor was merely a military governor. In practice, the urban authorities were largely subordinate to the French, and foreign troops were constantly present.<sup>27</sup> French (legal) reforms were initiated, but existing urban

<sup>24</sup> Katherine Aaslestad, ‘Paying for war: Experiences of Napoleonic rule in the Hanseatic Cities’, *Central European History* 39 (2006) 648–649. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938906000215>; Georges Servières, *L’Allemagne française sous Napoléon Ier, d’après des documents inédits tirés des Archives Nationales et des Archives des Affaires Étrangères* (Paris 1904) 88–90.

<sup>25</sup> Aaslestad, ‘Paying for war’, 645.

<sup>26</sup> Karl Gries to Dietrich Gries, 16 November 1806. Heinrich Reincke, ‘Aus dem Briefwechsel von Karl und Diederich Gries, 1796–1819’, *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Hamburgische Geschichte* 25 (1924) 244.

<sup>27</sup> Burghart Schmidt, *Hamburg im Zeitalter der Französischen Revolution und Napoleons (1789–1813)* (Hamburg 1998) 328–330.

institutions were basically left intact. Quartering French soldiers was, of course, unpleasant; but it could have been worse, according to Karl Gries (now a member of the French judiciary). Also in daily life, the changes were not that dramatic, Gries claimed—apart from less feasts and luxury due to the circumstances.<sup>28</sup> Quickly, Napoleon needed his soldiers elsewhere; remaining occupying forces were mostly ‘good-natured Dutchmen’. According to Gries, the self-imposed austere lifestyle made way for a little more enjoyment of life.<sup>29</sup> Yet, most citizens had a harder time than Gries, being forced to feed occupying troops, and provide officers with monetary allowances. And the financial burden increased.<sup>30</sup>

In the years 1808–1809 Napoleon’s attention was directed toward other parts of Europe. The Fifth Coalition War was convincingly won. The subsequent Treaty of Schönbrunn, which was signed on 14 October 1809, placed Europe almost entirely under Napoleonic rule, either directly or indirectly. However, it did not seem Napoleon’s intention to deprive the Hanseatic cities of their semi-autonomous status and turn them into departments.

Napoleon was growing frustrated with the military weakness of Louis’ army and continuing illegal trade with England. After the failed British invasion of the island of Walcheren in the summer of 1809 (the British suffered great losses, mostly due to bad hygienic conditions and spoiled drinking water), Napoleon summoned his brother to Paris. Walcheren was incorporated in December 1809. Dutch territories south of the Rhine followed in March 1810. Louis Bonaparte hoped this sacrifice would guarantee the independence of his reduced kingdom.<sup>31</sup> Napoleon had also forced his brother to allow French custom officials in his kingdom, and the troops of Marshal Nicolas Oudinot slowly advanced toward Amsterdam. The dismantlement of the Kingdom of Holland came as no surprise. Some Dutchmen assumed they would be better off as imperial subjects. Perhaps incorporation could lead to improvements, such as the creation of a

<sup>28</sup> Karl Gries to Diederich Gries, 18 February 1807. Reincke, ‘Aus dem Briefwechsel’, 246–248.

<sup>29</sup> Karl Gries to Diederich Gries, 1 August 1807. *Ibid.*, 248.

<sup>30</sup> Aaslestad, ‘Paying for war’, 652.

<sup>31</sup> Archives nationales, AF IV 1729, dossier 2, pièces 134–135; Nationaal Archief, The Hague, Staatsraad 1805–1810, inv. no. 107c.

uniform judicial system, financial benefits, a large free trade area, and a lower tax burden.<sup>32</sup>

## THE INCORPORATION OF THE NETHERLANDS AND NORTHWEST GERMANY

When Louis Bonaparte abdicated and fled on 2 July 1810, Oudinot took control of the capital and Napoleon formally incorporated the remainder of the Kingdom of Holland a week later. Napoleon ordered his confidant Charles-François Lebrun to Amsterdam. As ‘Lieutenant General’, Lebrun was to take over the duties of Louis and oversee the transition to French rule.<sup>33</sup> Lebrun initially objected to his appointment. He considered himself to be too old and pointed out that his acts as Governor in Genoa (where he had been *gouverneur-général* in 1805) had not been completely satisfactory to all parties.<sup>34</sup> Napoleon waved aside Lebrun’s objections. Within a few days, Lebrun arrived in Amsterdam. Fifty years earlier, as a student, Lebrun was shocked that the once-dynamic port city had lost much of its glory.<sup>35</sup>

Charles-François Lebrun had to ensure the government and military swore allegiance to the Emperor, and keep an eye on the budget of the former Kingdom. The Decree of Rambouillet (8/9 July 1810), the official incorporation act, had been short. Provisionally, the structure of the Kingdom of Holland was largely kept intact. Lebrun supervised the former Ministers, who had to remain at their post until 1811, just like their subordinates. Amsterdam officially became the third imperial capital, after Paris and Rome. It was determined that there would be just a few immediate changes.<sup>36</sup> Firstly, the Dutch customs was united with the French customs. Secondly, as a retribution for illegal trade, all (smuggled) colonial goods found were taxed 50 percent.<sup>37</sup> Thirdly, feared by many, interest payments on the public debt were cut by two thirds (the so-called

<sup>32</sup> Johanna W. A. Naber, *Overheersching en vrijwording : geschiedenis van Nederland tijdens de inlijving bij Frankrijk, juli 1810–november 1813* (Haarlem 1913) 23–24.

<sup>33</sup> Napoleon to Lebrun, 8 July 1810. Jourdan ed., *Correspondance générale* X, no. 23927.

<sup>34</sup> Auguste De Caumont la Force, *L’architrésorier Lebrun, gouverneur de la Hollande, 1810–1813* (Paris 1907) 2.

<sup>35</sup> A. E. M. Ribberink, ‘Lebrun en de homines novi’, *Nederlands Archievenblad* XC (1986) 133.

<sup>36</sup> *Bulletin des lois, 4e serie* XIII (Paris 1811) 331; Archives nationales, F17, 1098, pièce 133.

<sup>37</sup> Naber, *Overheersching en vrijwording*, 25–26.



*tiërcering*). Citizens would receive only one third of the interest they deserved. This would further contribute to the economic malaise of the Dutch departments. Although no interest on public debts had been paid since 1808, moneylenders, often merchants, lost their trust in the government, further stagnating the economy.<sup>38</sup>

In this transitional phase, Lebrun had to prepare the Dutch departments for integration, keep Napoleon informed and make sure all imperial orders were executed. He received many instructions from the Emperor, sometimes three to four letters per day. Given the Emperor's ambitions, Lebrun had to evaluate which of Napoleon's ideas could be implemented swiftly.<sup>39</sup> Also, the new subjects had to be reassured. Lebrun comforted disillusioned Dutchmen that, now that the Republic's days of glory were over, integration in the Empire was the best alternative.<sup>40</sup>

As for Northwest Germany, Napoleon was pondering of appointing his loyal Marshal Louis Nicolas Davout to oversee the incorporation. Previously, Davout had been Governor of the Duchy of Warsaw, created in 1807 from former Prussian lands. So, like Lebrun, Davout had obtained experience in the Empire's peripheries. Almost all of 1810, Davout had been in Paris in the circles of the Emperor and his ministers. He, therefore, had witnessed the dealings with the King of Holland. French troops in Germany were still scattered along the North Sea coast after defending Holland. With a reorganized army Napoleon wanted to assert his power in all German territories and eventually in Russia. In this plan, a key role was assigned to Davout.<sup>41</sup> Marshal Davout had to coordinate his reorganization with the customs authorities in Germany to work efficiently and supervise any corrupt customs officers.<sup>42</sup> When reforms did not go smooth enough to the Emperor's taste, Davout was reminded all French troops in

<sup>38</sup> J. L. van Zanden and Arthur van Riel, *The structures of inheritance: The Dutch economy in the nineteenth century*. The Princeton economic history of the Western world (Princeton 2004) 72–73.

<sup>39</sup> A.-C. Lebrun, 'Notice biographique', in: A.-C. Lebrun ed., *Opinions, rapports, et choix d'écrits politiques de Charles-François Lebrun, duc de Plaisance* (Paris 1829) 131.

<sup>40</sup> Annie Jourdan, 'La réunion de la Hollande à la France: histoire d'un processus', in: F. Antoine et al. ed., *L'Empire napoléonien. Une expérience européenne?* (Paris 2014) 142.

<sup>41</sup> Ch. De Mazade ed., *Correspondance du maréchal Davout, prince d'Eckmühl. Ses commandements, son ministère, 1801–1815. Tome troisième* (Paris 1885) 174–175.

<sup>42</sup> Napoleon to Davout, 28 September 1810. Jourdan ed., *Correspondance générale X*, no. 24702.

Germany were under his command and he was, therefore, responsible for the progress.<sup>43</sup>

In Northwest Germany, it had become clear that the French were increasing their presence. As in the Netherlands, this was not perceived unequivocally. In Hamburg, some took the view that the Senate should have resigned a long time ago, as it no longer possessed any genuine authority; others welcomed that the councilors held on to their office, but concluded that in the end there was no other option but to submit to the French. Despite the ever-increasing rumors, the news of the incorporation came as a surprise. On 7 December, Davout was first referred to by Napoleon as ‘gouverneur général des villes hanséatiques’.<sup>44</sup> The population, however, was informed as late as 18 December 1810.<sup>45</sup> Changes had been expected, but not an incorporation. Some were mildly positive about the change in political system, hoping an improvement in economic prospects within the Empire, or, in the case of religious minorities, more equality. But overwhelming majority of citizens regretted the loss of traditional autonomy, especially the urban lower classes reacted increasingly annoyed to the entailing negative economic and social developments. The strengthening of the military presence in Northern Germany and the implementation of the October Decrees marked the beginning of a new phase in Napoleon’s enforcement of the Continental System. Severe clashes took place between French *gendarmes*, who tried to confiscate goods, and the lowest social classes.<sup>46</sup>

Also, the concerned German princes had to be notified their principalities would soon be disbanded. This involved little clashes or personal dramas. Two categories of states were involved: Napoleonic vassal monarchies (Berg and Westphalia) and principalities ruled by the German Houses of Oldenburg, Arenberg, and Salm. The affected princes were politely informed of the loss of their country or a portion thereof. Concerning the former category: Napoleon saw the appropriation of parts of the domains belong to his family members as more or less a formality. In August 1810, Napoleon had prepared the taking of the German North Sea Coast. Not seeing his brother Jérôme Bonaparte as an equal, he considered that he

<sup>43</sup> Napoleon to Davout, 4 October 1810. *Ibid.*, 24780.

<sup>44</sup> Napoleon to Davout, 7 December 1810. *Ibid.*, 25447.

<sup>45</sup> Karl Gries to Diederich Gries, 28 March 1811. Reincke, ‘Aus dem Briefwechsel’, 255.

<sup>46</sup> Schmidt, *Hamburg*, 327, 422–423.

‘could do as he pleased’ with the Kingdom of Westphalia.<sup>47</sup> The Emperor ordered his troops to occupy the north of the kingdom and his brother to withdraw Westphalian troops.<sup>48</sup> Jérôme was not pleased, but did not stop his brother. Bordering Westphalia, the Grand Duchy of Berg was formally ruled by Napoleon’s nephew Napoléon Louis Bonaparte (son of former Dutch king Louis), but in effect, it was administrated by Jacques Claude Beugnot. Ceding a part of the Grand Duchy to the Empire was also a formality. Plus, because the previous ruler Murat had introduced high taxes, the local population looked forward to integration into France, with its relatively better fiscal climate.<sup>49</sup>

Equally straightforward was the taking of the possessions of the Duke of Arenberg, and the Princes of Salm-Salm and Salm-Kyrburg, enclaves within Hanover. Duke Prosper Ludwig von Arenberg, a brother-in-law of Joséphine de Beauharnais, was closely associated with the Empire. At that time, he was serving as an officer in the *Grande Armée* in Spain, leaving the actual governing of his Duchy to a Governor. As early as 1808 he had indicated he was willing to negotiate over the future of the Dutch of Arenberg. For his territorial losses, Von Arenberg was financially compensated and received the French title of Duke.<sup>50</sup> Prince Konstantin zu Salm-Salm and Prince Friedrich IV zu Salm-Kyrburg jointly ruled the Principality of Salm. Like von Arenberg, they were willing to relinquish their sovereignty. They were eventually compensated financially and admitted as dukes to the French nobility.<sup>51</sup>

The incorporation of the Grand Duchy of Oldenburg, however, was politically sensitive. To begin with, Grand Duke Peter Friedrich Wilhelm was an uncle of the Czar and the French emperor had to inform his Russian counterpart as well. Due to mental illness of the Grand Duke, his cousin Peter Friedrich Ludwig acted as head of state. He was not intent on leaving his country. After Peter Friedrich Ludwig had declined the first offer from Napoleon (namely Erfurt), Napoleon decided that the area had to be occupied. After diplomatic negotiations, Von Keverberg (a promising

<sup>47</sup>Napoleon to Champagny, 4 August 1810. Jourdan ed., *Correspondance générale* X, no. 24220.

<sup>48</sup>Napoleon to Clarke, 18 August 1810; Napoleon to Jérôme Bonaparte, 18 August 1810. *Ibid.*, 24346; 24351.

<sup>49</sup>Antoinette Joulia, ‘Ein französischer Verwaltungsbezirk in Deutschland: Das Oberemsdepartement (1810–1813)’, *Osnabrücker Mitteilungen* 80 (1973) 44.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 43–44.

<sup>51</sup>Servières, *L’Allemagne française sous Napoléon*, 222.

subprefect from Westphalia) was put forward, who completed the delicate task of persuading the duke, without endangering the Franco-Russian relations. Formally, the Grand Duchy ceased to exist on 28 February 1811; the ducal family had left for Russia the day before.<sup>52</sup>

### NAPOLEON'S *DROIT DE CONQUÊTE*

Napoleon's view on the newly acquired northern territories is telling, specifically, his discourse on *pays conquis* or *pays réunies*. In the technical language of the time, distinctions were made between *pays conquis* and *pays réunies*, the latter comprising territories integrated into France.<sup>53</sup> *Pays réunies* should genuinely form part of the Empire and be treated on an equal footing with Old France, such as the system of governance. *Pays conquis*, however, were not considered to be integral parts of the Empire.

In Amsterdam, Charles-François Lebrun had been charged with the duty of selecting prominent Dutchmen to be sent to Paris to prepare the *réunion*. In August 1810, a committee of 15 Dutch notables (the 'Conseil pour les affaires de Hollande') went to Paris to provide the French government there with useful information and proposals to efficiently integrate the Netherlands. Another 15 deputies—from the army, the Council of State and the municipal council of Amsterdam—were added to this committee.<sup>54</sup> It inventoried the differences between Dutch and French governance, first and foremost the administration, but also many other aspects such as the judicial system, finances, police, and armed forces. Also, a decision had to be made about which Dutchmen should become members of central state bodies.<sup>55</sup> During the daytime, there were long talks with the Emperor and his ministers. Each evening there were informal dinners and meetings. The Dutch diplomats regarded their French colleagues as more reliable partners than former King Louis Bonaparte. Now they could do business directly with the imperial government and stress that, in their opinion, a drastic imposition of French rule was

<sup>52</sup> Joulia, 'Ein französischer Verwaltungsbezirk', 44–45.

<sup>53</sup> Geoffrey Ellis, *The Napoleonic empire* (2nd ed.; Basingstoke 2003) 90.

<sup>54</sup> Th. Jorissen, 'De commissie van 22 juli 1810 te Parijs', *Bijdragen voor Vaderlandsche Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde* Nieuwe Reeks deel IX (1877) 67.

<sup>55</sup> Lebrun, 'Notice biographique', 130.

unwanted. Many of the committee members would later be appointed to high posts.<sup>56</sup>

Napoleon's attitude toward the Dutch was ambiguous. Napoleon noted that there was a major difference between the incorporation of a small territory and incorporating an entire nation. When incorporation concerned a single new department, Napoleon stressed that he could make no exceptions. However, he had received positive reports from Lebrun and other informants. Holland was not a *pays conquis* in Napoleon's eyes. He congratulated the Dutch on having many good institutions, which did not have to be replaced. Integration could be taken gradually, paying attention to local customs. He clarified that he did not intend to send a great deal of French officials.<sup>57</sup> Nor did all aspects of governance become strictly French. For instance, the Dutch commission successfully lobbied for preservation of Dutch as an administrative language.<sup>58</sup> But Dutch should not be the dominant language, Lebrun emphasized: 'the *réunion* will be imperfect when the published public acts continue to be written in a language different from ours'.<sup>59</sup>

However, the Emperor also looked down on Dutch administrators and politicians. On occasions, Napoleon was even aggressive. During an audience, the Emperor praised Dutch national identity but had contempt for many members of the elite. He frequently made committee members understand good and proper that he had every right to do as he pleased with his new subjects. In that sense, the Dutch had to be just as obedient as other conquered lands. Napoleon argued that since 1787, when Prussian armies had expelled the Patriots, Dutch independence was fiction: 'I hold you by right of conquest, and this is indeed the most sacred right; do not speak to me of independence; since the Prussians invaded your territory, your independence has been lost'.<sup>60</sup> This right of conquest characterized Napoleonic diplomatic philosophy. Talleyrand legitimized the *droit de conquête* of the Emperor. In previous centuries, Talleyrand reasoned, the keeping of a balance of power in Europe was increasingly

<sup>56</sup> Marie Elisabeth Kluit, *Cornelis Felix van Maanen. Tot het herstel der onafhankelijkheid, 9 september 1769–6 december 1813* (Groningen 1953) 293–327.

<sup>57</sup> Jorissen, 'De commissie van 22 juli 1810 te Parijs', 74–75.

<sup>58</sup> D. van der Horst, 'Cornelis Felix van Maanen, dienaar van vele heren', *Holland Historisch Tijdschrift* 32 (2013) 8.

<sup>59</sup> Archives nationales, F17 1092, dossier 1, pièces 29–30.

<sup>60</sup> Jorissen, 'De commissie van 22 juli 1810 te Parijs', 76–77.

kept not by negotiations and international treaties, but by warfare. The stability of Europe depended on it.<sup>61</sup>

Concerning the right of conquest, it is relevant to compare Napoleon's attitude toward the Netherlands with his attitude toward Northwest Germany. Strikingly, in general, the French were less outspoken when it came to the German-speaking lands in the Northwest. Early October, Emperor Napoleon still referred to the region as *provinces réservées* over which Marshall Davout was charged with enforcing law and order.<sup>62</sup> It seems the French authorities in Germany were more occupied with reorganizing the German armies and other pressing military matters.

On 10 December 1810 Napoleon sent the Senate a message on the incorporation of the Netherlands and Northwest Germany. Foremost, it was presented as a defensive action against the politics of the British government. This region could also be useful to dig a canal to the Baltic sea, thus circumventing the British maritime presence.<sup>63</sup> Minister of External Affairs, Jean-Baptiste de Nompère de Champagny (a hardliner concerning imperial expansion) also presented a picture that was opposite to that many Europeans had. According to him, the 'conciliatory' Napoleon Bonaparte had always given in on his conquests for the sake of peace between the major forces. Champagny underlined that earlier expansions of France, such as the annexing of Belgium and the secularizations in Germany, had strengthened the power of Prussia and Austria, and in fact, it was France who had acted modestly in preceding years. He saw conquest as a reaction to foreign aggression. Incorporation of Northwest Germany was necessitated by circumstances. With that Champagny pointed at possible economic benefits of canalization, also to avoid the British fleet on the North Sea and thus re-establishing the 'freedom of the seas' which had been threatened by the British.<sup>64</sup>

Three days later, spoke Senator Charles-Louis Huguet de Sémonville, former French ambassador in the Batavian Republic. As *rapporteur parlementaire*, he had reported on the legislation concerning the

<sup>61</sup> Emmanuel de Waresquiel, 'Talleyrand, une vision européenne', in: T. Lentz ed., *Napoléon et l'Europe* (Paris 2005) 134–135.

<sup>62</sup> Napoleon to Clarke, 4 October 1810. Jourdan ed., *Correspondance générale* X, no. 24764.

<sup>63</sup> Napoleon to the Senate, 10 December 1810. J. Mavidal and E. Laurent ed., *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860. Recueil complet des débats législatifs et politiques des chambres françaises* XI (Paris 1867) 3.

<sup>64</sup> Champagny to Napoleon, 10 December 1810. *Ibid.*, 3–5.

incorporation of allied states into the Empire. In his eyes the northern regions had to choose between rival powers France and Great Britain. The North had been a ‘shallop’ between the grand warships of the French and British but now had sided with the Empire. The Batavians, who had suffered so much, were reunited with their Belgian brothers. But De Sémonville had no elegant analogy for the German situation. Incorporating Northwest Germany was presented as a geopolitical *fait accompli*.<sup>65</sup>

Like the Dutch, the new Northwest-German subjects sent a joint delegation to France, though not prior to the official incorporation, but afterward.<sup>66</sup> Davout advised the deputies to return home quickly, since their stay in France might still give rise to unjustified hopes. Spokesman, and former Syndicus, Hermann Doormann on 17 March 1811 paid tribute to Napoleon. When Doormann spoke of the Hanseatic cities as traditional competitors of England and friends of France, this was more his personal view than the general opinion. Nevertheless, Doormann defended the interests of the Hanseatic cities, recalled their merits, and, between the lines, pleaded to preserve the positive achievements of the past.<sup>67</sup> In his speech, Doormann pointed at the illustrious history of the Hanseatic cities, as a civilizing force in Northern Europe. There were historical connections with France, dating back to Charlemagne. Doormann underlined that the Germans were willing to subject to the will of the Emperor, without seeing themselves as a *territoire vulgaire*, or *acquisition obscure*. They have good morals, a rich history and are industrious—all in ‘a fortunate mix of aristocracy without morgue, and democracy without storms. The main weakness of the Hanseatic cities was the deplorable state of commerce, therefore Doormann expressed the hope to start trading with the southern parts of the Empire, implicitly arguing against internal trade barriers. He carefully presented this as a compensation.<sup>68</sup>

Emperor Napoleon replied that with the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire, the status of the imperial cities had become unclear. Initially, he had wanted to unify them within a separate state, but without navy, it would be a defenseless independent state. Incorporation had to be seen within the context of European warfare, not as a long-wished imperial ambition. The Decrees of Berlin and Milan (an elaboration of the Decree of Berlin)

<sup>65</sup> Sémonville to Napoleon, 13 December 1810. *Ibid.*, 20–21.

<sup>66</sup> Napoleon to Davout, 12 March 1811. Jourdan ed., *Correspondance générale* X, no. 26202.

<sup>67</sup> Schmidt, *Hamburg*, 460–461.

<sup>68</sup> Doormann to Napoleon, 17 March 1811. Lewis Goldsmith, *Recueil de décrets, ordonnances, traités de paix, manifestes, proclamations, discours, &c.* [...] 4 (London 1813) 591–593.

together formed the *loi fondamentale* of the Empire, the *droit public de mon empire*, Napoleon stressed. He opposed states that had the courage to defy these imperial fundaments. Although Napoleon's words were reasonably friendly, he indirectly associated the Hanseatic cities with such states. He was willing to stimulate trade, so he said, but first, the maritime war had to end. The Germans had to wait the 'general peace', a common pretext of Napoleon when allied or incorporated nations make certain pleas. The Hanseatic cities were urged to actively cooperate with pacifying the seas by helping to enlarge the naval power of the Empire.<sup>69</sup> So, in the short term, the Germans were not promised free trade.

Surely, public speeches such as the above, which were printed in the newspapers, had public relations purposes. Napoleon, a calculating pragmatist, was not a man for manifestos. He favored the 'système du moment'.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, above arguments come close to a declaration of intentions with Northern Europe. Illustratively, Napoleon instructed Davout to send the Duke Friedrich Franz of Mecklenburg (the last principality that had joined the Confederation of the Rhine) a copy of his discourse, to make clear, that the Duke clear had to submit to the 'system of France'.<sup>71</sup> The Hanseatic representatives remained in Paris some time, attending formal ceremonies, but Davout quickly ordered them back. He feared that the activities of the improvised delegation, might have a bad influence on public moral.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, the delegates do not seem to have been popular. For instance, Karl Gries considered suspected that Hermann Doormann headed the delegation perhaps more due to his knowledge of the French language, than his diplomatic capabilities.<sup>73</sup>

Napoleon's words to members of both committees were amicable and severe. To grasp the relatively positive nature of his words, it is significant to compare them to Napoleon's response to the delegation of the new Lippe departement, that largely consisted of the former Prince-Bishopric of Münster. This area, due to protests of the local elite, had been separated from the Dutch departments by Lebrun. The Emperor characterized the Northwest German region rather negatively. Münster had been in a

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 593–594.

<sup>70</sup> Annie Jourdan, *L'empire de Napoléon* (Paris 2000) 152–153.

<sup>71</sup> Napoleon to Davout, 24 March 1811. Jourdan ed., *Correspondance générale X*, no. 26380.

<sup>72</sup> Servières, *L'Allemagne française sous Napoléon*, 254–255.

<sup>73</sup> Karl Gries to Diederich Gries, 27 March 1810. Reincke, 'Aus dem Briefwechsel', 253–254.



deplorable state of ignorance and superstition, Napoleon claimed. He presented its inclusion in the Empire, together with Holland and the Hanseatic departments, as an act of mercy.<sup>74</sup>

### PAYS RÉUNIES, UNDER CONDITIONS

The concepts of *droit de guerre* and *droit de conquête* progressively legitimized French dominance. Any violation of the *Blocus*, being the Empire's 'public law', should serve as a legal justification for incorporation. In this argumentation, the Emperor was not an aggressor, but the one who stood up for nations that de facto had already lost their independence for a long time. In this light, it is tempting to highlight Napoleon's, often positive, words for the Dutch and the relative French lack of interest for Northwest Germany, implying that the French only were preoccupied with winning over the Dutch at the start of the incorporation. Indeed, prominent Dutch politicians were sent to Paris for formal and informal discussions, and the need to take Dutch institutions and traditions into account was stressed—elements less present in official discourse on Northwest Germany, which would suggest the German territories were more of a *pays conquis* in the Parisian minds. That Napoleon for some time referred to Northwest Germany as *provinces réservées* would also confirm this interpretation. However, this would be a gross simplification. Napoleon's approach to the Northwest Germans definitely bears witness of a certain acknowledgement of a Hanseatic 'nation', or regional identity that transcended the urban sphere. Undeniably, Napoleon looked down on individual northern merchants and officials, whom he considered to be conceited and arrogant. Yet, these feelings were not necessarily extrapolated to the peoples in general—certainly not by all Frenchmen in the North.

Accordingly, the 'uniqueness' of both Dutch and German regions was acknowledged, albeit in different ways. As for the Dutch, their national identity and 'modernity' were not put into question, yet, the fact that they needed to be part of the Empire (like, for instance, many Italians) was a given fact. As for Northwest Germany, the Napoleonic government made clear that its incorporation was less 'logical': inclusion of these former parts of the Holy Roman Empire was of a pragmatic nature, much more so than in the Dutch case. Geopolitical circumstances had necessitated the

<sup>74</sup>Napoleon to the delegation of the Lippe department, 18 August 1811 *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier; publiée par ordre de l'empereur Napoléon III. Tome 22* (Paris 1867) no. 18048.

incorporation, it was argued. Nonetheless, Napoleon increasingly embraced the idea of an imperial system as guiding principle for Europe, in which he became the spiritual successor of the Holy Roman Emperors. In an Empire, a Dutch and Hanseatic nation could partially persist, as long as the interests of Old France were not harmed. In other words: the Netherlands and Northwest Germany became *pays réunies*, under conditions.

What was not recognized at the time was that the actual integration process would be much more challenging. The genesis, composition and internal dynamics of the intermediary bodies of governance in Amsterdam and Hamburg that had to oversee the integration process, will be discussed in the next chapter.

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## Intermediary Bodies of Governance

**Abstract** Following the phase of conquest, usually a temporary interim government was formed to supervise the incorporation of newly acquired territories. The timing of the incorporation, as well as the manner in which models from other parts of Europe were applied, influenced how Napoleonic governance worked out in practice. Importantly, the creation of so-called *gouvernements généraux* became a Napoleonic integration instrument. General-Governors Charles-François Lebrun in Amsterdam and Louis Nicolas Davout in Hamburg had similar tasks but made different choices. Their relationships with other actors, local and French, differed as well. In this chapter the two intermediary bodies are discussed, in relation to other Napoleonic institutions and their main protagonists. Often, Napoleonic officials who had already proven their worth elsewhere were employed in these areas. Thus, institutional examples and personal experiences from other parts of the Empire, such as Italy, influenced the integration of the North. Yet, being remote from the imperial core, many officials competed for power and hence for control of the integration process.

**Keywords** Intermediary government • Incorporation • Integration • Charles-François Lebrun • Louis-Nicolas Davout

## FROM CONQUEST TO INCORPORATION

During the autumn of 1810, Napoleon issued decree after decree to enlarge his Empire by incorporating conquered lands. In previous years, the treatment of new territorial acquisitions had been increasingly formalized. Usually an ephemeral Governor was appointed, certainly when it concerned small areas. Larger additions received more durable transitional forms of governance.

This chapter discusses how such intermediary governments were set up in the Dutch and Northwest German departments. In Amsterdam and Hamburg high state representatives were appointed, a Grand Dignitary and a Marshal respectively, aided by numerous high officials, which demonstrated that Napoleon was keen to integrate these lands firmly into the Empire. Both intermediary bodies of governance were given the task of implementing French institutions and procedures, but simultaneously had to establish working relationships with the former authorities. However, acts of French high officials, and the outcomes thereof, were all but uniform. Moreover, the governments were internally divided, and their relationships with other actors were equally complex.

Before investigating developments in the North, attention is paid to the expanding Empire on a larger scale. The introduction of the Napoleonic governance in lands that were conquered and occupied in 1810 could draw on earlier empire-building. These experiences served as stepping-stones for the *réunion* of the Netherlands and Northwest Germany. Whereas the former commissioners of the French Republic in the Belgian and Rhenish departments had essentially been civil servants, from Napoleon's rule onward, generals were quasi-systematically appointed as administrators in occupied territories in the phase before incorporation or the creation of a vassal state. Indeed, many members of the extended Bonaparte family were military men, like Murat, Jérôme, and Louis.<sup>1</sup> The practice was further institutionalized during the Empire. Specifically the creation of *gouvernements généraux* headed by an imperial Grand Dignitary was a Napoleonic instrument of incorporation.

<sup>1</sup>Jean-Paul Bertraud, 'L'armée au service de la politique extérieure de Napoléon', in: T. Lentz ed., *Napoléon et l'Europe* (Paris 2005) 171–172.

INSTRUMENTS OF EMPIRE-BUILDING:  
THE *GOUVERNEMENTS GÉNÉRAUX*

The Napoleonic idea of a General-Government can be traced back to the French conquest of northern Italy, specifically Piedmont, Tuscany, and Liguria. The French had especially had great hopes of Piedmont and Tuscany. After the conquest, the matter of how to achieve a more stable form of governance became pressing. Napoleon was uncertain how to deal with Piedmont, but eventually decided on its incorporation into France. Initially, Piedmont was administered by an intermediary body of governance known as the *Consultà*, overseen by French Commissioner-General Jean-Baptiste Jourdan. Its responsibility was to help transform the region into a cluster of French departments. On 11 September 1802, the *Gouvernement général des départements au-delà des Alpes* was created, whereby conquered Piedmont was formally incorporated and six, eventually five, new departments were created from it (Doire, Sésia, Pô, Marengo, and Stura). General Jacques-François de Menou acted as General-Governor of the Transalpin departments.<sup>2</sup>

Directly south of Piedmont lay the Ligurian Republic. Napoleon incorporated this vassal state in June 1805, and three new departments were created: Apennins, Montenotte, and Gênes. The western part of the former republic was added to the existing department Alpes-Maritimes. The introduction of the French administration took place under the responsibility of Ministry of the Interior. But on the spot, from Genoa, Charles-François Lebrun acted as General-Governor. He made serious efforts to create support among Italians. The Governor and his direct collaborators noted that seeking good harmony with the local elite was an effective integration strategy. Lebrun was critical of the French army, and also had conflicts with police minister Joseph Fouché. With the outbreak of the Third Coalition War, French troops were concentrated in northern Italy. However, a subsequent uprising in Piacentino, which threatened to spread to Genoa and surroundings, made Napoleon lose his confidence in Lebrun. Lebrun had suppressed the uprising but was mild in his punishments, which irritated the Emperor enormously. Lebrun stood up for his

<sup>2</sup>Michael Broers, *The Napoleonic Mediterranean: Enlightenment, revolution and empire* (e-book ed.; London and New York 2019). <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350988958>

cause and defended his moderate stance.<sup>3</sup> The Ligurian departments were thereupon added to the General-Government of the Transalpine Departments under the supervision of General Menou. Lebrun returned to France.

Several Italian territorial entities were thus merged into a Transalpin collective, which formed the blueprint for a new type of *grand dignitaire*. A *sénatus-consulte organique* created the *gouverneur général* as a state representative next to the extant Grand Dignitaries. On 8 February 1808, in the Senate, member of the Council of State Jean-Baptiste Treilhard legitimized the introduction of an additional Grand Dignitary—created specifically for the incorporated regions—as followed: ‘The institutions of peoples should always be useful to their position, to their current needs’. Experience showed, Treilhard stressed, that every day the Grand Dignitaries prove the usefulness as ‘sublime intermediaries between the monarch and the peoples’. By creating the Grand Dignitary of *gouverneur général* of the Transalpine departments, Napoleon aimed to improve the bond between his person and his subjects, according to Treilhard. The deeds of the General-Governor, should lead to a better communication between ‘the father of the state and the children separated from him by long distances and natural obstacles’.<sup>4</sup>

Napoleon’s brother-in-law Camillo Borghese, married to Pauline Bonaparte, was appointed General-Governor of the Transalpin departments. The Emperor also created a Grand Dignitary-type *gouverneur général* for Tuscany. From Florence, Napoleon’s Elisa Bonaparte governed this part of Italy, but her power as General-Governor and Grand Duchess over Tuscany (Arno, Ombrone, and Méditerranée) was very restricted by her brother. Likewise, Borghese had little success. Most Piedmontese nobles, still loyal to the Savoyard dynasty, did not rally to the French. Elisa had some more local goodwill, but too little influence in Paris to exert any serious power.<sup>5</sup> After Camillo Borghèse and Elisa

<sup>3</sup> Adeline Beaurepaire-Hernandez, ‘Un modèle de notable européen? Les ‘masses de granit’ des départements liguriens et leur intégration au système impérial’, in: F. Antoine et al. ed., *L’Empire napoléonien. Une expérience européenne?* (Paris 2014) 349–356; Michael Broers, *The Napoleonic empire in Italy, 1796–1814: Cultural imperialism in a European context?* (Basingstoke 2005) 95, 99; A. E. M. Ribberink, ‘Lebrun en de homines novi’, *Nederlands Archiefvenblad* XC (1986) 132–133.

<sup>4</sup> Lewis Goldsmith, *Recueil de décrets, ordonnances, traités de paix, manifestes, proclamations, discours, &c.* III (London 1813) 257–258.

<sup>5</sup> Broers, *The Napoleonic Mediterranean*.

Bonaparte, Charles-François Lebrun would in 1810 become the third General-Governor of this type.

Concurrently, numerous other territories were added to the Empire and many smaller intermediary governments briefly existed. A remarkable case are the Illyrian Provinces, formed in October 1809 from territories ceded from the Austrian Empire. Newly created Illyria was never fully integrated into the French Empire. Instead of departments, seven *intendances* were created; some French institutions were introduced but legally it remained a distinct entity. Several generals were successively appointed Governor. Eventually, the geographical and mental distance to Paris was too great to achieve further integration.<sup>6</sup> Equally remarkable are the short-lived Catalan departments that were formally incorporated in January 1812. But in Catalonia the integration process had little time to take off. In the four Catalonian departments created on paper, the French effectively exercised only control over the two enclaves Barcelona and Girona, and their immediate environs.<sup>7</sup>

In brief, intermediary bodies of governance became widespread during the Empire. Gradually regional systems of governance were harmonized, thus stimulating integration. Only the Illyrian provinces and Catalonia deviated from the trend, due to military factors at the end of the Napoleonic wars.<sup>8</sup> On the whole, many of the intermediary governments worked with care, were intent on entrenching the system they imported by taking into account past institutions and soliciting local notables to ensure cooperation. Nevertheless, outside of Old France it was sometimes necessary to bend the rules more than might initially have been considered desirable.<sup>9</sup>

Rule-bending was certainly the case in the North, which would lead to significant clashes within the state apparatus. From a constitutional point of view, the Dutch departments and those in Northwest Germany were incorporated into the French Empire on 13 December 1810 via a *sénatus-consulte organique*. Thus the imperial population increased by more than

<sup>6</sup> Josip Kolanović and Janez Šumrada ed., *Napoleon et son administration en adriatique orientale et dans les Alpes de l'est, 1806–1814* (Zagreb 2005) 21–41.

<sup>7</sup> Broers, *The Napoleonic Mediterranean*.

<sup>8</sup> Helmut Stubbe da Luz, 'Gouverneure, Prokonsuln, Satrapen, Vizekönige. Bemerkungen zur politischen Top-down-Substitution und -Delegation. Einführung', in: H. Stubbe da Luz ed., *Statthalterregimes—Napoleons Generalgouvernements in Italien, Holland und Deutschland (1808–1814)* (Hamburg 2016) 10–11, 23–24.

<sup>9</sup> Aurélien Lignereux, *L'Empire des Français: 1799–1815* (Paris 2012) 356–357.

three million inhabitants. However, the legal texts said little about the actual reorganization of the northern periphery.<sup>10</sup>

### GENERAL-GOVERNORS: LEBRUN AND DAVOUT

Lack of clear provisions, evidently, gave the Emperor leeway to organize his Empire primarily by decree. Two months earlier, on 18 October 1810, Napoleon had already issued a decree organizing Dutch departments, laying the foundations for Napoleonic governance in the Netherlands.<sup>11</sup> It was based on the organization of the Italian Transalpin departments, and envisioned a *gouverneur général* at the top, assisted by a number of high officials. The General-Government had to function as an intermediary between the Dutch departments and the central government in Paris—in accordance to the spirit of the Grand Dignitaryship of the General-Governor, as determined in 1808. The *gouverneur général* was to have almost absolute control over civilian and military affairs in the Dutch departments. Except for the Emperor, no one was higher in hierarchy. ‘Holland’ was divided into seven departments which were to be organized along French lines. During the talks in Paris the Dutch had advised to include the departments south of the Rhine, which had belonged to the Kingdom of Holland up till March 1810. But this idea was rejected. The Rhine remained a mental border within the Empire.

As Lieutenant General, 71-year-old Charles-François Lebrun was certainly a man most suited for the job. Charles-François Lebrun had many years of political experience. He had started his career under Louis XV. During the French Revolution he took the Tennis Court Oath, and in 1794 narrowly escaped death by guillotine. Lebrun was a financial expert. His skills and knowledge contributed to his elevation to Third Consul in 1799, next to Bonaparte and Cambacérés. With the establishment of the Empire in 1804, Lebrun was appointed *archi-trésorier* (arch-treasurer) of the French Empire. Though his title was mainly ceremonial, Lebrun was most influential. Moreover, Lebrun had been *gouverneur général* in northern Italy during the incorporation of the Ligurian Republic. As said, during a time of popular uprisings, Lebrun had been willing to listen to the concerns of the local elite, which was not always appreciated by the

<sup>10</sup> J. B. Duvergier, *Collection complète des lois, décrets, ordonnances, réglemens et avis du Conseil-d'État, depuis 1788 jusques et y compris 1824. Tome dix-septième* (Paris 1826) 264.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 209–227.



Emperor, nor by the repressive forces in Italy, such as the police and the military.<sup>12</sup>

Lebrun mediated between France and the Netherlands. His task was to supervise Dutch high officials and to improve communication. Charles-François Lebrun started an intensive and amicable correspondence with former co-Consul Cambacérés, who—when Napoleon was not in Paris—acted as the head of the French government. Lebrun and Cambacérés discussed personal matters, but Cambacérés also kept Lebrun up-to-date on the state of the Empire.<sup>13</sup> Apart from tapping into his Parisian network, Lebrun started corresponding with key figures in the Dutch executive, administration, and army. He saw his job—as he wrote to Vice-Admiral Jan Hendrik van Kinsbergen—as ‘rebuilding that what time and passions have destroyed’.<sup>14</sup> Lebrun’s duties as Lieutenant General more or less ended with Napoleon’s decree of 18 October 1810. Since initially the idea had been to ‘simply’ incorporate the former Kingdom of Holland, and then implement Napoleonic governance without regard to local conditions, Lebrun was hoping to return to Paris within a few months.

Lieutenant General Lebrun had never been very enthusiastic about his tasks in the Netherlands, but carried them out willingly. It must have been reassuring that the decree was silent on the matter who would be appointed General-Governor. Lebrun reminded Napoleon that his duties ended on 1 January 1811, and stress that he was longing to retire. He feared being ridiculed or being viewed with pity if he would stay any longer in Holland.<sup>15</sup> But much against his will Lebrun was appointed *gouverneur général*. Lebrun asked Napoleon to be relieved of his duties due to his old age: ‘life has no prize for me’.<sup>16</sup> For several weeks, the newly appointed *gouverneur général* argued that he was too old, did not have the vigor, and would

<sup>12</sup> Ribberink, ‘Lebrun en de homines novi’, 132–133.

<sup>13</sup> Johan Joor, ‘De behoefte aan een correspondentie ‘fidèle et sûre’. Een blik in de briefwisseling tussen Charles François Lebrun en Jean-Jacques Régis Cambacérés, 1810–1813’, in: G. Boink et al. ed., *Een kapitaal aan kennis: Liber Amicorum Sierk Plantinga* (2013) 265–269.

<sup>14</sup> Lebrun to Van Kinsbergen, 24 October 1810. A.-C. Lebrun, ‘Notice biographique’, in: A.-C. Lebrun ed., *Opinions, rapports, et choix d’écrits politiques de Charles-François Lebrun, duc de Plaisance* (Paris 1829) 136.

<sup>15</sup> Lebrun to Napoleon, 13 December 1810. H. T. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken der algemeene geschiedenis van Nederland van 1795 tot 1840. VI: Inlijving en opstand 1810–1813* (’s-Gravenhage 1912) no. 155.

<sup>16</sup> Lebrun to Napoleon, 17 December 1810. *Ibid.*, no. 158.

be very grateful if he would be relieved of the governmental burden.<sup>17</sup> But Napoleon insisted.

Concurrently, the Hanseatic departments were incorporated.<sup>18</sup> With the stroke of a pen, three departments were formed from the amalgam of territories in Northwest Germany. Contrary to the Netherlands, the decree did not mention a *gouvernement*, but it installed a *commission de gouvernement*, which was tasked with preparing the three Hanseatic departments for integration and conserving ‘the interests’ of the Empire. The commission was to finish its work on 1 July 1811 (later extended to 1 January 1812). Marshall Louis-Nicolas Davout was appointed as General-Governor. Compared to the establishment of the Dutch General-Government, the decree was rather short and Davout’s formal powers were more modest than Charles-François Lebrun’s. Davout was primarily responsible for commanding the French troops, and for general keeping of law and order. Procedurally, he presided the commission and signed all acts passed by the commissioners. Significantly, whereas High Dignitary Lebrun corresponded directly with the Emperor, Davout was expected to correspond with the Ministers of the Interior and Finances.<sup>19</sup>

Peculiarly, an imperial decree (26 December 1810) on the administrative reorganization of Northwest Germany was never published in the *Bulletin des lois*, therefore it did not have force of law. Nevertheless, this decree, having many similarities with the Dutch decree, defined important aspects of the new system of governance like the demarcation of the new departments, its personnel, the introduction of conscription, the creation of a *directeur de police*, and the recognition of the German (and Dutch) language.<sup>20</sup> In the course of 1811 this omission (or perhaps an intended procedural ‘error’) would lead to discussions whether the decree should be interpreted as a fixed law or, less strictly, ‘only as an instruction’.<sup>21</sup> The

<sup>17</sup> Lebrun to Napoleon, 7 January 1811. *Ibid.*, no. 162.

<sup>18</sup> *Journal de Paris* (1810). 20 December 1810; Helmut Stubbe da Luz, ‘Statthalterstatute. Grundlegende Normenkataloge für Dependancen und Provinzen’, in: H. Stubbe da Luz ed., *Statthalterregimes—Napoleons Generalgouvernements in Italien, Holland und Deutschland (1808–1814)* (Hamburg 2016) 263–268.

<sup>19</sup> For example, Ch. De Mazade ed., *Correspondance du maréchal Davout, prince d’Eckmühl. Ses commandements, son ministère, 1801–1815. Tome troisième* (Paris 1885); Annie Jourdan ed., *Correspondance générale. Tome dixième. Un Grand Empire, mars 1810–mars 1811* (Paris 2014) no. 2579.

<sup>20</sup> *Gazette nationale ou le Moniteur universel* (1810), 31 December 1810.

<sup>21</sup> Antoinette Joulia, ‘Ein französischer Verwaltungsbezirk in Deutschland: Das Oberemsdepartement (1810–1813)’, *Osnabrücker Mitteilungen* 80 (1973) 33.

concrete tasks of the commission and the decision-making discretion assigned to it were not precisely defined. All measures were to be communicated to Paris; the members of the *commission de gouvernement* were at the same time granted a certain liberty.<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, his memoirs the French fiscal *inspecteur d'arrondissement* Alexandre Boudet de Puymaigre recalls the rather unorganized start of Napoleonic integration attempts in Northwest Germany. Boudet de Puymaigre considered this to have been a conscious choice. He implies that French authorities believed it was 'more convenient to pressure the land under a military and exceptional regime' and therefore purposely delayed the formal integration into the Empire.<sup>23</sup> The imprecise legal basis seems to have been deliberate, and attributed to the ad hoc nature of the initial incorporation and integration of Northwest Germany.

Louis-Nicolas Davout, 31 years younger than his counterpart in Amsterdam, did not have to be persuaded. Governor Davout's abilities were generally recognized, and his loyalty to France was undisputed. At the same time, the Marshall was seen by many as arrogant and pompous, certainly among non-military men. According to *inspecteur d'arrondissement* De Boudet de Puymaigre, Davout demanded to be treated as a highness. His wide powers and status in a way made him a 'satrap' or 'pasha'.<sup>24</sup> French subprefect De Barthélemy would write in later life that Davout 'governed these provinces in an absolute way; living as a sovereign, having himself being addressed to as Altesse or Monseigneur'.<sup>25</sup> And the first impression of the President of the Imperial Court in Hamburg, Hercule de Serre, on arrival in Hamburg, was that Davout lived 'like a *Prince*, having a veritable court and is placed above all other authorities'.<sup>26</sup> But Davout undoubtedly had many admirers. Reports of the time suggest not all Frenchmen in Northwest Germany were that outspoken about him.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>23</sup> Alexandre Boudet de Puymaigre, *Souvenirs sur l'émigration, l'empire et la restauration* (Paris 1884) 127.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>25</sup> Hyacinthe-Claude-Félix de Barthélemy, *Souvenirs d'un ancien préfet (1787–1848)* (Paris 1886) 79–80.

<sup>26</sup> De Serre to his mother, 19 August 1811. G. de Serre ed., *Correspondance du comte de Serre (1796–1824). Tome premier* (Paris 1876) 89.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph Fiévée, *Correspondance et relations de J. Fiévée avec Bonaparte, premier consul et empereur pendant onze années (1802 à 1813)* (Bruxelles 1837) 159.

## THE INTENDANTS

Directly under the General-Governors came so-called *intendants*. On the one hand, *intendant* was a term from the Old Regime. It denoted an official who was appointed by the king to perform a certain task in a designated part of the realm. Under Napoleon, on the other hand, *intendant* was used as an appellation of a specific civil functionary within the army.<sup>28</sup> So, the profile of Intendant was multi-interpretable, which may have contributed to its usage in different circumstances.

Regarding the Netherlands, Napoleon had repeatedly stressed that he not want to send over too many French civil administrators, nor indifferently replace Dutch institutions. Governor Lebrun agreed that the only way to implement the Napoleonic system of governance accurately and quickly, was to rely on men who knew ‘the tradition of Dutch government’, the language, and personnel. Otherwise, the French would waste much time, rendering their rule ineffective.<sup>29</sup> However, introducing Napoleonic governance without the aid of French officials altogether, would also be inefficient. Take the figure of the *douanier*, who upheld the Continental System. Such men, Napoleon and Lebrun agreed, should primarily be French.<sup>30</sup>

The two main posts in Lebrun’s General-Government were those of *intendant de l’intérieur* and *intendant des finances*. Originally, the idea had been to create one intendency for both the Interior and Finances, but within a few weeks it was decided that these important issues needed to be distributed over two separate *intendants* in Amsterdam.

A Frenchman was to be in charge of the introduction of the French administrative system. Lebrun was therefore assisted by *intendant de l’intérieur* François Jean-Baptiste Dalphonse, who, prior to his Dutch vocation, had been prefect in France—in 1800 of the Indre department and from 1804 onward of the Gard department. Although Dalphonse was member of the *gouvernement général*, he was accountable to the Minister of the Interior. He was strictly speaking not an administrator, but had an

<sup>28</sup> Kolanović and Šumrada ed., *Napoleon et son administration*, 26–27; Catherine Lecomte, ‘De l’intendant au préfet: rupture ou continuité ?’, in: E. Pelisson ed., *La loi du 28 pluviôse an VIII deux cents ans après: survivance ou pérennité ?* (Paris 2000) 12.

<sup>29</sup> Lebrun to Napoleon, 28 November 1810. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken* VI, no. 146.

<sup>30</sup> Annie Jourdan, ‘La réunion de la Hollande à la France: histoire d’un processus’, in: F. Antoine et al. ed., *L’Empire napoléonien. Une expérience européenne?* (Paris 2014) 144.

advisory and coordinating role. The prefects in the Dutch departments were therefore to send all correspondence that did not concern (administrative) integration directly to relevant French institutions in Paris. François Dalphonse turned out to be a vital connection. He passed orders from Paris on to the prefects, briefed ministers on the Dutch situation, and explained French legislation to the Dutch. Thus, he ensured that the French administrative system, and thereby, in a larger sense, the Napoleonic system of governance, functioned. He took great pains at getting to know local culture and traditions.<sup>31</sup> Without Dalphonse the integration would, most probably, have been even more complicated.

The office of *intendant des finances* was held by Alexander Gogel, an experienced financial expert, who had worked out a modern progressive taxation system in 1806. Former revolutionary Gogel, an ideologically driven politician, had succeeded in giving the Dutch state a sound financial foundation. He strove to transform the old federal Republic into a unitary state. Napoleon was impressed by Gogel and had made him member of his *Conseil d'État*. Initially, he was entrusted with both finances and internal affairs, but it made more sense to entrust the administrative integration of the Netherlands to an experienced French ex-prefect like Dalphonse. Alexander Gogel's function as Intendant was intended to be temporary. He was given relatively much freedom, although he always remained subordinate to the Minister of Finance in Paris.<sup>32</sup> He regretted the loss of Dutch independence, but considered integration to be the only option to prevent the progress made by the Revolution from being lost.<sup>33</sup> He tried to promote Dutch interests as best he could, in his advisory and coordinating role. Gogel advocated a slow fiscal integration. His motives were not ideological or 'nationalistic'. His motivation was financial (new French taxes would be lower, thus put a strain on the budget) and practical (Dutch had to acquaint themselves with French fiscal legislation, and he feared 'inexperienced' Dutch tax employees would be replaced by French

<sup>31</sup>J. Roelevink, *Onderzoeksgids bestuur en administratie van de Bataafs-Franse tijd, 1795-1813* (Den Haag 2012) 265-267.

<sup>32</sup>H. T. Colenbrander, *Inlijving en opstand* (Amsterdam 1913) 57; Johanna W. A. Naber, *Overheersching en vrijwording: geschiedenis van Nederland tijdens de inlijving bij Frankrijk, juli 1810-november 1813* (Haarlem 1913) 34.

<sup>33</sup>Jan Postma, *Alexander Gogel (1765-1821): grondlegger van de Nederlandse staat* (Hilversum 2017) 275-276.

officials).<sup>34</sup> The French head of police in the Netherlands, Paul Étienne de Villiers du Terrage, was not positive about Intendant Alexander Gogel. De Villiers du Terrage suspected that Gogel tried to prevent integration. But since few people knew the fiscal ‘labyrinth’ as good as Gogel, his obstruction was tolerated, claimed De Villiers du Terrage.<sup>35</sup> Gradually, Gogel were entrusted fewer tasks, and he had to do with a smaller staff.

Like his colleague in Amsterdam, Davout was aided by two *intendants*, but in his case an Intendant for the Interior and Finances, and one for the implementation of the French judiciary. Note that the latter function did not exist in the Netherlands. There, national legal harmonization had been initiated from the Batavian Revolution onward. King Louis Bonaparte had successfully reformed Dutch legal institutions, which could be adapted to French models without much trouble.<sup>36</sup>

The intendency of the Interior and Finances was entrusted to Councilor of State René (Mouchard) de Chaban. Like many Frenchmen that were sent northbound, René de Chaban was a man of administrative experience in many part of the Empire. Historian Aurélien Lignereux has referred to him as a ‘veritable annexation specialist’.<sup>37</sup> Having started in the French heartland, he had been subprefect of Vendôme (in his native department of Loir-et-Cher) in 1798. Subsequently, he had been appointed prefect of the Rhenish department Rhin-et-Moselle, and prefect of the ‘Belgian’ Dyle department. In 1808 he had been appointed member of the Napoleonic junta in Toscana, and as such had been co-responsible for the organization of the three *départements de la Toscane*.<sup>38</sup> Like his counterpart Dalphonse in Amsterdam, De Chaban was generally well-liked, certainly in comparison to his superior Governor Davout. Subprefect De Barthélemy would later write that De Chaban character was ‘gentle and moderate’, and thereby ‘corrected, to a certain extent, the consequences of the too authoritarian character’ of Davout. According to De Barthélemy,

<sup>34</sup> Jan Postma, ‘Alexander Gogel: bouwer van de eenheidsstaat’, *Pro Memorie* 12 (2010) 56–86.

<sup>35</sup> De Villiers du Terrage to Savary, 9 February 1811. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken* VI, no. 735.

<sup>36</sup> Martijn van der Burg, ‘Cultural and legal transfer in Napoleonic Europe: Codification of Dutch civil law as a cross-national process’, *Comparative Legal History* 3 (2015) 85–109. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2049677X.2015.1041727>

<sup>37</sup> Lignereux, *L’Empire des Français*, 354.

<sup>38</sup> Joulia, ‘Ein französischer Verwaltungsbezirk’, 36–37; Stuart Woolf, *Napoleon’s integration of Europe* (London and New York 1991) 73.

De Chaban softened many measures that could have led to discontent among the Germans.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, in his correspondence with Davout, De Chaban underlined that a moderate approach was needed: ‘The new subjects have to be persuaded’, therefore French officials should try to win public opinion, while still remaining firm.<sup>40</sup> For instance, unlike Davout, De Chaban dreaded the French police’s ‘irresistible tendency’ to extend its authority: ‘Their surveillance is indispensable, but they have limits to which they must rigorously confine themselves’.<sup>41</sup> But whereas Dalphonse was genuinely interested in Dutch culture, De Chaban had less affinity with the Germans. He considered Northwest Germany incomparable with other incorporated regions, he wrote the Minister of the Interior. The inhabitants did not know a common fatherland, but were said to be driven by personal interest. The French could help the inhabitants to reorient themselves.<sup>42</sup> Likewise, various contemporaries characterized De Chaban as well-loved, but also as somewhat patriarchal.<sup>43</sup> President of the Imperial Court in Hamburg, Hercule de Serre noted that De Chaban overshadowed other French officials and favored his own area of policy: the administration.<sup>44</sup> State Councilor Joseph Fiévée—who was skeptical about the *commission de gouvernement*—considered De Chaban as potentially having many good qualities. But since his position as commission member was, in Fiévée eye’s, ‘false’, given the awkward position of the commission, De Chaban was primarily concerned with his own job safety.<sup>45</sup> Whether or not these characterizations are entirely truthful, De Chaban indeed enjoyed a large degree of autonomy concerning the implementation of Napoleonic governance. He was given relatively much freedom how to interpret the French model in a German context.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Barthélemy, *Souvenirs*, 79–80.

<sup>40</sup> Burghart Schmidt, *Hamburg im Zeitalter der Französischen Revolution und Napoleons (1789–1813)* (Hamburg 1998) 494.

<sup>41</sup> De Chaban to Davout, 16 April 1812. Georges Servières, *L’Allemagne française sous Napoléon Ier, d’après des documents inédits tirés des Archives Nationales et des Archives des Affaires Étrangères* (Paris 1904) 479–480.

<sup>42</sup> Schmidt, *Hamburg*, 490.

<sup>43</sup> Boudet de Puymaigre, *Souvenirs sur l’émigration*, 130, 134.

<sup>44</sup> De Serre to his mother, 19 August 1811. De Serre ed., *Correspondance du comte de Serre I*, 89.

<sup>45</sup> Fiévée, *Correspondance et relations*, 159.

<sup>46</sup> Joulia, ‘Ein französischer Verwaltungsbezirk’, 36–37.

The second *intendant*, Louis-Joseph Faure, was responsible for the reorganization of the judiciary in Northwest Germany, and more broadly the legal integration of Northwest Germany into the Napoleonic Empire. Intendant Faure was a jurist with much experience. He had been a lawyer during the old regime and had become politically active during the French Revolution. Faure had been member of the Council of Five Hundred, and after Napoleon's *coup d'état*, of the Tribunate. With the dissolution of the Tribunate in 1807, Faure was appointed member of the legislative section of the Council of State. As a Counselor, he had worked on the codification of French criminal law, which had resulted in the *Code pénal*.<sup>47</sup> Given his expertise, Faure was primarily concerned with, firstly, the implementation with French law in Northwest Germany, and secondly, the reorganization of the judiciary along French lines.<sup>48</sup> Whereas Davout was primarily accountable to the Minister of War, and De Chaban to the Ministers of the Interior and Finances, Faure answered to the Minister of Justice.<sup>49</sup> Louis-Joseph Faure seems to have been a hard, but quiet worker. Fellow jurist Hercule de Serre characterized Faure as 'timid' and certainly not the most influential member of the government in Hamburg.<sup>50</sup> Joseph Fiévée described him as a 'modest' official, who was content with completing his tasks.<sup>51</sup>

### CONFLICTING MANDATES

The Governors and the Intendants were not the only high officials that were appointed in Amsterdam and Hamburg. Other representatives of the central state received their proper orders from Paris, but of course also had to take into account the policies of the intermediary governments. There were many conflicts of competence within the Napoleonic state machinery. The Ministries of the Interior, General Police, War, Finance and Justice each strove to assert power over the farthest corners of the Empire.

<sup>47</sup>Jean Vidalenc, 'Les 'départements hanséatiques' et l'administration napoléonienne', *Francia* 1 (1973) 427; Swantje Naumann and Helmut Stubbe da Luz, *Die französischen Besatzer in Hamburg. Zeugnisse zu den Jahren 1811–1814* (Hamburg 2013) 251.

<sup>48</sup>Joulia, 'Ein französischer Verwaltungsbezirk', 36.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>50</sup>De Serre to his mother, 19 August 1811. De Serre ed., *Correspondance du comte de Serre I*, 89.

<sup>51</sup>Fiévée, *Correspondance et relations*, 157.



These state bodies often did not cooperate well, and often had incompatible ideas about integration of the North.

An influential Frenchman in Amsterdam was aforementioned *directeur général de la police* Paul Étienne de Villiers du Terrage who led the extensive police force that was established in the Dutch departments in 1811. Before his appointment as General Director of Police De Villiers du Terrage, a protégé of Pierre-François Réal (Director of the first police division), had served as General Commissioner in Boulogne-sur-Mer. De Villiers du Terrage was one of five Directors-General that were employed exclusively in incorporated departments: Turin, Rome, Tuscany, Hamburg, and Amsterdam. His tasks and duties were also modeled on the organization of the Transalpin departments. De Villiers du Terrage put much effort in creating a loyal and repressive police force.<sup>52</sup> His police formed part of a large and rather autonomous organization, accountable to the Minister of Police, Anne Jean Marie René Savary. De Villiers du Terrage was one of Savary's most zealous servants, but constantly faced opposition from Lebrun and Dalphonse. It appears from his correspondence with colleagues in Paris that he suffered severely; Pierre-François Réal sent him positive letters hoping to encourage De Villiers du Terrage to continue his work.<sup>53</sup> In his letters, De Villiers du Terrage called Charles-François Lebrun a 'vieillard irascible': a grumpy old man. It annoyed him that he was obliged show respect for Lebrun.<sup>54</sup> While he and his colleagues did their utmost to implement the wishes of the emperor, De Villiers wrote, Governor Lebrun took ample time to speak to complaining Dutchmen and make all kinds of promises. Lebrun's presence greatly curtailed his authority. De Villiers likened himself therefore to a 'bird trapped by glue'.<sup>55</sup> The feelings were mutual: Lebrun disliked De Villiers and refused to communicate directly with him.<sup>56</sup>

Charles-François Lebrun also worked with some less prominent *directeurs* that were associated with institutions in Paris, such as *Directeur*

<sup>52</sup> Martijn van der Burg, 'La police napoléonienne dans les départements néerlandais: entre tradition et modernité (1795–1820)', in: F. Antoine et al. ed., *L'Empire napoléonien. Une expérience européenne?* (Paris 2014) 261–263. <https://doi.org/10.17613/wd7c-e226>

<sup>53</sup> Réal to Devillers, 31 March 1811. Auguste de Caumont la Force, *L'architrésorier Lebrun, gouverneur de la Hollande, 1810–1813* (Paris 1907) 272–273.

<sup>54</sup> De Villiers du Terrage to Réal, 4 November 1811. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken VI*, no. 777.

<sup>55</sup> De Villiers du Terrage to Savary, 12 March 1811. *Ibid.*, 742.

<sup>56</sup> Jourdan, 'La réunion de la Hollande à la France', 149.

*des ponts et chaussées* Johan Hendrik Mollerus, *Directeur de la caisse central* Robert Voûte, and *Directeur du Grand Livre de la Dette publique* Cornelis Charles Six van Oterleek—all Dutchmen.<sup>57</sup> Initially, the Dutch departments received a *directeur-principal des douanes*. Customs was, of course, an important matter for the Napoleonic authorities. Contrary to other branches of the state apparatus in Holland, this crucial task was not entrusted to Dutch collaborators; *douaniers* had to be Frenchmen.<sup>58</sup> The erudite linguist and statistician Charles Étienne Coquebert de Montbret was appointed as Director. Coquebert de Montbret had held various diplomatic functions in Hamburg in the 1770s and 1780s, primarily that of Consul General to the Hanseatic towns. Coquebert de Montbret had traveled Europe and was fluent in German.<sup>59</sup> He was supposed to function as intermediate link between the Directorate General in Paris and the customs officials in the Dutch departments. Coquebert de Montbret lacked experience in this field, and resented the irregularities among customs officers, which he could not prevent as he had little powers compared to the authorities in Paris.<sup>60</sup> From April 1812 onward the *douaniers* in Holland (with headquarters stationed in Amsterdam, Emden, Groningen, and Rotterdam) received their orders directly from France.<sup>61</sup>

The composition of the intermediary government in Northwest Germany did not exactly follow that of the Dutch departments. Apart from the Governor and the Intendants, the commission in Hamburg was formed by five *auditeurs* from the Council of State. Claude-Auguste Petit de Beauverger was appointed *secrétaire-général*. Jules David and Marie Louis François Constant Himbert de Flégny assisted Intendant De Chaban, and Dagobert de Salomon and Beckmann-Schore assisted Intendant Faure. After several months, most of them were employed as

<sup>57</sup> Roelevink, *Onderzoeksgids*, 253–280.

<sup>58</sup> Jourdan, ‘La réunion de la Hollande à la France’, 144.

<sup>59</sup> Aurélien Lignereux, ‘La langue des policiers: pratiques linguistiques, politique de recrutement et culture professionnelle dans les départements annexés’, in: F. Antoine et al. ed., *L’Empire napoléonien. Une expérience européenne?* (Paris 2014) 384.

<sup>60</sup> Marie Du Mesnil, *Mémoires sur le Prince Le Brun, Duc de Plaisance et sur les événements auxquels il prit part sous les parlemens, la révolution, le consulat et l’empire* (Paris 1828) 370–371.

<sup>61</sup> Johan Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam: onrust, opruiing en onwilligheid in Nederland ten tijde van het Koninkrijk Holland en de inlijving bij het Franse keizerrijk (1806–1813)* (Amsterdam 2000) 426–427.

prefect or subprefect to put the integration program of the *commission de gouvernement* into practice (see Chap. 6).

Louis-Philibert Brun d'Aubignosc, as *directeur-générale de la police*, was responsible for policing Northwest Germany. A skilled and committed servant, Aubignosc had long been active in the army. He was captured during Napoleon's Egypt campaign, and later gained the trust of State Councilor Pierre Daru, who in 1806 became General Director of the Grande Armée led against Prussia. Aubignosc worked in the newly conquered Berlin, and distinguished himself by a well-founded report on Prussian finance. In 1809, at Daru's instigation, he became general director for occupied Hannover, and later for the Duchy of Lauenburg. From early on, Aubignosc was keen on enlarging the Empire, sending memorandums to recommend the incorporation of Northwest Germany. His activities contributed to his appointment in January 1811 Hamburg, was later promoted to *directeur-générale*.<sup>62</sup>

Whereas Amsterdam's police director was on good terms with Minister of Police Savary, and not with the General-Governor, in Hamburg the situation was the other way round. Minister Savary had a low opinion of Aubignosc. Nevertheless, Aubignosc worked closely together with Davout. Davout repeatedly tried to convince Savary that Augbignosc was doing an excellent job, but eventually had to turn to the Emperor to express support for Aubignosc. Aubignosc complained about the lack of manpower and financial means. He had at his disposal a relatively limited number of employees. Also, he had to share police commissioners with the respective *maires*. Minister Savary was not very cooperative in overcoming these problems. Therefore, Davout's troops actively assisted Aubignosc's men. Aubignosc also encountered opposition from French officials stationed in Hamburg who not keen on enlarging Aubignosc's powers, because they were involved in corruption.<sup>63</sup>

In Hamburg, Consul Jean-Jacques-Sébastien Le Roy, in a seemingly superfluous office, became correspondent for the French Foreign Ministry. Veteran Le Roy had joined the French naval forces as a young man, became a naval engineer in 1778, took part in the American War of Independence, and had been active as a diplomat in Constantinople. After taking part in

<sup>62</sup> Naumann and Stubbe da Luz, *Die französischen Besatzer*, 68, 274–275.

<sup>63</sup> Burghart Schmidt, 'Die französische Polizei in Norddeutschland: Die Berichte des Generalpolizeidirektors d'Aubignosc aus den Jahren 1811–1814', *Francia* 26 (1999) 93–114; Naumann and Stubbe da Luz, *Die französischen Besatzer*, 68, 274–275.

Napoleon's expedition to Egypt, he was assigned to the Foreign Ministry. And after the Consul Generalship in Cadiz, Le Roy was sent to Hamburg to report on everything going on in Northern Europe. Remarkably, alongside the hybrid military-civil authorities, a de facto representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was active, as if Northwest Germany remained a foreign state. There was enough to observe in the newly incorporated city that should not be left to the general director of the police, Aubignosc, alone. Importantly, Le Roy became a member of the *Conseil spécial* set up in Hamburg to monitor the Continental System.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, the activities of the aforementioned persons touched those of Joseph Eudel, customs director in Hamburg. Eudel had already come to the Hanseatic cities in January 1807, together with his corps of customs officers.<sup>65</sup>

The above shows that Frenchmen that were sent to the North formed a heterogeneous group. They did not always get along, which was all the more difficult since their activities could overlap. Tensions within the Napoleonic state apparatus did not go unnoticed locally. According to Abraham Ampt, a police commissioner in The Hague, the Napoleonic government deliberately 'encourages small skirmishes' between administration, army, and police. The central government hoped that conflicts would keep the people in the field sharp, Ampt observed. Moreover, it was thought these antagonisms would prevent administrators, policemen, and other officials from forming a local force against the central government.<sup>66</sup> For the Parisian authorities this state of affairs had another advantage: the separate threads of the web allowed the government to obtain information from varied sources, which provided a more complete view of the situation at the local level.<sup>67</sup> This was especially welcome concerning new *pays réunies*.

<sup>64</sup>Naumann and Stubbe da Luz, *Die französischen Besatzer*, 59–61.

<sup>65</sup>Silvia Marzagalli, *Les boulevards de la fraude: le négoce maritime et le blocus continental, 1806–1813: Bordeaux, Hambourg, Livourne* (Villeneuve d'Ascq 1999) 192.

<sup>66</sup>Naber, *Overheersching en vrijwording*, 68.

<sup>67</sup>Pierre Henry, *Histoire des préfets: Cent cinquante ans d'administration provinciale, 1800–1950* (Paris 1950) 53.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTERMEDIARY BODIES

Early 1811, the first phase of integration was completed in the Dutch departments. Now, Charles-François Lebrun was able to delegate most of the day-to-day management to the *intendants*. Therefore, he was less tied to the third capital. With Napoleon's permission, he relocated to Huis ten Bosch in The Hague—the former residence of the Oranges and briefly the palace of King Louis Napoleon. Between 1811 and 1813 he settled alternately in Amsterdam and The Hague.<sup>68</sup> Contemporaries remarked that Governor Lebrun increasingly played the role of 'good old man', on the background, to appease the Dutch.<sup>69</sup> There may have been a link between Lebrun's stay in The Hague and simultaneous severe actions of French military commissions against reluctant Dutch conscripts.<sup>70</sup> Responding to this repression, Lebrun argued that true justice did not demand blood, but examples. Blood spilled 'without absolute necessity' would only produce more hatred and revolt.<sup>71</sup>

Throughout, Charles-François Lebrun was willing to listen to the concerns of the Dutch. He had the ability to cope with Napoleon's high demands and, if necessary, he did not hesitate to tell Napoleon the truth. For instance, 'Gentle measures are needed', Lebrun frequently insisted with Napoleon, 'those work wonders with the Dutch'.<sup>72</sup> Yet, Lebrun always remained loyal to Napoleon and did not tolerate widespread opposition.

The shock Dutch republicans had experienced in 1806, now befell the inhabitants of the Hanseatic cities. Davout made it clear that the North Germans had to make no illusions—all autonomy was lost. Obviously, French influence had been considerable for years, but the definitive loss of republicanism fell heavily on citizens.<sup>73</sup> Hamburger Karl Gries regretted that 'out of Republicans we have become Subjects'. Proud citizens, were attached to their form of government, not least because it was so old, Gries claimed. But he admitted that, despite all the laudable efforts to preserve civic republican freedom, form of government had become

<sup>68</sup> Lebrun to Napoleon, 1 February 1811; Lebrun to Napoleon, 26 May 1811. Archives nationales, Paris, AF IV 1724, pièces 54, 298.

<sup>69</sup> Maarten W. van Boven ed., *Afscheid van de wereld. Het eigen levensverhaal van Boudewijn Donker Curtius, politicus, advocaat en rechter in de Bataafs-Franse tijd* (Hilversum 2010) 116.

<sup>70</sup> Bart Verheijen, *Nederland onder Napoleon: partijstrijd en natievorming 1801–1813* (Nijmegen 2017) 203.

<sup>71</sup> Lebrun, 'Notice biographique', 144.

<sup>72</sup> Lebrun to Napoleon, 2 February 1812. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken* VI, no. 315.

<sup>73</sup> Katherine Aaslestad, *Place and politics: Local identity, civic culture and German nationalism in North Germany during the Revolutionary Era* (Leiden 2005) 245–246.

archaic.<sup>74</sup> Tellingly, one of the first acts of the Commission was abolishing the urban Senates, the backbone of the age-old Hanseatic governance system. Davout was keen to dispose completely of the old urban form of government, but many of the civil servants were retained, also as a gesture toward the administrative elite.<sup>75</sup> Reactions were mixed. According to Davout, the old officials settled with ‘resignation and submissiveness’. However, police accounts reported dissatisfied reactions from the population, such as the nightly removal of posters with the Commission’s official ordinances. In the hinterland, popular responses seem to have been more moderate.<sup>76</sup>

When the organization plans finished, *auditeurs* Himbert de Flégny and Beckmann-Schore personally brought all documentation to Paris, to submit it to Napoleon. If the Emperor approved it before 25 June, the French government could enter into force punctually on 1 July 1811.<sup>77</sup> With an imperial decree, the workings of the intermediate government were finally determined. The Commission would continue its work from 1 January 1812 onward as the *gouvernement général* of the Hanseatic departments. The decree displayed many similarities with the manner in which the Dutch situation was regulated. For instance, a *directeur-général de police* was established, similar to the one in Amsterdam, which, in turn, was modeled on the Italian example. The Governor still was responsible for ‘high police’ and ‘exercises general supervision over all military, civilian, and administrative authorities, but without the power to modify or suspend any order given by our ministers’<sup>78</sup>—unlike Lebrun, who in the chain of command stood directly under Napoleon.

In Hamburg, from September 1811 onward, French State Counselor Joseph Fiévée was active as member of a liquidation commission, which took care of the debts of former governments. Fiévée was critical of the intermediary government’s activities and its competences. There was no clear division of competences and tasks—all the more so because the Commission’s term of office had not yet come to an end when Fiévée had

<sup>74</sup> Karl Gries to Diederich Gries, 28–30 March 1811. Heinrich Reincke, ‘Aus dem Briefwechsel von Karl und Diederich Gries, 1796–1819’, *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Hamburgische Geschichte* 25 (1924) 17.

<sup>75</sup> Schmidt, *Hamburg*, 437.

<sup>76</sup> Joulia, ‘Ein französischer Verwaltungsbezirk’, 38.

<sup>77</sup> Schmidt, *Hamburg*, 489.

<sup>78</sup> Imperial decree of 4 July 1811. Duvergier, *Collection complète des lois...* XVII, 463–480.

to start his work.<sup>79</sup> He also pointed to a power struggle between the commission and their superiors in Paris. Knowing their formal authority was questionable, members of the *commission de gouvernement*, in Fiévée's eyes, struggled to 'retain a portion of power'.<sup>80</sup>

During 1811, the Commission convened in 40 sittings, creating the basic structures for Napoleonic governance. Accordingly, it was considered appropriate to discontinue the Commission's work at the turn of the year. The decree of 4 July had already transferred numerous powers to the prefects, with the General-Governor remaining as the higher supervisory authority. Even after the dissolution of the Commission, the General-Governor remained in charge of the military high command and exercised supreme supervision over 'high police' and all government bodies, provided he would neither amend or postpone ministerial decrees, nor exercise influence on the administration of justice. Davout's position emphasized that the territories still required special control.<sup>81</sup> His primary task in Hamburg was the build-up of a strong military force, with the aim of conquering the Russian Empire. Rumor had it he was hoping to receive the title of King of Poland when, after defeating the Tsar's troops. Davout left Hamburg with his army in March 1812, but was not formally released from his duties.<sup>82</sup>

Antoinette Joulia has explained the persistence of the Northwest German intermediary government after 1811 in terms of a shift of roles. Initially, preparing for integration was the primary task, but gradually it became clear this coordinating intermediate body contributed to the governability of the area. Nevertheless, many ambiguities remained, as multiple lines of communication were chosen, just like in the Dutch departments. In principle, prefects primarily dealt with De Chaban or Faure, especially concerning integration difficulties, but in other cases, Paris was called upon as well.<sup>83</sup>

Another parallel can be drawn with the Dutch departments. In Amsterdam, Intendant Dalphonse's role gradually changed in a similar way. Lebrun delegated more and more tasks to Dalphonse, thus maintaining the Intendant of the Interior. For instance, Dalphonse became

<sup>79</sup>Naumann and Stubbe da Luz, *Die französischen Besatzer*, 106, 261–263.

<sup>80</sup>Fiévée, *Correspondance et relations*, 156.

<sup>81</sup>Schmidt, *Hamburg*, 498–499.

<sup>82</sup>Naumann and Stubbe da Luz, *Die französischen Besatzer*, 227–228.

<sup>83</sup>Joulia, 'Ein französischer Verwaltungsbezirk', 35, 38.

responsible for the reform of poverty institutions, for managing the relations with the various church congregations in the Netherlands, and for a statistical analysis of the Dutch departments.<sup>84</sup> Like Lebrun, Dalphonse was accepted rather quickly by the Dutch elite and never abused his powers. While traveling the Dutch departments, he sympathized with the Dutch, and reprimanded corrupt French officials. But he never alienated himself from his compatriots. The baron was loyal to Paris. Dalphonse, like Lebrun, did not tolerate Dutch disobedience.<sup>85</sup>

In Hamburg, Intendant Faure performed his duties swiftly. On 20 August 1811, with the opening of the Imperial Court in Hamburg, under the presidency of Hercule de Serres, the whole of the legislation and legal system of the Empire came into effect in the Hanseatic departments. When Faure's duties in Hamburg ended, Napoleon wanted him to return. Faure was sent to southern France to investigate the penitentiary system.<sup>86</sup> But Intendant De Chaban remained in Hamburg. Joseph Fiévée characterized De Chaban as someone who became increasingly concerned with his own career. To secure his intendency, and the substantial financial benefits that came with it, De Chaban accustomed Governor Davout to delegate all matters to him, making himself indispensable, while Davout handled military affairs.<sup>87</sup>

Despite their relative proximity, little interactions occurred between the intermediary bodies in Amsterdam and Hamburg. References to each other were limited to incidents, such as in April 1812. As high military authority in the North, Davout had forbidden the municipalities located within the 31st military division, which included parts of both the present-day Netherlands and Germany, from issuing passports for journeys outside their own department. In doing so, he curtailed the free movement of persons. Thereupon the General-Government in Amsterdam had the authorities in Paris intervene and undo the measures taken by Davout. When the *gendarmérie*, which employed other demarcations of Holland and Northwest Germany, continued to follow Davout's line, Lebrun's position in the hierarchy was decisive, and he overruled Davout.<sup>88</sup> Examples of such conflicts between Amsterdam and Hamburg are rare,

<sup>84</sup>Roelevink, *Onderzoeksgids*, 265–267.

<sup>85</sup>Naber, *Overheersching en vrijwording*, 60–61; Simon Schama, *Patriotten en bevrijders: revolutie in de Noordelijke Nederlanden, 1780–1813* (Amsterdam 1989) 714–715.

<sup>86</sup>Naumann and Stubbe da Luz, *Die französischen Besatzer*, 251.

<sup>87</sup>Fiévée, *Correspondance et relations*, 159.

<sup>88</sup>Dalphonse to Lebrun, 11 April 1812. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken* VI, no. 1254.



but it is nevertheless striking that little or no cooperation took place. The intermediary governments constituted two separate spheres within the Empire, which became visible in conflicts where the lines between them were poorly demarcated, like Lippe and Ostfriesland.

### BETWEEN CENTER AND PERIPHERY

In Napoleonic Europe, intermediary governance bodies were plentiful, as potentially effective empire-building instruments. A distinction must be made between ‘regular’ *gouverneurs généraux* and the newly created Grand Dignitaries in the form of a General-Governor. With the establishment of the *gouvernement générale de la Hollande*, Charles-François Lebrun was, again, awarded an honorary title of Grand Dignitary. This answers the rarely asked question why the intermediary government in Amsterdam did not come with an ‘end date’, like the one in Hamburg. The General-Government was intrinsically linked to the person Charles-François Lebrun as Grand Dignitary. Arguably, the Dutch departments, as a formally distinct entity within the Empire, would not be disbanded until the decease of Lebrun. Otherwise, the Grand Dignitary would be deprived of his ‘fief’ (to put it somewhat anachronistically). Given the different status of Davout and his commission, as well as their more restricted duties, this was not the case in Northwest Germany.

During the Empire’s expansion in these years, Napoleon preferred to act by decree. The two intermediary governments in the North could build on imperial precedents, but were still quite distinct. The processes by which the respective governments were shaped differed, starting with the choice of Governor. At the time of incorporation, the Emperor was well aware of Lebrun’s mild approach to ensuring obedience. Yet, he apparently considered Charles-François Lebrun to be the right man for the Dutch departments. Napoleon was satisfied enough with Lebrun’s earlier achieved results, that in December 1810 he definitely entrusted Lebrun with supervising the Netherlands. Or, he could not find anyone else who the Dutch would trust to a similar degree. In any case, Napoleon had no immediate reasons to doubt Lebrun’s abilities and the successful completion of the integration process.

Both intermediary bodies of governance were to some extent improvised, but evidence suggests that specifically the incorporation of Northwest Germany intentionally turned out rather unstructured, even chaotic. In Hamburg, the loyalty of hardened soldier Davout was undisputed, but there were doubts about the region’s integration in the short

term. Antoinette Joulia has explained the ‘somewhat peculiar form of government’ in Northwest Germany in several ways. Napoleon’s imperial aspirations, as spiritual heir to the German emperors, is accredited to have played a role. Above all, she has pointed to the perceived ‘otherness’ of the region (at least from a French perspective), as well as the high degree of heterogeneity of the region.<sup>89</sup>

Notwithstanding all sorts of inconsistencies during the incorporation, the intermediary governments were composed with care. The appointed officials were selected mainly because of their competences. In the Netherlands, the framework that was developed and the personal backgrounds of high officials, implied that the Dutch would be given a certain say. French entrusted more tasks to local collaborators than in Northwest Germany, since it was possible to build on a Dutch system of territorial governance. Comparable administrative bodies were largely lacking in the German territories. Napoleonic officials were more prominent in the Hanseatic departments, there, the involvement of the local personnel was mainly at lower levels.

For a large part of their term of office, the Governors-General were in the background and left the tasks to their subordinates. Both Lebrun and Davout could rely on highly skilled *intendants*. Nevertheless, it were the governors who chose to support certain persons, or not. Davout and Lebrun made individual choices. The two governors in the North hardly ever joined forces, nor were there permanent close contacts between each other’s direct staff.

Major stumbling blocks were located outside the *gouvernements généraux*. The functioning of the intermediary governments in the North was much more complicated than it would have been, if there had been better cooperation, and a clearer division of tasks between various Napoleonic institutions. The governments were hindered in their work by the fact that administrators, policemen, gendarmes, tax inspectors and prosecutors each corresponded with their own Minister in Paris, and consequently there was no single coherent scheme of integration. This was especially the case in Hamburg, where from the start on many ambiguities were.

All considered, the *gouvernements généraux* derived their strength from being able to mediate between the needs of the periphery and the demands

<sup>89</sup> Joulia, ‘Ein französischer Verwaltungsbezirk’, 32.

of the imperial core. However, this entailed that, so remote from Paris, many actors competed for influence and thus for the control of the integration process. And, of course, integration was not confined to Amsterdam and Hamburg alone. The prefects in de Dutch and Northwest German departments would therefore become important players; they are the protagonists of the next chapter.

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## Prefects: ‘Tools of Conquest’

**Abstract** This chapter is concerned with the introduction of the prefectoral system in the North. The introduction of *préfets* was an expression of the desire to create a modern civil administration answerable to the central government. Attention is paid to its implementation, the selection and circulation of prefects, and their relationships with other actors. Napoleonic territorial governance meant a significant break with tradition, but its implementation was far from perfect. Although French legislation itself was not altered, in practice, many issues hindered the functioning of the prefectoral system in the incorporated departments, such as redrawing geographical borders and lack of understanding of Napoleonic governing practices. Creating support was difficult when no consideration was given to local circumstances and wishes—a challenge delegated to prefects. Stimulating personal mobility between different parts of the Empire was a possible means of accelerating integration. The case of the prefects in the Netherlands and Northwest Germany shows how the flow of imperial models, officials, and knowledge contributed to the interconnectedness of the different parts of the Napoleonic Empire, or conversely, how the lack thereof hindered integration.

**Keywords** Prefectoral system • Prefects • Circulation • Incorporation • Integration

## THE PREFECTORAL SYSTEM

The creation of the *gouvernements généraux* marked merely the beginning of the challenge of introducing Napoleonic governance in the Netherlands and Northwest Germany. Napoleon Bonaparte's so-called fundamental law of 28 Pluviose VIII (17 February 1800) had established a framework of *préfets*, *sous-préfets*, and *maires*, who respectively administrated the *départements*, *arrondissements*, and *communes*. This system of territorial governance was also to be implemented in the newly incorporated northern departments. It personified the desire for 'modern' (in the sense of 'French') territorial governance and was seen as effective in asserting state power throughout Europe. Prefects were in charge of the day-to-day running of their respective department. Decisions were made at the central level, to be carried out by prefects without criticism. Information from the lower levels had to flow back to the ministries in the reverse manner. In the process of putting Napoleon's wishes into practice, prefects played a pivotal role. Stuart Woolf has therefore referred to them as one of Napoleon's 'tools of conquest'.<sup>1</sup>

Remarkably, long, prefects were portrayed rather one-dimensionally. Historians saw them either as virtually autonomous 'Little Emperors' or as compliant state servants.<sup>2</sup> Although decisions were taken in the imperial core, and prefects, as agents of the central state, were meant to follow instructions to the letter, historians are showing that prefects not seldom followed their own path. As the embodiment of the state, maintaining good working relations with other actors was essential for the proper execution of prefectural tasks. This position profile in itself indicates that the presumed rigidity of the Napoleonic state is not completely accurate.<sup>3</sup> Prefects went to great lengths to align the desires of the central state, of regions and themselves. Hence they played a complex and sometimes contradictory role within the Napoleonic state apparatus. Studying the introduction of prefectural rule thus gives insight into the daily interactions between the Napoleonic state and society.

<sup>1</sup> Stuart Woolf, *Napoleon's integration of Europe* (London and New York 1991) 74–85.

<sup>2</sup> Gavin Daly, "Little Emperors? Investigating prefectural rule in the departments", in: P. Dwyer ed., *Napoleon and his Empire. Europe, 1804–1814* (Basingstoke 2007) 58.

<sup>3</sup> Annie Jourdan, *L'empire de Napoléon* (Paris 2000) 260–263.

## RECRUITING PREFECTS

Whereas during the French Revolution local communities often elected officials, First Consul Bonaparte preferred a top-down system with appointed administrators who were closely connected to the central state.<sup>4</sup> Prefects were responsible for the flow of information, the maintenance of law and order, the monitoring of agriculture and religious communities, the appointment of lower government officials, and much more—basically all things pertaining to the maintaining of the Empire's social order. Therefore, the official recruitment policy was not to appoint prefects from the region they administrated.

Selecting candidates was a complicated task. Informal patronage networks, family ties (by marriage) and previous political experience all played an important role. In particular the High Dignitaries Cambacérès and Lebrun were influential in the selection of prefects, the former for southern departments, the latter for northern departments.<sup>5</sup> Many prefects selected by the entourage around Bonaparte had a moderate revolutionary background, or were not very politically outspoken. The share of aristocrats among the corps of prefects increased over time, which is partially explained by the larger share of the nobility in the incorporated departments.<sup>6</sup> The complex process of patronage, enquiring, and reassessing is evident from the Interior Ministry's archival records, which, as Isser Woloch has aptly put it, consists of 'oversized worksheets for collating information [on potential (sub)prefects, and a] mass of supporting letters and petitions either recommending individuals or soliciting positions in one's own behalf'.<sup>7</sup>

Significantly, the corps of prefects 'professionalized' over time. A system of formal education and training, developed by Napoleon, was the auditoriat of the Council of State. As an *auditeur*, potential (sub)prefects could gain knowledge and experience in the Council of State and in time be assessed by seniors to what extent they were suitable for an

<sup>4</sup> Isser Woloch, *The new regime. Transformations of the French civic order, 1789–1820s* (New York 1995) 54.

<sup>5</sup> Louis Bergeron, *L'épisode napoléonien. Aspects intérieurs: 1799–1815* (Paris 1998) 70.

<sup>6</sup> Gavin Daly, *Inside Napoleonic France. State and society in Rouen, 1800–1815* (Aldershot 2001) 42–43.

<sup>7</sup> Isser Woloch, *Napoleon and his collaborators: The making of a dictatorship* (New York 2001) 54.

administrative career.<sup>8</sup> On average, a Napoleonic prefect served just over four years, then posted elsewhere.

Newly appointed prefects quickly gathered information on all potentially relevant topics. The prefect was assisted by a *conseil de préfecture*, comprising important dignitaries of the department, usually five, who settled administrative, fiscal, and legal disputes. Additionally, each department had a so-called *conseil général du département*, consisting of 16–24 members, who met annually to discuss the distribution of taxes and give financial advice. The *conseils de préfecture* and *conseils généraux* had a certain influence. The notables were taken seriously when they submitted their views to Paris, in case of disagreement with the prefect.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, prefects had at their disposal a Secretary-General who had largely administrative functions. But in the absence or illness of the prefect they acted as his deputy, for instance, maintaining the correspondence with subprefects. As such they were more than just clerks. Understandably secretaries-generals were carefully appointed by the central government.<sup>10</sup> Prefects were also keen on maintaining informal contacts with local advisors for their knowledge and skills in matters of local interest.<sup>11</sup> In fact, all 15 Secretaries-General who were appointed in the Netherlands and Northwest Germany were such locals.

## BEFORE INCORPORATION

Well before the Netherlands were incorporated, Batavian revolutionaries had criticized old decentralized structures, particularly the provinces with their traditional autonomy.

In 1798, the first constitution of the Batavian Republic ended provincial autonomy, and introduced hierarchical-centralist principles. Like in France, new departments were formed that no longer followed the historic boundaries and took their names from rivers. With the moderate Dutch constitution of 1801, departments regained old provincial borders

<sup>8</sup> Edward A. Whitcomb, 'Napoleon's prefects', *The American Historical Review* (1974) 1114–1116. <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/79.4.1089>

<sup>9</sup> Jacques Godechot, *Les institutions de la France sous la Révolution et l'Empire* (Paris 1951) 511–514; Woloch, *The new regime*, 55–57.

<sup>10</sup> Daly, *Inside Napoleonic France*, 54–56.

<sup>11</sup> Marie-Cécile Thoral, 'The limits of Napoleonic centralization: Notables and local government in the department of the Isère from the Consulate to the beginning of the July Monarchy', *French History* 19 (2005) 469–473. <https://doi.org/10.1093/fh/cri048>

and a small part of their powers, but the unitary state was kept intact. There was no question of a return to pre-revolutionary provincial autonomy.<sup>12</sup>

Territorial governance had been further reformed during the Kingdom of Holland. Louis Bonaparte's reforms placed authority at all levels of government in the hands of an individual subordinate to the state. Louis considered Dutch governance to be characterized by 'inertia'. At the head of a department came a *landdrost*, whose main tasks were to carry out government orders, and supervise administration and police. In the *kwartieren* (the equivalents of the *arrondissements*) so-called *kwartierdrosten* carried out the orders of the *landdrost* and oversaw the municipalities. Nonetheless, according to Dutch legislators, a moderately independent council of *assessoren* (assessors) would have to be set up alongside the *landdrost*. Preferably, departmental officials would come from the region. Louis was able to diminish the role of the assessors, but they remained a power factor, unique to the Dutch system.<sup>13</sup> And although Louis had wished to rearrange the departments, also sacrificing their traditional names for geographical neologisms, departments continued to follow their old borders and retained their names.

Overall, Dutch territorial governance was a mix of Dutch and French elements. Louis Bonaparte desired feedback on it and consulted Jean Guillaume Loaré de Roissy, Secretary-General of the Council of State. From a Dutch perspective, the organization was top-down and regulated, but Loaré preferred a more hierarchical and strict organization. Though Louis had in 1809 succeeded in pushing through the decision that in the near future assessors were replaced by departmental councils, according to Loaré the departments were still too autonomous and powerful. Loaré reminded Louis that administrators were mere 'instruments', and advised to further hierarchically reorganize territorial governance, limiting the powers of the departments.<sup>14</sup>

Whereas Dutch territorial governance had many features in common with the French system, that was not the case in Northwest Germany. It was much more diverse. In Northwest Germany, a limited tradition of

<sup>12</sup>J. Roelevink, *Onderzoeksgids bestuur en administratie van de Bataafs-Franse tijd, 1795–1813* (Den Haag 2012) 9.

<sup>13</sup>Joke Roelevink, 'Louis Bonaparte aux prises avec l'inertie hollandaise', in: A. Jourdan ed., *Louis Bonaparte, roi de Hollande* (Paris 2010) 125–127.

<sup>14</sup>Loaré to Louis Bonaparte, 22 June 1810. Archives nationales, Paris, AF IV 1814, pièce 2–4.



territorial governance existed. Small principalities, like Arenberg, Münster or Osnabrück, had been ruled by local Princes or Prince-Bishops, therefore lacked an elaborate system of ‘subnational’ governance. And the three Hanseatic city-states were ruled by urban collegial bodies. Nevertheless, there were also regions accustomed to territorial governance.

Firstly, these were areas with a Prussian past. In Prussian regions, the so-called *Kriegs- und Domänenkammern* were in place, which had been established in 1723 for the purpose of governing territories distant from Berlin. These provincial bodies were responsible for the levying of taxes that served to maintain Prussia’s standing army, as well as for the day-to-day administration of lands outside Prussia proper—hence the words *Krieg* (war) and *Domänen* (domains) in their title. This system of governance, while recognizing the primacy of the central state, was not a uniform or centralized model comparable to the Napoleonic one. In Prussian Northwest Germany, Münster, Aurich, and Minden were home to a *Kriegs- und Domänenkammer*. All *Kriegs- und Domänenkammern* were subordinate to the *General-Direktorium* (General-Directory) in Berlin, and its members (called *Kriegs- und Domänenrat*) often were people from outside the region. Although rather progressive administrative reforms were implemented in 1807, these did not apply to Northwest Germany, which by then was already outside Prussia’s sphere of influence.<sup>15</sup>

Secondly, the Hanseatic departments comprised areas previously belonging to a Napoleonic vassal monarchy, the Kingdom of Westphalia, or the Grand-Duchy of Berg, which both had been subdivided into French-style departments. For instance, in Westphalia, borders did not follow old territorial divisions and Westphalian departments too had geographical names. However, the local political elite tried to temper the restructuring of institutions and territorial subdivisions. It demanded a substantial role and respect for its privileges; in fact, about half of the prefects and subprefects in the Kingdom of Westphalia belonged to the nobility.<sup>16</sup> Certain districts of the three northern departments of the Kingdom were merged with the new Hanseatic departments. Notable

<sup>15</sup>Margaret F. Reid, ‘Public administration in Germany: Continuity and change’, in: A. Farazmand ed., *Handbook of comparative and development public administration* (2nd ed.; New York 2001) 202–203; Julian Wright and Christopher Clark, ‘Regionalism and the state in France and Prussia’, *European Review of History* 15 (2008) 285. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13507480802082607>

<sup>16</sup>Nicola Todorov, ‘Adhésion, obstruction, participation. Les Allemands face au modèle administratif français’, *Beihfte der Francia* 79 (2016) 141. [https://perspectivia.net/publikationen/bdf/boudon\\_clemens\\_horn/todorov\\_adhesion](https://perspectivia.net/publikationen/bdf/boudon_clemens_horn/todorov_adhesion)

*arrondissements* were Osnabrück and Minden (both transferred to Ems-Supérieur), and Stade and Lüneburg (to Bouches-de-l'Elbe). And some of the northern districts of the Grand Duchy of Berg were merged into the department of Lippe—most importantly the city of Münster. Thus, prior to 1811, about a quarter of the Northwest-German *arrondissements* (not counting 'Dutch' Ostfriesland) was familiar with French-style territorial governance.

### THE DUTCH SOUTH OF THE RHINE

The first prefects in the Netherlands were Nicolas Frémin de Beaumont and Patrice de Coninck. The first was appointed prefect of the newly created department of Bouches-du-Rhin, in April 1810, the latter, in May, as prefect of Bouches-de-l'Escaut. These departments had been reluctantly handed over to the Empire by King Louis Bonaparte, after the short-lived British occupation of the island of Walcheren the year before.

Nicolas Frémin de Beaumont came from a distinguished Norman family and had started his career under Louis XVI. Shortly before the Revolution he was appointed to the position of Mayor of Coutances, which he held until 1790. After several judicial offices, he was appointed subprefect of Coutances under the Consulate and was a member of the Legislative Corps for the Manche department, where he was considered an expert in financial matters.<sup>17</sup> Frémin de Beaumont was a protégé of Charles-François Lebrun, who had played a part in his appointment.<sup>18</sup>

Initially, the prefect was positive. Generally, inhabitants had been cooperative, especially the clergy. To his satisfaction, local administrators had become well informed about Napoleonic governance, albeit things did not yet run as smoothly as in France. However, he was worried about obstruction from the town of Nijmegen. Its elite disliked the merger with former 'Staats-Brabant' (ruled from The Hague). Frémin de Beaumont pointed out a contrast between the Protestant, originally Orangist, elite of Nijmegen, and the more French-oriented citizens of *préfecture's*-Hertogenbosch (Bois-le-Duc). Frémin de Beaumont contributed this to the higher level of education of Nijmegen's notables, who had vivid

<sup>17</sup> *Dictionnaire des parlementaires français* III (Paris 1891) 64.

<sup>18</sup> Marie-Rose Thielemans, *Goswin, baron de Stassart 1780–1854. Politique et Franc-maçonnerie* (Bruxelles 2008) 135.

memories of the relative independence of their city in Republican times.<sup>19</sup> During his time of office, Nijmegen continued to worry the prefect because possible rebellious sentiments from north of the Rhine could be transferred to his department.<sup>20</sup> The people in the districts in former Brabant, who until 1795 had been second-class inhabitants in the Dutch Republic, generally accepted Frémin de Beaumont, who was known as a moderate administrator.<sup>21</sup>

From May to December 1810, the Fleming Patrice de Coninck acted as prefect of Bouches-de-l'Escaut, as the historical Province of Zeeland was now called. Originally, the idea had been to add this entire area to Deux-Nethès, governing it from Antwerp. When the emperor was in Middelburg in May 1810, mayor Jacob Hendrik Schorer managed to persuade Napoleon to abandon this plan and establish the separate department of Bouches-de-l'Escaut.<sup>22</sup> Little is known about De Coninck's brief stay in Middelburg, except that supposedly 'he was very esteemed here'.<sup>23</sup> He was then transferred to Hamburg to become prefect of the new Bouches-de-l'Elbe department. Patrice de Coninck will be further discussed below in the section on the Hanseatic prefects.

De Coninck's successor was another Fleming, Pierre Joseph Pycke, who previously had been mayor of his native town of Ghent. Pycke cooperated well with the central government, without antagonizing the locals too much.<sup>24</sup> According to prefect Pycke, the former political elite had difficulty accepting its new role. There was little overt opposition, but nevertheless widespread dissatisfaction. To impose French rule, the diligent Pycke established a secret police and reported personally to police chief Réal about public order.<sup>25</sup> Pycke frequently called the people of Zeeland 'docile' and 'submissive'. Gradually, when Napoleonic institutions and

<sup>19</sup> 'Bouches du Rhin. – Comptes administratifs, 1811–1812'. H. T. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken der algemeene geschiedenis van Nederland van 1795 tot 1840. VI: Inlijving en opstand 1810–1813* ('s-Gravenhage 1912) no. 517.

<sup>20</sup> Frémin de Beaumont to De Montalivet, 28 March 1813. *Ibid.*, no. 520.

<sup>21</sup> G. J. W. Koolemans Beijnen ed., *Historisch gedenkboek der herstelling van Neêrlands onafhankelijkheid in 1813. Vierde deel* (Haarlem 1913) 422.

<sup>22</sup> J. A. M. Y. Bos-Rops, J. G. M. Sanders, and A. P. van Vliet ed., *Noord-Brabant in de Bataafs-Franse Tijd, 1794–1814: een institutionele handleiding* ('s-Hertogenbosch and Hilversum 2002) 32.

<sup>23</sup> P. J. Blok and P. C. Molhuysen ed., *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek. Deel 8* (Leiden 1930) 306–307.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 1259–1260.

<sup>25</sup> Pycke to Réal, 30 January 1812. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken VI*, no. 784.

measures were slowly accepted, Pycke became more positive. The population would not readily admit it, but became used to being French, Pycke claimed.<sup>26</sup> Undoubtedly, the often, perhaps overly, positive *comptes administratives* emphasized the 'tranquility' in the originally Dutch lands, yet, the relatively well-functioning system of conscription indeed partly supports the claims of prefects such as Pycke. In retrospect, one inhabitant of Zeeland wrote that, compared to other parts of the Netherlands, they had been reasonably fortunate with both prefects.<sup>27</sup>

### PREFECTS IN THE *DÉPARTEMENTS DE LA HOLLANDE*

North of the Rhine, when the Kingdom of Holland was incorporated into the French Empire. Provisionally, existing territorial governance was retained, albeit with French terminology. *Landrosten* were renamed *préfets*, and *kwartierdrosten* became *sous-préfets*. Similarly, at the municipal level the single head of authority became the *maire*.

Despite similarities between former Dutch departments and the French prefectural system, the decision to introduce a system of one-headed government at every level of the administration was a sharp break with Dutch tradition.<sup>28</sup> The Dutch commission in Paris had recommended leaving territorial divisions the same. Consequently, the borders of the departments North of the Rhine relatively coincided with those of the former departments of Holland. Since French departments tended to be larger, the Dutch departments of Amstelland and Utrecht were merged, as well as Groningen and Drenthe. Starting on 1 January 1811, imperial departments were to be in place.

In the former Kingdom of Holland, the selection of prefects had of course to take into account the views of Lebrun, who was more inclined to rely more on Dutch collaborators than many of his French colleagues. The General-Governor feared that replacing incumbent officeholders would discourage the new subjects. Maintaining (a part of) the Dutch administrative corps could help to create support for Napoleonic governance. Moreover, this would enable his General-Government to tap into the knowledge of Dutch collaborators.

Two *landdrosten* could continue their work in the same place, now in the capacity of prefect, namely Hendrik Ludolf Wichers in Groningen, and Petrus Hofstede in Zwolle. Hendrik-Ludolf Wichers was native to

<sup>26</sup> 'Bouches-de-l'Escaut. – Comptes administratifs, 1811–1812'. Ibid., no. 532.

<sup>27</sup> Olivier Groeneyk, *Kronijk van Zierikzee* (Zierikzee 1821) 214.

<sup>28</sup> Roelevink, *Onderzoeksgids*, 376–377.

Groningen. Trained as a jurist, he did not hold an office between the Revolution and 1802.<sup>29</sup> It seems Wichers was initially rather cooperative, which made measures such as the conscription not too problematic. Wichers' correspondence with the General-Government shows that he grew concerned about the needs of the population. For example, early 1813, municipalities had been instructed to 'voluntarily' provide horses and fully equipped horsemen (so-called *cavaliers montés*). Prefect Wichers and subprefects decided that the local communities should provide about 100 horses. In agriculture, no man could be missed. Wichers thought it would be better to demand twice as many horses, without horsemen. He suggested to compensate villagers in the hope of sparing the poorest people. Intendant Dalphonse replied that this was Wichers' concern since he had decided to reinterpret orders.<sup>30</sup> This should not have come as a surprise. A year earlier, he had made a similar request to financially aid poor women and children of soldiers, which Dalphonse had also rejected.<sup>31</sup>

Prefect of Bouches-de-l'Yssel, Petrus Hofstede, was born in the Southern Netherlands, but came from a family native to the region of Drenthe. His father had been stationed in Tournai, in one of the forts of the Dutch Republic that acted as a buffer against France. It was in Drenthe that Hofstede started an administrative career. As an Orangist he was evicted from his posts during the Batavian Revolution and was office-less for almost seven years. Louis Bonaparte appointed him as *landdrost* of the Department of Drenthe, and subsequently of Overijssel.<sup>32</sup> Hofstede was reluctant to implement drastic reforms. For example, in the case of poverty care, prefect Hofstede pointed at the limits of harmonization and centralization. New institutions may well be better, Hofstede wrote, but the present was difficult enough, even without reforms, 'as long as war continues to exert such a cruel influence on almost every part of society'.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> P. J. Blok and P. C. Molhuysen ed., *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek. Deel 3* (Leiden 1914) 1417–1418.

<sup>30</sup> Wichers to Dalphonse, 3 February 1813. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken VI*, no. 1587; Dalphonse to Wichers, 15 February 1813. *Ibid.*, no. 1594.

<sup>31</sup> G. J. W. Koolemans Beijnen ed., *Historisch gedenboek der herstelling van Neêrlands onafhankelijkheid in 1813. Eerste deel* (Haarlem 1912) 375.

<sup>32</sup> P. J. Blok and P. C. Molhuysen ed., *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek. Deel 4* (Leiden 1918) 764–765; J. H. Wigger, 'De préfecture in het Département des Bouches-de-l'Yssel, een Frans bestuursorgaan in Overijssel in de jaren 1811–1813', *Overijsselse Historische Bijdragen* 115 (2000) 73–75.

<sup>33</sup> Hofstede to Dalphonse, 9 August 1811. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken VI*, no. 1622.

Petrus Hofstede deviated from the official line when he disapproved of it. In February 1813, widespread desertion was feared. Formally, prefect Hofstede instructed his subordinates to pursue deserters and tell the population that assistance to fugitives would not be tolerated. Nevertheless, Hofstede did not threaten with the severe punishment of quartering soldiers in the parental home of a deserter. Punished families would then have to provide for the soldiers, which was a hated and costly sanction. Hofstede tried to postpone this punitive measure. However, reluctance among conscripts persisted. Hofstede was required to report in detail on the progress of the investigations and reprimand defectors' families. He made little effort and preferred quartering *gendarmes* instead of soldiers. However, the number of *gendarmes* in the department was limited and they were also needed throughout the department to ease the conscription process. Moreover, when it became clear the parents of a reluctant conscript could not cover maintenance costs, Hofstede decided that the family's possessions had to be publically sold—a considerably milder punishment. Hofstede felt harsher sanctions were impracticable and counterproductive.<sup>34</sup>

Two *landdrosten* switched department: Regnerus Livius van Andringa de Kempnaer went from Friesland to former Gelderland, while Johan Gijsbert Verstolk van Soelen made the opposite journey. Van Andringa de Kempnaer came from a lineage of Frisian aristocrats. In 1795 he, like many, had been evicted from all posts. After the reconciliation of Dutch revolutionaries and Orangists in 1801, he was appointed member of the Legislative Body. Under Louis Bonaparte he was appointed *landdrost* of his native Friesland.<sup>35</sup>

On 4 February 1812, a major disturbance took place on the occasion of the handing back of the restored Sint-Walburgis Church in Arnhem to its Catholic inhabitants. For years it had been used as an arsenal. Since authorities feared that old tensions between Protestants and Catholics would flare up, on the day of the consecration, next to the regular police, also the urban militia and the *gendarmerie* were present. During the ceremony, attended by officials like the prefect, citizens gathered outside the church. However, things escalated between various law enforcers. When a

<sup>34</sup> Johan Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam: onrust, opruiing en onwilligheid in Nederland ten tijde van het Koninkrijk Holland en de inlijving bij het Franse keizerrijk (1806–1813)* (Amsterdam 2000) 362–363.

<sup>35</sup> Blok and Molhuysen ed., *NNBW* 8, 960.

*gendarme* refused to carry out orders from an urban militia officer, the latter pulled his sword and threatened the *gendarme*. This promptly resulted in a fight between the (mostly French) *gendarmes* and local militia members. Also, bystanders, incited by the militia members, joined in the fight. When the noise of the clattering of arms and shouting was heard in the church, the police rushed to separate the parties. Prefect Van Andringa de Kempnaer dismissed the disturbance as unimportant and did not inform the General-Government. Of course, Lebrun and Dalphonse learned of it and reprimanded the prefect.<sup>36</sup>

The General-Government kept its eye on prefect Van Andringa de Kempnaer. Intendant Dalphonse wrote the prefect: ‘people complain that you do not welcome the French enough and that you give too much preference to Dutchmen [...] it is advisable that you seek to make a fusion of the Dutch spirit with the French spirit, and that you bring together Frenchmen and Dutchmen’.<sup>37</sup> And like his fellow prefect Wichers, Van Andringa de Kempnaer was critical of certain measures, such as the *cavaliers montés* demanded by Paris. Van Andringa de Kempnaer undertook the desired action, but only after reporting it to Dalphonse, underscoring that he considered the legal basis of the demands to be insufficient.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, the prefect was compliant enough in French eyes. A later biographer wrote that the fact that the prefect was maintained by the Emperor, even when he was in bad health, ‘perhaps pleads against his independence’.<sup>39</sup> Van Andringa de Kempnaer died on 3 December 1813 while Prussian troops besieged Arnhem.

In the department Frise, former *landdrost* of Gelderland was installed as prefect. Johan Gijsbert Verstolk van Soelen came from a family of Rotterdam patricians. Verstolk van Soelen was known as a diplomatic man, a quality that during the post-Napoleonic period would earn him the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs. He largely endorsed the ideas behind Napoleonic governance, but advocated a moderate approach, much like the intermediary government. Verstolk van Soelen could navigate between the needs of the central state and those of his department. He was not hated by the people, nor was he reprimanded from above, being able to meet the minimum requirements of cooperation regarding unpopular

<sup>36</sup> Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam*, 185–186.

<sup>37</sup> Dalphonse to Van Andringa de Kempnaer, 15 May 1812. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken* VI, no. 1554.

<sup>38</sup> Van Andringa de Kempnaer to Dalphonse, 10 April 1813. *Ibid.*, no. 1599.

<sup>39</sup> Blok and Molhuysen ed., *NNBW* 8, 959–960.

measures like conscription.<sup>40</sup> Also, his collaboration with other Napoleonic actors, such as the French troops, went rather well. For instance, when the French commander-general in Leeuwarden complained to Governor Lebrun about local members of the National Guard ('three quarters are laborers, workers, bad subjects and drunkards, always doing foolish things and even insulting their officers') Verstolk van Soelen was willing to come up with a solution.<sup>41</sup> And in cases of popular resistance, he did not hesitate to call upon the *gendarmérie*, military or departmental guard.<sup>42</sup>

Apart from Dutch natives, two experienced French prefects, both from the Southern Netherlands, were sent to introduce Napoleonic governance North of the Rhine. Former *préfet* of the Vaucluse, baron de Stassart, became prefect of *Bouches de la Meuse* and Count De Celles (formerly *préfet* of Loire-Inférieure) became the prefect of *Zuyderzée*. Thus, the most significant Dutch departments, which together made up the old provinces of Holland and Utrecht, were controlled by Napoleonic officials of 'Belgian' origin. Charles-François Lebrun initially reported quite positively on the arrival of the experienced men.<sup>43</sup> Soon, however, it became evident that their appointment was counterproductive. The idea that the prefects from the former Southern Netherlands would function better due to their background, was clearly a misconception. They regarded themselves as being French through and through and had little affinity with the Dutch.<sup>44</sup>

Goswin de Stassart, as prefect of Bouches-de-la-Meuse working from The Hague, had been subprefect of Orange, and subsequently in Avignon prefect of the Vaucluse department. Previously, thanks to his knowledge of German (as a child having lived in Austria) he had been intendant in Tirol and Vorarlberg. In 1806, he was entrusted with the task of administrative inspections in Belgium and the Rhineland, and between 1806 and 1808 had been Intendant in several Prussian territories. Based on his many years of experience in Prussia, Belgium and the Rhineland, he was convinced he knew how to approach the Dutch. 'The main basis of my political thinking has been to develop the idea of a strong and vigorous administration, because I believe that is a very important point for the people of the

<sup>40</sup> Arend Pietersma, 'Johan Gijsbert Verstolk van Soelen, prefekt fan it departemint Fryslân, 1811–1813', *It Beaken. Tydskrift fan de Fryske Akademy* 51 (1989) 14–27.

<sup>41</sup> Devaux to Lebrun, 20 November 1811. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken* VI, no. 1234.

<sup>42</sup> Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam*, 374–375, 658.

<sup>43</sup> Lebrun to Napoleon, 11 February 1811. Archives nationales, AF IV 1724, pièce 84.

<sup>44</sup> Thielemans, *Goswin, baron de Stassart*, 135.



north', he told Intendant Baron Dalphonse.<sup>45</sup> Prefect De Stassart was known for his zeal and meticulousness, but also his temper. He was eager to settle pending matters 'sur le champ' ('without delay'). De Stassart was on bad terms with the Napoleonic police, in particular Director-General Devilliers Duterrage in Amsterdam and the Commissioner-General in Rotterdam, De Marivault. De Stassart complained repeatedly to Minister De Montalivet, that De Marivault showed little respect.<sup>46</sup>

De Stassart's relationships with his Dutch subordinates, and with the General-Government, were also troublesome. In a confidential report that perplexed the Minister of the Interior, De Stassart accused nearly all his subordinates of Orangism. Moreover, De Stassart felt that the subprefect of Rotterdam was arrogant, the subprefect of Leiden incapable, that of Dordrecht lazy, and Brielle's subprefect vain. As for the *maires*, the mayor of The Hague was supposedly too vain and that of Rotterdam too old. Lastly, Secretary-General Caan had little firmness and too much self-esteem, the prefect concluded.<sup>47</sup> Intendant Dalphonse criticized De Stassart's self-confident actions. In Dalphonse's eyes, the prefect should 'serve His Majesty as he wishes, as to avoid anything that may cause discontent and produce unrest and anxiety among the people'.<sup>48</sup> Instead of softening his tone, De Stassart denounced the General-Government, to which Dalphonse replied: 'I know many trustworthy prefects, but I do not know any who has been given the freedom you are asking for'; the intendant added that he would report De Stassart's undesirable behavior to the minister in Paris.<sup>49</sup>

Antoine de Celles, the new prefect of the large Zuyderzée department, was born in Brussels and had made a career in the Napoleonic army and administration. Prior to his position in Amsterdam, he was posted in Loire-Inférieure, and was known as a diligent and experienced administrator. De Celles, however, could react aggressively, was overly punctilious, and had little interest in local traditions. Like De Stassart, seeking prompt integration into the French Empire, De Celles had bad relationships with

<sup>45</sup>De Stassart to Dalphonse, 29 August 1811. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken* VI, no. 1513.

<sup>46</sup>C. F. Gijsberti Hodenpijl, 'De Fransche overheersching I-X', *Elsevier's Geïllustreerd Maandschrift* (1910) II, 257–258; V, 257.

<sup>47</sup>Thielemans, *Goswin, baron de Stassart*, 152.

<sup>48</sup>Dalphonse to De Stassart, 6 February 1813. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken* VI, no. 1588.

<sup>49</sup>Dalphonse to De Stassart, 10 February 1813. *Ibid.*, no. 1590.

numerous other Napoleonic officials.<sup>50</sup> De Celles could also be very critical of subordinates, such as certain subprefects. Both De Celles and De Stassart were determined to vigorously impose conscription. Their decisiveness and repressive actions, made a great impression on the public, contributing to hatred toward the French.

A recurring issue were De Celles' disagreements between with the *maire* of Amsterdam, Willem Joseph van Brienen, who got along well with General-Government members.<sup>51</sup> In contrast, De Celles' relations with the police were excellent; Devilliers du Terrage supported De Celles in his conflicts with the General-Government. When Napoleon heard of the disputes, Lebrun explained that Devilliers and De Celles were close acquaintances and the police exaggerated the situation. Lebrun argued conflicts had arisen due to the clash of two different political cultures. Also, the 'great affection between the police and the prefecture [...] must be taken into account when assessing its accusations'.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, Dalphonse pointed out that French governance was very different from Dutch tradition, and simply time was needed for the Dutch to accommodate.<sup>53</sup> When disagreements between the ardent prefects and subordinates escalated, Lebrun intervened and through his connections in Paris recalled decisions made by De Celles and De Stassart.<sup>54</sup>

## IN BETWEEN THE NETHERLANDS AND GERMANY

The Dutch-German border region consisted of Ems-Oriental (Ostfriesland and Jeverland) and Lippe (Münster and surrounds). Because Ems-Oriental fell under the supervision Charles-François Lebrun, appointing a prefect endorsed by Lebrun would have been logical. Lebrun considered former *landdrost* Willem Queysen an upright and competent man. He therefore regretted that the prefectship of Ems-Oriental was awarded to Frenchman

<sup>50</sup> Johanna W. A. Naber, *Overheersching en vrijwording: geschiedenis van Nederland tijdens de inlijving bij Frankrijk, juli 1810–november 1813* (Haarlem 1913) 62–65.

<sup>51</sup> Martijn van der Burg, 'Local administration in the Napoleonic empire: The case of Napoleon's third capital', *Napoleonica. La Revue* 25 (2016) 123–141. <https://doi.org/10.3917/napo.025.0123>

<sup>52</sup> Lebrun to Napoleon, 2 February 1812. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken* VI, no. 315.

<sup>53</sup> Dalphonse to De Montalivet, 10 April 1812. *Ibid.*, no. 1413.

<sup>54</sup> Maarten W. van Boven ed., *Afscheid van de wereld. Het eigen levensverhaal van Boudewijn Donker Curtius, politicus, advocaat en rechter in de Bataafs-Franse tijd* (Hilversum 2010) 28–29.

Sébastien Louis Joseph Jannesson. Lebrun argued that replacing Queysen would discourage Dutch officials, which could be counterproductive.<sup>55</sup> However, according to French informant Gateau, Queysen was a staunch supporter of the House of Orange, which disqualified him.<sup>56</sup> Appointing a non-Dutchman was nonetheless a smart move because Ostfriesland and Jeverland in 1807 had not been enthusiastic about becoming Dutch, and the subsequent imposition of Dutch institutions.<sup>57</sup> Lebrun in August 1810 advocated using the German language in Ostfriesland, as he considered it a ‘great burden’ to treat inhabitants as if they were Dutch.<sup>58</sup> German became an official language in Ems-Oriental—similar to the Hanseatic departments, a few months later. And from November 1811 Ems-Oriental onward resorted under the Imperial Court in Hamburg, instead of The Hague.<sup>59</sup>

Joseph Jannesson, born in Saverne, in the Alsace, had earlier been subprefect of Zweibrücken in the department Mont-Tonnerre, and member of the *conseil de préfecture* of Haut-Rhin. Subprefects in this district often came from military circles. Jannesson owed this appointment to General George Mouton, who was the brother-in-law of Jannesson’s brother-in-law Charles-Philippe d’Arberg. Before, as subprefect in the Rhineland, Jannesson had a problematic relationship with locals who preferred a native-German subprefect.<sup>60</sup> However, in Ems-Oriental, he seems to have been well-liked, being open to the opinions of people of all backgrounds. And Jannesson was not known to intervene extensively in all matters, unlike other prefects.<sup>61</sup> This ‘egalitarian’ approach seems to have displeased Lebrun. According to Lebrun, Jannesson ‘made choices that resemble those of the worst years of the revolution’; for instance, he appointed jury members who were ‘innkeepers, craftsmen, people with

<sup>55</sup> Lebrun to Napoleon, 13 December 1810. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken* VI, no. 155.

<sup>56</sup> ‘M. Gateau - sur plusieurs Hollandais marquans’, 30 July 1810. *Ibid.*, no. 35.

<sup>57</sup> Archives nationales, AF IV 1816, pièce 13.

<sup>58</sup> Auguste de Caumont la Force, *L’architrésorier Lebrun, gouverneur de la Hollande, 1810–1813* (Paris 1907) 51.

<sup>59</sup> Naber, *Overheersching en vrijwording*, 62.

<sup>60</sup> Gordon D. Clack, ‘The politics of the appointment and dismissal of the prefectural corps under the consulate and empire. The example of the department of Mont-Tonnerre’, *Francia* 11 (1983) 492. <https://doi.org/10.11588/FR.1983.0.51262>

<sup>61</sup> Tileman Dothias Wiarda, *Neueste Ostfriesische Geschichte 10: von 1806 bis 1813* (Leer 1817) 660.

almost no property. I have already told Your Majesty that this man had neither the means nor the moral principles of these times'.<sup>62</sup>

Further South, the Lippe department comprised the heart of the former Prince-Bishopric of Münster, which had fallen in Prussian hands in 1802 and subsequently been divided between other German principalities. Initially, all lands between the old borders of the Kingdom of Holland and the rivers Lippe and Ems had been added to several Dutch departments. But this encountered difficulties. There was uncertainty about the exact boundaries and the German administrators communicated poorly with their superiors in the Dutch department capitals.<sup>63</sup> Eventually, at the request of the local elite, the borders of old principality, were partly restored in 1811, in the form of the separate Lippe department. Judicially, it was labeled a 'Rhenish' department since the region fell under the Imperial Court in Liège.<sup>64</sup>

Jean-Charles-Annet-Victorin de Lasteyrie du Saillant was appointed prefect in Münster. De Lasteyrie du Saillant, born in the village of Le Saillant in the Limousin, descended from old nobility from Southern France. Also a military man, De Lasteyrie du Saillant belonged to emigrants who took part in the royalist Army of Condé.<sup>65</sup> Being in close contact with Austrian fellow-officers, he must have acquainted himself with the German language. After the failed counterrevolutionary episode, he acquired the favor of Napoleon in the fight against the English, following the invasion of Walcheren in 1809. De Lasteyrie du Saillant has been characterized as a prefect determined to carry out the Emperor's wishes; yet, also as attentive to the population.<sup>66</sup> President of the Imperial Court in

<sup>62</sup> Lebrun to Napoleon, 1 July 1811. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken* VI, no. 264.

<sup>63</sup> Wigger, 'De préfecture', 71–72.

<sup>64</sup> Barbara Dölemeyer, 'Frans recht in Noord-Duitsland. De inlijving van de noordwestelijke gebieden van Duitsland bij het Franse keizerrijk', in: A. Berkvens, J. Hallebeek and A. Sirks ed., *Het Franse Nederland: de inlijving 1810–1813. De juridische en bestuurlijke gevolgen van de 'Réunion' met Frankrijk* (Hilversum 2012) 38.

<sup>65</sup> Peter Burg, 'Präfekten an Rhein und Weser. Das biografische Profil der napoleonischen Regionalverwaltung in eroberten Gebieten', in: V. Veltzke ed., *Napoleon. Trikolore und Kaiseradler über Rhein und Weser* (Köln etc. 2007) 192.

<sup>66</sup> Pierre Henry, *Histoire des préfets: Cent cinquante ans d'administration provinciale, 1800–1950* (Paris 1950) 46; Monika Lahrkamp, *Münster in napoleonischer Zeit: 1800–1815. Administration, Wirtschaft u. Gesellschaft im Zeichen von Säkularisation u. franz. Herrschaft* (Münster 1976) 193–194.

Hamburg, De Serre characterized him as a generous ‘homme de qualité’.<sup>67</sup> The General-Government in Amsterdam continued to monitor the department intermittently; reports or inspection rounds often included Lippe.

### PREFECTS IN THE HANSEATIC DEPARTMENTS

The administrative reorganization of the Hanseatic departments largely followed procedures developed during the integration of the Rhineland. Territorial divisions were decided upon in Paris, but exact subdivisions were determined on the spot. During March 1811, Intendant René de Chaban systematically sought to work out a new territorial division of Northwest Germany, as until then the borders of the departments had only been roughly mapped out. Few detailed topographical maps were available. As a former prefect, De Chaban knew well how inadequate demarcations could complicate the work. The division into *arrondissements* was largely in accordance with French law and, as a result, the population and the territory were distributed relatively evenly among the departments. Where possible, De Chaban tried to take into account ‘local interests’ and ‘old habits’. For lands previously part of Berg or Westphalia, the existing district borders were used as a basis.<sup>68</sup>

All three Hanseatic prefects came from ‘new’ Belgian or Rhenish departments. Intendant De Chaban doubted whether they should be granted full powers immediately, or that (like in Italy) the army should be given a certain degree of control, considering the German population knew ‘no fatherland’, and thus was guided by ‘personal advantage’ alone.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, military circles were an important source of candidates, as had been the case with De Lasteyrie du Saillant. De Chaban increasingly disliked that his powers over the prefects were limited. He criticized the lack

<sup>67</sup> De Serre to his mother, 28 April 1813. G. de Serre ed., *Correspondance du comte de Serre (1796–1824). Tome premier* (Paris 1876) 282.

<sup>68</sup> Burghart Schmidt, *Hamburg im Zeitalter der Französischen Revolution und Napoleons (1789–1813)* (Hamburg 1998) 466–469; Bernd Wunder, ‘L’administration territoriale des départements allemands annexés par l’Empire napoléonien’, in: M. Pertué ed., *L’administration territoriale de la France (1750–1940)* (Orléans 1998) 352–353.

<sup>69</sup> Schmidt, *Hamburg*, 489–490.

of centralization to properly 'direct' prefects; the introduction of Napoleonic governance was thereby hampered, he argued.<sup>70</sup>

Charles-Philippe d'Arberg, from the Belgian town of Jemappes, was made prefect of Bouches-du-Weser, operating from *préfecture* Bremen. He was a son of a general and a lady of the court of former Empress Joséphine. In other ways, too, he was related to prominent state officials: D'Arberg's sisters were married to General Louis Klein and General George Mouton. As *auditeur* of the Council of State he was charged with diplomatic missions, such as the Peace of Tilsit in July 1807, and made a military career. In 1808, as Governor, he had to watch over the abdicated Spanish king, who was obliged to reside in the Castle of Valençay. As a man with both diplomatic and military backgrounds, he was an excellent candidate for the post in peripheral Bremen. Known are d'Arberg's interventions in public health, and his actions against rebellious movements in his department.<sup>71</sup>

Karel Lodewijk van Keверberg, or Karl Ludwig von Keверberg, was appointed prefect of Ems-Supérieur, working from Osnabrück. Von Keверberg was born in Haelen in the Dutch-speaking part of the Prince-Bishopric of Liège, near the borders with the Dutch Republic and Prussian regions. Von Keверberg was talented, a member of a prominent Rhenish noble family, and familiar with German society. He had studied at Prussian universities with the intention of making a career there. The French Revolution temporarily interrupted his ambitions; with Napoleon's coup-d'état, he quickly climbed all the sports of the French administrative ladder, beginning as the *maire* of his birthplace, working his way up to subprefect of Cleve. Von Keверberg requested to be appointed prefect of a department along the Rhine, but this would not be in keeping with the official policy of appointing as few administrators as possible from the region. Moreover, a polyglot like Von Keверberg could be useful elsewhere. With the incorporation, Von Keверberg, supported by his prefect,

<sup>70</sup>De Chaban to Davout, 16 April 1812. Georges Servières, *L'Allemagne française sous Napoléon Ier, d'après des documents inédits tirés des Archives Nationales et des Archives des Affaires Étrangères* (Paris 1904) 479–481.

<sup>71</sup>*Biographie nouvelle des contemporains... Tome premier* (Paris 1820) 228; Helmut Stubbe da Luz, 'Franzosenzeit' in *Norddeutschland (1803–1814). Napoleons Hanseatische Departements* (Bremen 2003) 157, 291.

pleaded with Minister De Montalivet, emphasizing his deep knowledge of German society.<sup>72</sup>

The sharp-minded Von Keверberg quickly realized that rigidly introducing Napoleonic governance would encounter problems and advocated a less strict implementation. Especially the wide range of traditional-local governance in Northwest Germany differed from the principles of French administrative regulations. Although the Commission in Hamburg understood Von Keверberg's objections, he was urged to stay close to the French example.<sup>73</sup> During his term of office, Von Keверberg tried to reconcile French and German interests, and urged Napoleonic officials to be compassionate as inhabitants' dissatisfaction with reforms came not out of anti-French feelings, but 'out of love for their native country'. Ministers in Paris were susceptible to his arguments.<sup>74</sup> Von Keверberg became increasingly critical. He resented the repressive measures following the unrest in the Hanseatic departments, early 1813, its populations had been placed under a state of emergency. The prefect complained to Davout that inhabitants had made enough sacrifices in previous years.<sup>75</sup>

Lastly, Patrice de Coninck, from the Flemish town of Bruges, became prefect of Bouches-de-l'Elbe. He had substantial administrative experience, as mentioned earlier, having been prefect of Jemappes and Bouches-de-l'Escaut. De Coninck's name had not been on the list of prefectoral candidates presented to the emperor by the Paris Minister of the Interior. Given the profile of De Coninck, and his provenance, it can be assumed that De Coninck had been proposed by Charles-François Lebrun. In Hamburg, De Coninck was a skillful administrator and pursued a moderate policy, but was considered, especially by the army, as neither very energetic nor particularly diligent.<sup>76</sup> Also, Davout and De Chaban had their reservations about De Coninck—in their eyes, in this extraordinary border region, outstanding prefects were needed. But De Coninck was not viewed

<sup>72</sup>Antoinette Joulia, 'Ein französischer Verwaltungsbezirk in Deutschland: Das Oberemsdepartement (1810–1813)', *Osnabrücker Mitteilungen* 80 (1973) 39–41; Michael Rowe, *From Reich to state: The Rhineland in the revolutionary age, 1780–1830* (Cambridge and New York 2003) 94.

<sup>73</sup>Antoinette Joulia, 'Les institutions administratives des départements hanséatiques', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 17 (1970) 890–891.

<sup>74</sup>Joulia, 'Ein französischer Verwaltungsbezirk', 65–66.

<sup>75</sup>Stubbe da Luz, 'Franzosenzeit' in *Norddeutschland*, 221, 291.

<sup>76</sup>Swantje Naumann and Helmut Stubbe da Luz, *Die französischen Besatzer in Hamburg. Zeugnisse zu den Jahren 1811–1814* (Hamburg 2013) 293–294.

as an exceptionally hard worker, nor very perceptive. The prefect wanted to keep everyone happy, according to Davout, who tried to replace De Coninck.<sup>77</sup> De Coninck, in a letter to the Minister of the Interior in Paris, stressed that the Government Commission was doing too little to gain the general confidence of locals, which was not beneficial for their loyalty to the Empire.<sup>78</sup> When in February 1813 rumor spread that the Russians were about to take Hamburg, De Coninck, just having sent a letter to Paris affirming the loyalty of his department, attempted suicide, which was thwarted in time by a civil servant.<sup>79</sup>

### CIRCULATION OF *PRÉFETS*

As a part of empire-building, numerous former *landdrosten* had been sent to France. The *landdrost* of the dissolved Utrecht department, Jan Hendrik van Lynden van Lunenburg, was compensated with membership of the *Corps législatif* in Paris—just like his fellow *landdrost* Willem Queysen of Oost-Friesland.<sup>80</sup> Plus, two *landdrosten* were promoted to prefect and exchanged places with French colleagues. Carel Gerard Hultman from The Hague went to Avignon, to take over the prefectship of Vaucluse from De Stassart. And Jan van Styrum exchanged Amsterdam for Nantes, to succeed De Celles in Loire-Inférieure. The latter quickly acquired the reputation in Nantes of a generous and friendly man who did his utmost for the community, so it is said. His son, Jan van Styrum jr., had traveled with him to France and had been made *auditeur*, with the prospect of a fine career within the Empire. But son Jan died on 8 May 1812, which weighed heavily on the parents. Eventually, Van Styrum had to resign in February 1813, when he came into conflict with the central government over conscription matters.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Schmidt, *Hamburg*, 494.

<sup>78</sup> Silvia Marzagalli, 'Administrer à la française une ville allemande: Les difficultés au quotidien vues de Hambourg', *Beihefte der Francia* 79 (2016) 104–105.

<sup>79</sup> Hyacinthe-Claude-Félix de Barthélemy, *Souvenirs d'un ancien préfet (1787–1848)* (Paris 1886) 81; Alexandre Boudet de Puymaigre, *Souvenirs sur l'émigration, l'empire et la restauration* (Paris 1884) 148–149.

<sup>80</sup> Blok and Molhuysen ed., *NNBW* 3, 802.

<sup>81</sup> Alphonsine Delaroche to her husband André Marie Constant Duméril, 19 October 1812. *S'écrire au XIXe siècle. Correspondance familiale, 1810–1819* (2010). <http://correspondancefamiliale.ehess.fr/index.php?1589>; Irène Diet, *Jules et Alice Sauerwein et l'anthroposophie en France* (1999) 21; J. R. Persman, 'Mr. Jan baron van Styrum, landdrost van Amstelland, 1807–1810', *Holland Historisch Tijdschrift* 8 (1976) 27–36.



Vaucluse's prefect Carel Hultman, in contrast, remained on good terms with the central government. Hultman born in Zutphen, was a former moderate revolutionary, who had gained diplomatic experience at the Prussian court during the Batavian Republic. Under Louis Bonaparte several distinguished posts were awarded him. That Hultman was a man from the center made him a good candidate for the French. Impartiality and honesty were seen as his qualities.<sup>82</sup> In Avignon he is said to have made himself popular through 'wise and fair administration', and then to have returned to the Netherlands at his own request.<sup>83</sup> Carel Hultman's request came timely. Napoleon could make good use of an experienced Dutchman since two Dutch prefects were dismissed, namely Hofstede and Wichers. These had been quickly distrusted by the French, such as police official Réal, who considered them to be 'weak', both mentally and physically. Consequently, both Wichers and Hofstede were relieved of their duties on 12 March 1813. Newspapers reported euphemistically that they were 'called to other functions'.<sup>84</sup> Hofstede's loyalty was questioned. For instance, Réal was unpleasantly surprised that Hofstede's sons did not serve in the army.<sup>85</sup> His reluctance to fight desertion angered superiors as well.

Hultman filled the gap left by Hofstede in Bouches-de-l'Yssel. Interior Minister De Montalivet desired a confidential correspondence with Hultman, so that the prefects (who, in his own words, had become 'véritable français') could gather 'interesting details' for Paris. Hultman was positive about the efforts and willingness of the territorial administrators, but was critical of their knowledge of the French prefectural system. Particularly the Secretary-General, still clinged on to 'old methods and forms', wrote Hultman. There were also too few administrators who had a good command of the French language. Hultman indicated that improvements would take some time.<sup>86</sup> Hultman kept repeating this argument for quite some time—which is surprising since the presumed 'novelty' of prefectural rule can be questioned, by the end of 1813.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>82</sup> 'M. Gateau - sur plusieurs Hollandais marquans', 30 July 1810. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken VI*, no. 35.

<sup>83</sup> *Galerie historique des contemporains, ou nouvelle biographie...* V (Bruxelles 1819) 348.

<sup>84</sup> *Gazzetta di Genova*, 7 April 1813.

<sup>85</sup> 'Rapport du conseiller d'État Réal sur sa mission en Hollande', July 1811. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken VI*, no. 274.

<sup>86</sup> Hultman to De Montalivet, 20 June 1813. *Ibid.*, no. 719.

<sup>87</sup> Hultman to De Montalivet, 30 September 1813. *Ibid.*, no. 720.

For many years, only one prefect from Old France had been active in the Netherlands, namely Nicolas Frémin de Beaumont, from Coutance. But when the Napoleonic Empire came under increasing tension, a person from Old France was sought to strengthen the grip of the state. Ems-Occidental's prefect Wichers, being 'too old' and too concerned with the needs of the local population, was replaced with Claude-Auguste Petit de Beauverger. Petit de Beauverger, born in the Bourgogne, had been the Secretary-General of Government Commission in Hamburg, working under Davout and De Chaban. Before that, he had been a departmental councilor in Paris, and member of the Legislative Corps. He was a brother-in-law of Nicolas Frochot, who from 1800 to 1812 had been prefect of the important Seine department. Shortly before, Frochot's son Étienne had been appointed sub-prefect in Oldenburg, within Petit de Beauverger's sphere of influence. Petit de Beauverger has been characterized as a compliant follower of Napoleon.<sup>88</sup>

The General-Government in Amsterdam took a reserved attitude. When Petit de Beauverger arrived in Groningen, General-Governor Lebrun informed him that Intendant Dalphonse might have a consultative role, but his views were widely appreciated. And Lebrun also warned against the very positive newspaper articles, which could be interpreted as flattery by the Dutch. Lebrun also objected to negative reports on the previous prefect.<sup>89</sup> So relations between the General-Government and Petit de Beauverger were strained, and contrary to fellow-new-prefect Hultman, Petit de Beauverger was considerably more pessimistic on the progress. He saw little enthusiasm among the population. Moreover, according to the prefect, there were few dedicated people among civil servants and other state officials. Petit de Beauverger did not encounter any open opposition, but he did observe inertia and tacit resistance. Nevertheless, taxation and conscription encountered few problems, according to the prefect.<sup>90</sup>

In Northwest Germany only one staff-change occurred, namely following the uprisings of early 1813 and subsequent fall of prefect Patrice de Coninck. Charles-Achille-Stanilas-Emile le Tonnelier de Breteuil, De Coninck's replacement, brought with him imperial know-how. Originally

<sup>88</sup> *Dictionnaire des parlementaires français* I (Paris 1889) 231.

<sup>89</sup> Lebrun to Petit de Beauverger, 1 May 1813. A.-C. Lebrun, 'Notice biographique', in: A.-C. Lebrun ed., *Opinions, rapports, et choix d'écrits politiques de Charles-François Lebrun, duc de Plaisance* (Paris 1829) 142–143.

<sup>90</sup> Petit de Beauverger to De Montalivet, 29 September 1813. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken* VI, no. 724.

from Paris, Breteuil had studied at the *École Polytechnique*, together with Charles de Choiseul-Praslin, married Le Tonnelier de Breteuil's sister Charlotte, and become high officer of National Guard in Paris. Charlotte Le Tonnelier de Breteuil maintained a network to promote her brother's career. The ardent prefect had earlier held the position of Intendant of Styria and Lower Carniola, in the Illyrian Provinces. On 30 November 1810, he was appointed prefect of Nièvre, from where he was transferred to Hamburg in March 1813.<sup>91</sup> As one of the emperor's staunchest supporters, he quickly recognized the difficult task he was facing, as he wrote to his minister: 'I see clearly that we are hated [...] I hope we will force [the inhabitants] to love the Emperor and serve him as faithful subjects'.<sup>92</sup> In retrospect, tax inspector Boudet de Puymaigre characterized Le Tonnelier de Breteuil as highly influenceable. According to Boudet de Puymaigre, he was exceptionally loyal to Napoleon.<sup>93</sup> Such an obedient figure was exactly what Paris wanted, considering the circumstances, but it is doubtful whether the prefect's appointment was beneficial to integration.

Maps 5.1 and 5.2 show the origins and geographical mobility of people who were appointed prefect, respectively in the Netherlands and Northwest Germany.<sup>94</sup> Black lines visualize the individual administrative careers, which gives insight into the circulation of prefects within the Empire. Orange circles represent birthplaces; the larger their size, the more often a person from that location was appointed to a new post—or persons, in the case of shared places of birth.

Most prefects in the Dutch departments originally came from the Low Countries, either the former Dutch Republic or the Southern Netherlands. Only two came from Old France. Nevertheless, as the maps shows, 'Belgian' prefects were in charge of virtually the entire Dutch coastline: De Coninck and Pycke in Zeeland, De Stassart in South-Holland, and De Celles in North-Holland and the West Frisian Islands. Hardliners De

<sup>91</sup> Étienne Léon de Lamothe-Langon, *Biographie des préfets, depuis l'organisation des préfectures, 3 mars 1800, jusqu'à ce jour* (1826) 94–96; Servièrès, *L'Allemagne française sous Napoléon*, 485–487.

<sup>92</sup> Jean Vidalenc, 'Les 'départements hanséatiques' et l'administration napoléonienne', *Francia* 1 (1973) 440–441.

<sup>93</sup> Boudet de Puymaigre, *Souvenirs sur l'émigration*, 160.

<sup>94</sup> For more information on the visualisation data see next chapter, as well as the dataset: Martijn van der Burg, *Napoleonic prefects and subprefects in the Netherlands and Northwest Germany* (Palladio project), *Humanities Commons*, 17 September 2020. <https://doi.org/10.17613/9zn2-r331>



**Map 5.1** Circulation of the Napoleonic prefects in the Dutch departments

Celles and De Stassart controlled the densely populated western parts of the Netherlands. Prefects of Dutch descent were generally not mobile; they seldom traveled further than two departments. Hultman was the exception to the rule, having a continuous and mobile Napoleonic career.

Prefects in the Northwest German departments originally came from 'Old' France and the former Southern Netherlands, except for 'Dutch/Prussian/Rhenish' Van/Von Keverberg. Prefects posted in Northwest Germany were rather mobile, having served throughout the Empire, specifically the French heartland. This difference between the Napoleonic



**Map 5.2** Circulation of the Napoleonic prefects in the Northwest German departments

officials in the Dutch departments and those in the German departments will become even more apparent in the next chapter on the subprefects.

Prefects of French descent in the Netherlands and Northwest Germany often continued their work in a post-Napoleonic French department, think of Frémin de Beaumont, Petit de Beauverger, and Le Tonnelier de Breteuil. Lippe's prefect Lasteyrie du Saillant fled to France in late 1813. The sources are silent about what happened to him afterward, apart from his death in 1833 in Saint Rabier in the south of France, not far from his native soil. When the Cossacks advanced, Ems-Oriental's prefect Jannesson

did not manage to flee in time and was imprisoned. After the war, he went back to his properties in Alsace. But many French officials remained administratively active during the Restoration.<sup>95</sup>

Prefects of Dutch descent often were appointed *gouverneur* in the newly established Kingdom of the Netherlands, or another administrative post. This was also the case for 'well-liked' Belgians, De Coninck and Pycke, who in the years after Waterloo became Dutch *gouverneur* in Antwerp, and Ghent respectively. Van Keerbergh became *gouverneur* in Antwerp and Ghent, changing places with De Coninck and Pycke. The other Belgian prefects De Celles and De Stassart held no public offices until 1821. Briefly, during the Hundred Days, De Stassart was member of Napoleon's Council of State. After 1821 both men became oppositional members of the Second Chamber of the Dutch Estates-General. Both would play a leading role in the Belgian Revolt in 1830.

#### NAPOLEONIC PREFECTS COMPARED

Stuart Woolf rightly noted that prefects have been 'tools of conquest', during Napoleon's 'integration of Europe' (to again quote Woolf). Arguably, 'tools of incorporation' would have been an apt label. Following the phase of conquest, prefects embodied the pursuit of binding departments to the central state and had a pivotal function between the actual taking of a territory and more elaborate attempts at its integration. As the Empire expanded, talented young men were systematically trained to represent the state at subnational level. However, not only personal qualities played a role to obtain a prestigious post. A balance had to be sought between selecting the most competent persons and those who had the best contacts.

Across Europe, prefects encountered problems when the uniform Napoleonic system of territorial governance came into contact with local and regional governing practices. Prefects individually had to make assessments, which had repercussions on the effectiveness of the prefectural system. While prefects did not take equal consideration of the wishes of all, they undeniably had a high degree of self-determination. The incorporation process therefore, to some extent, took existing situations into account. For pragmatic reasons, and a certain willingness to recognize regional diversity, boundaries of the Dutch departments largely followed

<sup>95</sup>For the post-Napoleonic careers of imperial officials, see Aurélien Lignereux, *Les impériaux: administrer et habiter l'Europe de Napoléon* (Paris 2019).

traditional provincial and departmental borders. For example, Friesland (Frise) could retain its old name, and Zeeland, at the request of locals, was granted a department of its own (Bouches-de-l'Escaut). Likewise, the creation of the German Lippe department shows the preparedness to listen to local elites' wishes. Strikingly, precisely in the 'intermediate' departments of Ems-Oriental and Lippe, feelings of regional uniqueness developed in opposition to the Dutch—within a French context.

A difference between the Netherlands and Northwest Germany was the novelty of Napoleonic territorial governance. During the Batavian Revolution, the Dutch had already become acquainted with 'departments' as replacements for the Provinces. And under Louis Bonaparte, the usefulness of a prefect-like character, in the form of the *landdrost*, was recognized. Many Dutch officials could therefore continue their work within the French state. Some Dutchmen were even considered competent enough to become prefect in France. Northwest Germans, in contrast, were never appointed to high posts in other parts of the Empire. Nor had Northwest Germany had precursors to the prefectorial system, apart from the ex-prefects from the Kingdom of Westphalia, and, to a much lesser extent, the Prussian *Kriegs- und Domänenräte*.

The Dutch prefectorial corps North of the Rhine, was a mixture of 'Belgians' and Dutchmen. Most of them, coming from the circles around Lebrun and his acquaintances, preferred a mild approach. De Stassart and De Celles were exceptions, but influential ones, who controlled the strategic and densely populated coastal departments. By contrast, prefects of Dutch origin—often former Orangists or former revolutionaries of moderate signature—developed various strategies to deal with their superiors. That Dutch prefects were outspoken, or were not Napoleon's most ardent supporters, was not an insurmountable problem, but failing to carry out orders altogether was an issue. Less fervent prefects tried to keep different parties satisfied. Some of them faithfully followed the directives of Ministers, but did not do anything extra, whether or not without explicitly expressing their reservations. Others carried out instructions as they received them from higher up, but gave their own interpretation to them, in the hope of softening measures. Frequently, delays occurred in the execution of orders, or information flow from below. This could buy time for prefects to operate at their own discretion. Many native prefects emphasized, sometimes for years, the novelty of the French system, which would be the cause of inadequacies.

The prefects in Northwest Germany came predominantly Old France, except Fleming De Coninck and Van/Von Keverberg—the latter cannot be categorized as either 'Belgian', Dutch, or Prussian. And the more military character of the prefectural corps of Northwest Germany stands out, compared to the predominantly civilian character of the Dutch prefects, both north and south of the Rhine. The controversy over the appointment of Ems-Oriental's prefect (a Dutch-civil administrator or French-military one?) is exemplary. Strikingly, family relations played a more important role in Northwest Germany than in the Netherlands. Prefect were more often related, not seldom via their sisters, to other high officials: Petit de Beauverger to the Frochot family; Jannesson and Arberg to Generals like Mouton and Klein; Breteuil to Charles de Choiseul-Praslin. This was also apparent outside the prefectural corps.

It seems the influence of the General-Government in Amsterdam on 'its' prefects was greater than Davout's and De Chaban's influence on prefects in Northwest Germany, much to the disappointment of Intendant De Chaban. In Amsterdam, given his position, Lebrun had no daily contact with prefects, yet he did occasionally intervene. Lebrun criticized prefects for their behavior when he believed prefects did not strictly abide the law, or when prefects' behavior did not contribute to good governance—for example, when, in his eyes, they were too ambitious or too negative toward the Dutch. Intendant Dalphonse often entered into discussions with reluctant prefects, either French or Dutch. Dalphonse and Lebrun did not want to dictate the prefects' entire behavior, but did expect prefects to do their utmost to find a middle way between introducing the French system and respecting Dutch traditions. In the last year of Napoleonic rule, when doubts about the docility of the North grew sharply, Paris increased the share of French prefects in the northern periphery.

In the post-Napoleonic period, former prefects continued their activities in France, the Netherlands or, later, Belgium. None of them pursued a career in a part of Northwest Germany. As for national(ist) remembrance, Dutch and German eye-witnesses who subsequently wrote about the prefects were often rather mild in their judgment. Frequently, they noted that prefects had had an eye for local needs, or at least had sought to leniently apply orders from above. Most chroniclers agreed that 'it could have been a lot worse', compared to the minority of zealous prefects. Prefects were generally not blamed for the excesses of the Napoleonic



period, even though prefects were undeniably co-responsible for the implementation of detested measures like conscription.

In sum, in both regions a balance was sought between, on the one hand, firming imperial grip via the strict implementation of Napoleonic governance, and, on the other hand, entrusting authority to locals and respecting traditions. In the Northwest German case, the former approach prevailed, in the Netherlands the latter was more present. Despite these regional differences, the prefectural system functioned for the most part, which confirms the image of prefects as tools of incorporation. This did not mean that Napoleonic measures could be introduced without question. To further explore the subtleties of Napoleonic governance, it is worthwhile zooming in on the *arrondissements* (districts), where subprefects were responsible for the integration process. These persons, as well as the difficulties they encountered, will be the focus of the next chapter.

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## Subprefects: (Trans)Regional Tools of Integration?

**Abstract** This chapter examines the Napoleonic subprefects who have been in office in the Netherlands and Northwest Germany. Within the prefectoral system, these *sous-préfets* were the highest officials at arrondissement (district) level. Activities of subprefects, somewhat neglected by historians, give insight into how French tried to rally the locals, and how this affected the daily functioning of the Empire. Discussed are subprefects' sociocultural backgrounds, imperial careers, and perception of Napoleonic governance. Subprefects had to balance national, local, and personal interest. Integration at district level was hard when the letter of the administrative legislation and the precise instructions from above were rigidly adhered to. Subprefects traveling the Empire linked events in the Netherlands and Northwest Germany to developments elsewhere, promoting integration into the Empire. Circulation patterns reflect different ideas on the required level of integration. It is argued that the figure of the subprefect was a potential 'tool of integration'. That subprefects were close to the ground could contribute to the effectiveness of Napoleonic governance. But subprefects also coped with demanding prefects, and interference of other agents of the central state. Reversely, unwilling subprefects were in a position to hinder the integration process.

**Keywords** Subprefects • *Ralliement* • Circulation • Personal mobility  
• Integration

## BALANCING INTERESTS

The preceding chapter explored the role of prefects in the integration of the Netherlands and Northwest Germany. Further down the chain of territorial governance were additional administrative entities. Each French department was divided into *arrondissements* (districts), usually three to five, which were headed by a *sous-préfet* (subprefect). Whereas the Napoleonic prefects had to position themselves vis-à-vis the central authorities and other high state representatives, subprefects had the delicate task of being in direct contact with local communities. Even if these figures were not the most noticeable ones, the filling of their posts was of importance. For example, a subprefect had to ensure conscription was observed, municipal administration ran smoothly, and taxes were correctly levied. Under Napoleon, the role of subprefects further increased. Originally, it were the prefects who fulfilled the role of subprefect in the departmental capital, but from 1809 onward, an *auditeur* was appointed subprefect next to the prefect. Although this, of course, strengthened the grip of the central government, it was primarily a question of efficiency. Many prefects had indicated that they wanted to concentrate themselves on general matters of administration to speed up work.<sup>1</sup>

As potential checks and balances between the interests of core and periphery, subprefects were noteworthy agents of the central state. Even more than in the case of the prefects, it was desirable that subprefects were able to establish a working relationship with the locals, without sacrificing the core values of the Napoleonic state model. Knowledge of foreign languages and of administrative practices were welcome qualifications for subprefects, to adequately fulfill their duties. Scholars of Napoleonic Europe have shown that the central state could only successfully assert its power if it entered into a relationship with older social, economic, and cultural structures, even if old systems had been abolished.<sup>2</sup> In many parts of the *Grand Empire*, bureaucrats and dignitaries came from the traditional socioeconomic elite. From their midst, experienced bureaucrats could be employed to staff the expanding imperial state apparatus. Without their knowledge and skills, the state could not function as well as it should. The pursuit of general support was called *ralliement*. Subprefects were

<sup>1</sup> Jean Tulard, *Napoléon et 40 millions de sujets: La centralisation et le premier empire* (Paris 2014) 119–126.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Grab, *Napoleon and the transformation of Europe* (Basingstoke 2003) 208–209.

potentially significant figures in the departments for the advancement of *ralliement*, certainly in the imperial periphery, where Napoleonic governance was contested, which led to numerous gradations of *ralliement*.<sup>3</sup>

Ideally, from a Napoleonic viewpoint at least, local elites would unconditionally accept French culture. This process was called *amalgamation*. The endeavor was to mold new subjects into genuine Frenchmen.<sup>4</sup> As shown earlier, *amalgamation* was by no means undisputed among French authorities. It is true that some French saw Germans as people ‘without a fatherland’, but not all aimed at a complete cultural assimilation. As for the Dutch, there was even less consensus on the extent to which *ralliement* should lead to *amalgamation*. Consequently, there were differences of opinion on the degree to which the new subjects could be allowed to govern themselves. Therefore, subprefects had to balance the interests of many actors.

Subprefects’ balancing skills were especially put to the test in early 1813 when a revolt started in Hamburg. While the French retreated behind the Elbe, Russian troops took Hamburg, whereupon uprisings broke out in other northern areas. Also in the Dutch departments unease grew. French managed to retaliate within a few months. Northwest German towns were punished after being recaptured, and repressive actions in the Netherlands intensified. These developments had direct impact on the functioning of subprefects due to their wide geographical distribution, and close local contacts.

This chapter investigates the selection, appointment, careering, and functioning of subprefects in the Dutch and Northwest German departments. In total, 66 individuals have been employed in the prefectorial system as subprefects in the northern imperial periphery, of whom 43 in the

<sup>3</sup>Gavin Daly, *Inside Napoleonic France. State and society in Rouen, 1800–1815* (Aldershot 2001) 64; Jeff Horn, ‘Building the new Regime: Founding the Bonapartist state in the department of the Aube’, *French Historical Studies* 25 (2002) 250–251. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00161071-25-2-225>; Michael Rowe, ‘Between Empire and home town: Napoleonic rule on the Rhine, 1799–1814’, *The Historical Journal* 42 (1999) 651–652. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X9900850X>; Michael Rowe, *From Reich to state: The Rhineland in the revolutionary age, 1780–1830* (Cambridge and New York 2003); Stuart Woolf, *Napoleon’s integration of Europe* (London and New York 1991) 109–110; Leonard den Boef, *De (on)macht van de elite. De inlijving van het arrondissement Utrecht bij het Napoleontische Keizerrijk* (Thesis University of Amsterdam 2012).

<sup>4</sup>Michael Broers, ‘Cultural imperialism in a European context? Political culture and cultural politics in Napoleonic Italy’, *Past and Present* (2001) 154–155. <https://doi.org/10.1093/past/170.1.152>

Dutch departments and 23 in Northwest Germany.<sup>5</sup> The provenance and sociocultural backgrounds of these subprefects will be discussed, and subsequently their mobility. To what extent has the circulation of subprefects across the Empire been instrumentalized to promote integration? Furthermore, their participation in the integration process will be examined. Prefects might have been the ‘tools of conquest’, or ‘tools of incorporation’, in their turn subprefects were potential ‘tools of integration’.

### RECRUITING SUBPREFECTS FOR THE NORTH

The subprefect recruitment policy resembled that of prefects. The Ministry of the Interior selected prospective subprefects among talented *auditeurs*. Family and friendship relationships also were factors in the selection process. An impression of this can be found in the memoirs of Hyacinthe-Claude-Félix de Barthélemy, the son of a senator who was appointed subprefect of Lüneburg: ‘[Minister De Montalivet] welcomed me with great friendliness and offered me lunch; he congratulated me on my knowledge of German [...] At that time the Ministry was thinking of completely organizing the prefectoral system in Germany, by placing there the auditors with a knowledge of the language; all my patrons unanimously urged me to try my fortune in this direction. Baron [Nicolas-Marie Quinette, State Councilor] himself gave the minister the letter in which my father asked the sub-prefecture of Lübeck for me’.<sup>6</sup> Actually, auditor De Barthélemy was appointed subprefect of Lüneburg, Lübeck was awarded to Marie Louis François Constant Himbert de Flégny, who had even stronger family connections, being the son of the prefect of the Vosges department, Louis-Alexandre Himbert de Flégny. Likewise, their

<sup>5</sup>The prosopographical, *casu quo* network research is based on name lists as published in the annual *Almanach impériale*. Newspapers, such as the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Journal du Soir*, *Journal de Paris*, and *Journal de l’Empire* reported on newly appointed subprefects, thus providing insight into their personal mobility. These data have been enriched with biographical information from various (online) sources (e.g., [www.biografischportaal.nl](http://www.biografischportaal.nl); Wikipedia, and <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/repertoriumambtsdragersambtenaren1428-1861>). Findings are visualized geographically with the application *Palladio*, developed by Stanford University. See <https://hdlab.stanford.edu/palladio/>—the dataset is accessible online at <https://doi.org/10.17613/9zn2-r331>—entitled *Napoleonic prefects and subprefects in the Netherlands and Northwest Germany* (Palladio project), *Humanities Commons*, 17 September 2020.

<sup>6</sup>Hyacinthe-Claude-Félix de Barthélemy, *Souvenirs d’un ancien préfet (1787–1848)* (Paris 1886) 67.

direct colleague Armand de Salperwick, at that time subprefect of Montauban, was recommended to be posted in Bremen by his relative Félix Le Peletier d'Aunay, prefect of Tarn-et-Garonne.<sup>7</sup> So, there was a well-defined pool of potential subprefects, namely the French auditors who were proficient in German, had an impeccable reputation, and were supported by high officials.<sup>8</sup>

In the Netherlands, Charles-François Lebrun, with his clientelist circle, was of course involved in suggesting possible subprefects. For the sake of creating support and continuity, it was obvious to retain skilled *kwartierdrosten* (the subprefect-like administrators in the districts of the former Kingdom of Holland), plus recruiting a certain amount of Frenchmen. Nevertheless, French authorities in the Netherlands were not always in agreement. For instance, Intendant Dalphonse and prefect De Stassart had suggested to appoint the Frenchman Defontaine as subprefect of Dordrecht. This man originally came from Vivarais, was married to a Catholic and distinguished Dutch woman. General-Governor Lebrun, in contrast, opted for the incumbent *kwartierdrost* Johan Repelaer to serve as subprefect. However, Repelaer would not live up to expectations; Minister De Montalivet reprimanded him a few years later because he was said to be insufficiently diligent. Defontaine later became deputy mayor of The Hague.<sup>9</sup> When a new series of subprefects was appointed in April 1813, Lebrun and Dalphonse appear not to have been involved in the selection process—it seems to their regret.<sup>10</sup>

That for Northwest Germany ‘ambition’ and ‘high potential’ were crucial factors, as opposed to the factors ‘affinity’ or ‘experience’ in the Netherlands, is reflected in the ages of appointees. There, younger and less experienced men were posted compared to their colleagues in the Netherlands. On appointment, the median age of subprefects in the Netherlands was approximately 36 years. For the Northwest German subprefects, their median age was about 28 years. And whereas subprefects stationed in the Netherlands often already had started a career in

<sup>7</sup>Jean Vidalenc, ‘Les notables des départements hanséatiques’, *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 17 (1970) 789.

<sup>8</sup>Napoleon to Davout, 12 March 1811. Annie Jourdan ed., *Correspondance générale. Tome dixième. Un Grand Empire, mars 1810–mars 1811* (Paris 2014) 26202.

<sup>9</sup>Dalphonse to Lebrun, 30 May 1811. H.T. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken der algemeene geschiedenis van Nederland van 1795 tot 1840. VI: Inlijving en opstand 1810–1813* ('s-Gravenhage 1912) no. 1176; De Montalivet to Repelaer, 23 June 1813. *Ibid.*, no. 571.

<sup>10</sup>Lebrun to Napoleon, 16 April 1813. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken* VI, no. 408.

administration, in Northwest Germany, being subprefect was for many a first significant position. Historian Vidalenc has characterized many of the Hanseatic subprefects as career-driven: ‘a curious mixture of protégés and ambitious persons determined not to let themselves be forgotten in distant posts’.<sup>11</sup> Historian Stubbe da Luz has pointed out that many of them belonged to the highest-ranking group of *auditeurs de première classe*, permitted to attend *Conseil d’État* meetings presided by the Emperor.<sup>12</sup>

## RALLYING THE LOCAL ELITES

### *Dutch Locals*

Approximately 70 percent (30 individuals) of all subprefects stationed in the Dutch departments were of local origin. This proportion was initially even higher as during the incorporation progressively more non-Dutch subprefects were appointed. Many had experience in subnational administration of the Kingdom of Holland. A total of 11 *kwartierdrosten* were directly retained as subprefect. In many other cases comparable local administrators, such as mayors or departmental ‘assessors’, were called upon. And in one case, a former *landdrost* was appointed as subprefect.

The backgrounds of subprefects of Dutch origin were moderately diverse. When appointed, a Dutch subprefect was about 38 years of age. Politically, the group was a mixture of moderate revolutionaries and former Orangists. There was a blend of subprefects with a noble background and subprefects with a bourgeois background—as far as different sociocultural groups could be distinguished. The Dutch Republic had never known a prominent nobility. Borders between wealthy citizens and noblemen were blurred, even within families there were various branches of aristocracy and non-aristocracy. Nonetheless, a distinction can be made between the West and the East. In the urbanized West there were more non-aristocratic subprefects, in contrast to the rural East. In eastern districts, subprefects from the regional nobility governed in the manner of the eighteenth-century landed gentry. Sometimes they even resided in

<sup>11</sup> Vidalenc, ‘Les notables’, 789.

<sup>12</sup> Helmut Stubbe da Luz, *Franzosenzeit in Norddeutschland (1803–1814). Napoleons Hanseatische Departements* (Bremen 2003) 80.

their country houses, instead of governing, as intended, from their office in the district capital.<sup>13</sup>

Compared to subprefects elsewhere, there were surprisingly few extensive family relationships. Only in two cases (sub)prefects carried the same family name: both the subprefect of Almelo, Reinout Gerard van Tuyll van Serooskerken, and his third cousin Jan Maximiliaan, subprefect of Utrecht, came from the distinguished, noble Van Tuyll van Serooskerken family. And Coenraad Wolter Ellents Hofstede, subprefect of Assen (Ems Occidental) was the son of Petrus Hofstede who had been appointed prefect of the department Bouches-de-l'Yssel. This Coenraad Hofstede seems to have been an active subprefect, according to a military report on the progress of conscription.<sup>14</sup> Both the limited number of family connections and the diversity in terms of political and sociocultural background can be explained by that, usually, districts built upon the existing political-administrative elite; groups that, given the federalistic past, were regional specific.

Given their provenance, Dutch subprefects were known as respectable administrators, but some did display undesirable behavior, upon which the government took firm action. Take Amsterdam's subprefect, Jan Frederik Abbema, who was somewhat of an outsider. *Arrondissement* Amsterdam was in fact a district of little importance since the city itself, as the third capital of the Empire, fell directly under the prefect; Amsterdam's mayor Van Brienen was higher in hierarchy than the subprefect. Abbema, formerly secretary of the cabinet of King Louis Napoleon, had recently been married to Louise de Narbonne-Lara, an illegitimate granddaughter of French King Louis XV, through her father Louis Marie de Narbonne-Lara, an *aide-de-camp* of Emperor Napoleon. Abbema's father was a Dutch Patriot who had lived in exile in Paris during the French Revolution.<sup>15</sup> Abbema was dismissed for 'having taken the liberty of receiving payments prohibited by law', incarcerated in Amsterdam's house of correction.<sup>16</sup> He was succeeded by a subprefect from an old Amsterdam family, Willem Cornelis de Witt.

<sup>13</sup>Ton Reichgelt, 'De rol van de onderprefect van Zwolle bij de centralisatie van het bestuur in de Franse tijd', *Zwols Historisch Jaarboek* 6 (1989) 59, 67.

<sup>14</sup>C. F. Gijsberti Hodenpijl, 'De Fransche overheersching I-X', *Elsevier's Geïllustreerd Maandschrift* (1910) VI, 136.

<sup>15</sup>P. J. Blok and P. C. Molhuysen ed., *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek. Deel 4* (Leiden 1918) 2-4.

<sup>16</sup>Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken* VI, no. 1244.



The most significant *arrondissement* in the Dutch departments was Rotterdam. There, former *landdrost* of Drenthe, aforementioned Jan Adriaan van Zuylen van Nijevelt, was appointed subprefect. He regularly came into conflict with his immediate superior, prefect De Stassart of Bouches-de-l'Meuse. Van Zuylen van Nijevelt addressed the Interior Minister directly about the tone of Stassart's correspondence, and his sometimes arbitrary behavior. Intendant Dalphonse mediated and indicated Van Zuylen van Nijevelt detested having been demoted from *landdrost* to subprefect. Dalphonse supported him, upon which Minister De Montalivet expressed his confidence in the subprefect.<sup>17</sup>

Zuyderzée's prefect, Antoine de Celles, was also greatly annoyed by the Dutch subprefects in his department. De Celles urged Minister De Montalivet to reprimand the subprefects for being openly dissatisfied. For instance, he described the subprefect of Hoorn, Edzard Jacob Rutger Mollerus, as 'a poorly brought up child', and the subprefect of Haarlem, Ewout van Vredenburg, as weak.<sup>18</sup> The prefect put great pressure on his subordinates. Amersfoort's subprefect, Albert Carel Snouckaert van Schauburg, complained that De Celles demanded excessive labor for the recruitment of volunteers for the army and had behaved inappropriate toward him. Snouckaert van Schauburg tried to resign whereupon Lebrun intervened and reprimanded De Celles.<sup>19</sup>

Prefect De Celles had the most trouble with the subprefect of Utrecht, Jan Maximiliaan van Tuyll van Serooskerken, another Dutch subprefect of a distinguished lineage. Van Tuyll van Serooskerken had difficulty transmitting harmful measures to the *maire*, while at the same time having to force them to provide him with information. The subprefect tried to align the needs of the French with those of the local community. When the *maire* of Utrecht continued to respond slowly to inquiries, Van Tuyll van Serooskerken wrote: 'I [dare] to flatter myself, that I always work to divert the unpleasantness, to which you are often exposed [...] I need your special cooperation, as without it I am unable to answer the orders by higher authority'.<sup>20</sup> Strikingly, in his correspondence with prefect De Celles, he seems to have kept up appearances, and to have done just enough to be

<sup>17</sup> De Montalivet to Van Zuylen van Nijevelt, 3 February 1813. *Ibid.*, no. 1591.

<sup>18</sup> De Celles to De Montalivet, 14 April 1813. *Ibid.*, no. 635.

<sup>19</sup> Lebrun to De Celles, 4 February 1813. Amsterdam University Library, manuscript collection, inv. no. 50G I; Gijsberti Hodenpijl, 'De Fransche overheersching I-X', I, 258.

<sup>20</sup> Van Tuyll van Serooskerken to the *maires* in his district, 22 September 1812. Het Utrechts Archief, Onderprefektuur Utrecht. Cf. Den Boef, De (on)macht van de elite.

taken seriously. Subprefect Van Tuyll van Serooskerken sent reports every two weeks that resembled previous ones, as if nothing extraordinary ever happened. According to him, local sentiments were consistently excellent and the population was extremely willing to meet French wishes. In fact, young men would enthusiastically perform their military service, and some taxpayers were grieved they did not earn enough to pay taxes to their beloved Emperor, the subprefect claimed.

Of course, the prefect understood Van Tuyll van Serooskerken's actions were not beneficial to the imperial cause. As of 1813, the recalcitrant subprefect of Utrecht was obliged to send De Celles six confidential letters each month, on all potentially important matters. Without result, because Van Tuyll van Serooskerken continued to write similar reports. This to the dismay of prefect De Celles, who insisted that subprefect 'should not limit [himself] to repeating incessantly that everything is peaceful', and stop copying previous reports over and over again.<sup>21</sup> Van Tuyll van Serooskerken felt grieved De Celles treated him like a 'rascal', and in April 1813 submitted his resignation. This was not granted as it was considered criminal to resign at that difficult moment.<sup>22</sup>

The above examples are mainly set in an urban context. In rural areas, subprefects often came from the provincial elite. Take the subprefect of the district Heerenveen, Tinco Martinus Lycklama à Nijeholt, in the department Frise. As a rural subprefect, staffing the prefectoral system was a concern. Throughout his term of office, he struggled to find competent local administrators. The French had brought with them many administrative gremia, with many posts, in a relatively sparsely populated region. Quite some candidates for administrative positions refused. The subprefect had to appoint persons in several municipalities simultaneously, otherwise a shortage was imminent. Lycklama à Nijeholt's correspondence with municipalities also shows aptly that, although the subprefect correctly passed on orders to the *maires*, he did hardly come back to matters very proactively or ask for further information. He did exactly what was minimally expected of him, and nothing more.<sup>23</sup> Heerenveen's subprefect was hardly the only one who displayed this kind of behavior.

<sup>21</sup> G. J. W. Koolemans Beijnen ed., *Historisch gedenkboek der herstelling van Neêrlands onafhankelijkheid in 1813. Vierde deel* (Haarlem 1913) 356–357.

<sup>22</sup> Gijsberti Hodenpijl, 'De Fransche overheersching I-X', I, 258.

<sup>23</sup> Gemeentearchief Heerenveen, Gemeente Heerenveen 1812-oktober 1816, inv. no. 155.

### *German Locals*

About a quarter of all Northwest German *arrondissements*, not counting ‘Dutch’ Ostfriesland, had already been familiarized with French-inspired territorial governance via the Grand Duchy of Berg and the Kingdom of Westphalia. Former subprefects from these states were consequently potentially well-suited to introduce Napoleonic governance in the newly incorporated departments. Six subprefects (26 percent of the subprefects posted in Northwest Germany) came from Germany. Of the six native German subprefects, four had previously served as subprefect in a Napoleonic vassal monarchy. The aristocrat Clemens von Oer became subprefect of Steinfurt. After a career in Münster’s army, he was, in the short time that Prussia governed Münster, *Landrat* of Beckum. With the establishment of the Kingdom of Westphalia he became subprefect of Coesfeld, likewise near Münster. Von Oer thus had local roots, a Prussian past, as well as Westphalian experiences. Also of Westphalian nobility was Otto von Gruben who became subprefect of Bremerlehe. Previously he acted as Westphalian subprefect of Bremervörde.<sup>24</sup>

Not from the nobility, but from the small bourgeoisie, was Johann Christian Friedrich Eisendecker. This Hanoverian had had a good education, as he was fluent in French, and had made a career in Hanover’s bureaucracy. He had been subprefect of Nienburg prior to the incorporation of northern parts of the Kingdom of Westphalia. In 1811 he became subprefect of the Quackenbrück district. Eisendecker, was seen as a sincerely committed person, who was active and maintained good relations with everyone.<sup>25</sup>

The fourth former Westphalian subprefect was appointed in May 1812, namely Clamor von dem Bussche. This former lieutenant in the Prussian army had been subprefect of Minden but was initially not continued after the incorporation, because he was said to be not competent enough. Prefect Keverberg successfully lobbied for him nonetheless.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Vidalenc, ‘Les notables’, 789.

<sup>25</sup> Antoinette Joulia, ‘Les institutions administratives des départements hanséatiques’, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 17 (1970) 886–887.

<sup>26</sup> Antoinette Joulia, ‘Ein französischer Verwaltungsbezirk in Deutschland: Das Oberemsdepartement (1810–1813)’, *Osnabrücker Mitteilungen* 80 (1973) 69–70; Bärbel Sunderbrink, *Revolutionäre Neuordnung auf Zeit: gelebte Verfassungskultur im Königreich Westphalen: das Beispiel Minden-Ravensberg 1807–1813* (Paderborn 2015) 322.

Among the native German subprefects, there were only two without experience with French-inspired territorial governance. The first was Michael Anton von Tenspolde, a former Prussian *Kriegs- und Domänenrat* in Münster, who was appointed subprefect of Neuenhaus. The second was Adolf Christian Börries Otto von Grote, who came from old Hanoverian nobility and was appointed subprefect of Lingen.<sup>27</sup> Prefect Von Keверberg was very appreciative of Von Grote who he considered to be ‘full of zeal and devotion to imperial service, one of the promptest and most outspoken men in the three Hanseatic departments for the government’.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the small share of native German subprefects, there was a certain continuity in the Northwest German bureaucracy, but mainly in the lower echelons. In addition, the departmental council and the district council included many established names. This local administrative elite was consulted by French authorities, not only as a sign of goodwill toward them, but also out to tap into their knowledge.<sup>29</sup>

## APPOINTING FOREIGN SUBPREFECTS

### *Foreign Subprefects in the Dutch Departments*

Regarding the origins of the minority (13 = 30 percent) of non-Dutch subprefects in the Dutch departments, six came from ‘Old’ France, five from ‘New’ France, and two subprefects had a German background.<sup>30</sup> A few French subprefects had a longer record of service, such as the 50-year-old Louis Gaston de Bonnechose. Former page of Louis XVI and from an ancient noble Norman family, he had made a career as cavalry Lieutenant Colonel. During the Terror, De Bonnechose temporarily fled to the Dutch Republic and married a Dutch woman. De Bonnechose was appointed

<sup>27</sup> Joulia, ‘Les institutions administratives’, 886.

<sup>28</sup> Vidalenc, ‘Les notables’, 783.

<sup>29</sup> Burghart Schmidt, *Hamburg im Zeitalter der Französischen Revolution und Napoleons (1789–1813)* (Hamburg 1998) 482–483; Joulia, ‘Ein französischer Verwaltungsbezirk’, 33.

<sup>30</sup> Alexander Diederik van Omphal van IJzendoorn, born in Tournai in the Southern Netherlands, is classified as a Dutch subprefect, since troops from the Dutch Republic were stationed here between 1713 and 1781, including his father Major Anthony Frederik. Joan Carel Gideon van der Bruggen van Croy, born in Colombo (Ceylon) as the son of a colonial administrator is equally classified as a Dutchman.

subprefect of Nijmegen and would later become subprefect of Yvetot.<sup>31</sup> Other Frenchmen started their careers in the Dutch departments. Charles Henri David De Gestas, from Paris, was 23 years old when appointed subprefect of The Hague in April 1811. He stayed there until the collapse of French rule in November 1813, and would become subprefect of Reims after the Hundred Days. Twenty-five-year-old François Louis Joseph de Bonnegens, from Saint-Jean-d'Angle (Charente-Inférieure) gained experience as a subprefect in Dutch Gorinchem. In April 1813 he was able to take up that post in Quimperlé (department Finistère) and Gorinchem received another French subprefect: Talleyrand's *protégé* Alexandre-Pierre-Amédée Godeau d'Entraigues, former subprefect of Lille, born four years before the Revolution in the Province of Berry.

The 'Belgian' subprefects had gained experience with the prefectoral system after the incorporation of the Southern Netherlands in 1795. Most came relatively late to the North, in 1812 or 1813. Although the Belgian subprefects were a minority, some key posts were assigned to them. In the departmental capitals, the *préfectures*, where besides the subprefect other important Napoleonic institutions were also present, a subprefect of a non-Dutch origin was often appointed next to a Dutch prefect. Many were from the Southern Netherlands: Edouard Charles Marie Ghislain de Carnin de Staden in Zwolle; Jean Patrice O'Sullivan de Grass in Arnhem; and Edmond Delacoste in Groningen. In Frise, several years prefect Verstolk van Soelen, for reasons unknown, had no (neo)-French subprefect next to him, in contrast to most prefects in the North. This was not known in Amsterdam for a long time.<sup>32</sup> The Belgian *auditeur* Philibert François Jean Baptiste Joseph Van der Haeghen de Mussain, from Mons, finally took up this post in July 1813; aged 52, he was considerably older than other subprefects from the Southern Netherlands.

Whereas prefects of Belgian origin encountered much resistance, and hence were not always able to fulfill their tasks properly, subprefects from the South operated more efficiently. Zwolle's subprefect De Carnin de Staden, from an esteemed West Flemish family, was committed to the Napoleonic case. On two occasions he even received a gratuity for

<sup>31</sup> *Annales de la littérature et des arts* XXXI (Paris 1828) 351–352.

<sup>32</sup> Johan Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam: onrust, opruiming en onwilligheid in Nederland ten tijde van het Koninkrijk Holland en de inlijving bij het Franse keizerrijk (1806–1813)* (Amsterdam 2000) 112.

demonstrated diligence during his conscription activities.<sup>33</sup> Deventer's subprefect Pierre Louis Joseph Servais van Gobbelschroy, originally from Louvain, also had a good name. Their fellow Belgian subprefect Edmond Delacoste in Groningen made similar efforts. Whereas the Dutch prefect and subprefects were reluctant to take action against men who dodged conscription, *sous-préfet* Delacoste ordered his mayors to forcibly apprehend runaways and hold accomplices responsible.<sup>34</sup>

In all probability, loyal subprefects contributed to the replacement of their 'weak' Dutch prefect. When necessary, Belgian subprefects were seen as instruments to 'steer' Dutch prefects. One example is Arnhem's subprefect Jean Patrice O'Sullivan de Grass, from Brussels, with Irish ancestors. When Napoleonic rule in the Netherlands slowly crumbled, Intendant Dalphonse reminded him of his specific position to monitor the prefect's functioning and to secretly report any obstacles.<sup>35</sup>

Lastly, two subprefects with a German background were posted in the Netherlands. Their activities were very limited though. Firstly, Johann Gerhard Druffel, from Münster, had in Prussian times been *Geheime Staatsreferendar*, and had become acquainted with the prefectoral system as a Secretary-General in former Grand Duchy of Berg. Subsequently, in the short period Münster was part of the Dutch departments, Druffel acted as subprefect of Almelo (Bouches-de-l'Yssel), but quickly returned to his native town to become Secretary-General of Lippe.<sup>36</sup> Secondly, Gerhard von Lommessem, subprefect of Aachen in the Rhenish department of the Roër, was in April 1813 appointed subprefect of Goes (Bouches-de-l'Escaut). The *auditeur* Von Lommessem replaced deputy Pieter Adrianus Ossewaarde, a native of Goes, who, according to the commissioner general of police, was not devoted enough, nor on good terms with the local military commander.<sup>37</sup> But Von Lommessem showed little interest in Goes, was often absent and delegated his powers to local employees. Under the guise of being ill, he returned to Aachen. When, in

<sup>33</sup> Reichgelt, 'De rol van de onderprefect', 59–63.

<sup>34</sup> Koolemans Beijnen ed., *Historisch gedenkboek* IV, 375–376.

<sup>35</sup> Dalphonse to O'Sullivan de Grass, 7 October 1813. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken* VI, no. 1612.

<sup>36</sup> Johannes Katz, *Das letzte Jahrzehnt des Fürstbistums Münster. Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Tätigkeit des Geheimen Staatsreferendars Johann Gerhard Druffel* (Digital reprint of 1933 doctoral dissertation, 2019) 140. [https://www.lwl.org/hiko-download/HiKo-Materialien\\_016\\_\(2019\).pdf](https://www.lwl.org/hiko-download/HiKo-Materialien_016_(2019).pdf)

<sup>37</sup> Donny to Savary, May/June 1811. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken* VI, no. 755.

October 1813, prefect Pycke summoned him back, Von Lommessem politely refused.<sup>38</sup>

### *Foreign Subprefects in the Northwest German Departments*

Contrary to the large proportion of locals in the Dutch departments, subprefects stationed in Northwest Germany largely came from Old France. Of the 23 subprefects in Northwest Germany, no less than 17 were of French origin (74 percent). Not surprisingly, they often came from border regions such as the Alsace, but not seldom also from the French heartland.<sup>39</sup> For example, Marie Louis François Constant Himbert de Flégny was among the first wave of French to be sent to Northwest Germany, initially as employee of Intendant De Chaban, and soon as a subprefect of Lübeck. Himbert de Flégny came from an old noble family, as earlier mentioned, his father was prefect of the Vosges department.<sup>40</sup>

These French subprefects were given a more challenging task than their colleagues in the Netherlands, or their counterparts in earlier incorporated German areas, such as the Rhineland. In Northwest Germany, the French language and culture were less prominent. Moreover, Napoleonic France of 1810 was more demanding and repressive than the revolutionary France with which the German-speaking southern Low Countries and the Rhineland had had to deal. The distance between the Northwest German population and the French government was accordingly greater. Thus, lower-ranking German administrators, who had grown up without central state control, felt their freedom curtailed by superiors such as subprefects, which led to annoyances.<sup>41</sup>

The sometimes difficult relationships between the French and the Germans are exemplified in egodocuments of Lüneburg's subprefect De Barthélemy. At the start of his term, he wrote his father: 'We are little

<sup>38</sup> P. Scherft, *De archieven der Prefectuur van het Departement der Monden van de Schelde en der onderprefecturen van de arrondissementen van Middelburg en Goes 1810–1814* ('s-Gravenhage 1968).

<sup>39</sup> No place of birth is recorded for some lesser-known subprefects, but on the basis of the family name, it

can be concluded that they, or their direct ancestors, originated from northeastern France. To simplify, one French-speaking subprefect of Swiss origin, Jacob Bouthillier de Beaumont, is counted here as a Frenchman.

<sup>40</sup> Stubbe da Luz, *'Franzosenzeit' in Norddeutschland*, 113.

<sup>41</sup> Vidalenc, 'Les notables', 778.

pasha's here', the population treated him with great respect. However, the *maire* of Lüneburg, 53-year-old Georg Ludwig Kruckenbergh, looked down on the subprefect, and refused to correspond with a young man like De Barthélemy. The *maire* directly addressed the prefect, who, however, pointed out mayors had to answer to the subprefects. This caused quite a stir. Consequently, Governor Davout had to underline the authority of the subprefect toward the old administrative elite. Apart from clashes between locals and foreigners, subprefect De Barthélemy also noticed the delicate relationship between French themselves. The subprefect was critical of misbehaving French soldiers, but was keen on remaining on good terms with the military authorities.<sup>42</sup>

Not all French subprefects in Northwest Germany were necessarily brilliant officials in the making. Take the young nobleman Alfred Louis Jean Philippe de Chastellux, who was appointed subprefect of Hamburg. De Chastellux, son of a well-known Marshal of the same name, was supposed to serve in the army but managed to obtain a rare exemption from military service. During the evacuation of the Bouches-de-l'Elbe in March 1813, the General-Government had retreated to Osnabrück for two months. De Chastellux, however, cautiously withdrew to Paris claiming he wanted to put himself at the Minister's disposal. He only slowly returned to his post at the insistence of the Minister and the new prefect Le Tonnelier de Breteuil, who was surprised not to find him in Osnabrück. As compensation, he joined the army and was employed in the recapture of Hamburg. Briefly, he was reappointed subprefect, but Le Tonnelier de Breteuil was glad to be able to send him back to France after a few months.<sup>43</sup>

It could be expected that exchanges of subprefects occurred between the Netherlands and Northwest Germany, given the relative geographical proximity, mutual intelligibility between Dutch and Low German, and recent common experiences. Arguably, an experienced former Dutch *kwartierdrost* could have helped to bridge the gap between traditional political culture and Napoleon governance in a nearby German district. Remarkably, however, the Netherlands and Northwest Germany were entirely separate clusters within the imperial prefectural network. Not a single subprefect in the years under scrutiny was stationed both in the Netherlands and in Northwest Germany. The separate spheres are further

<sup>42</sup> Barthélemy, *Souvenirs*, 75–76.

<sup>43</sup> Stubbe da Luz, 'Franzosenzeit' in *Norddeutschland*, 79–81; Vidalenc, 'Les notables', 789.



exemplified by looking at German-speaking Ostfriesland (Ems-Oriental), which was formally supervised from Amsterdam, but tellingly did not count subprefects of Dutch descent. Ems-Oriental's subprefects resembled the profile of subprefects in the other German departments. Emperor Napoleon had, in fact, explicitly ordered his Minister of the Interior to appoint subprefects from Old France in Ems-Oriental, providing they spoke German.<sup>44</sup> There was quite a bit of anti-Dutch sentiment among the population. Jan Remees Modderman, Dutch subprefect of Winschoten (Ems-Oriental), reported discontent in the border region Reiderland/Rheiderland, a former Prussian area that had been added to the Dutch department of Groningen in 1807. Like other parts of the former Province of Ostfriesland, Dutch rule had not been warmly welcomed. Modderman reported that old military Prussian songs were sung, and that there was a desire to return to the German language and old forms of government.<sup>45</sup>

### CIRCULATION OF SUBPREFECTS ACROSS THE EMPIRE

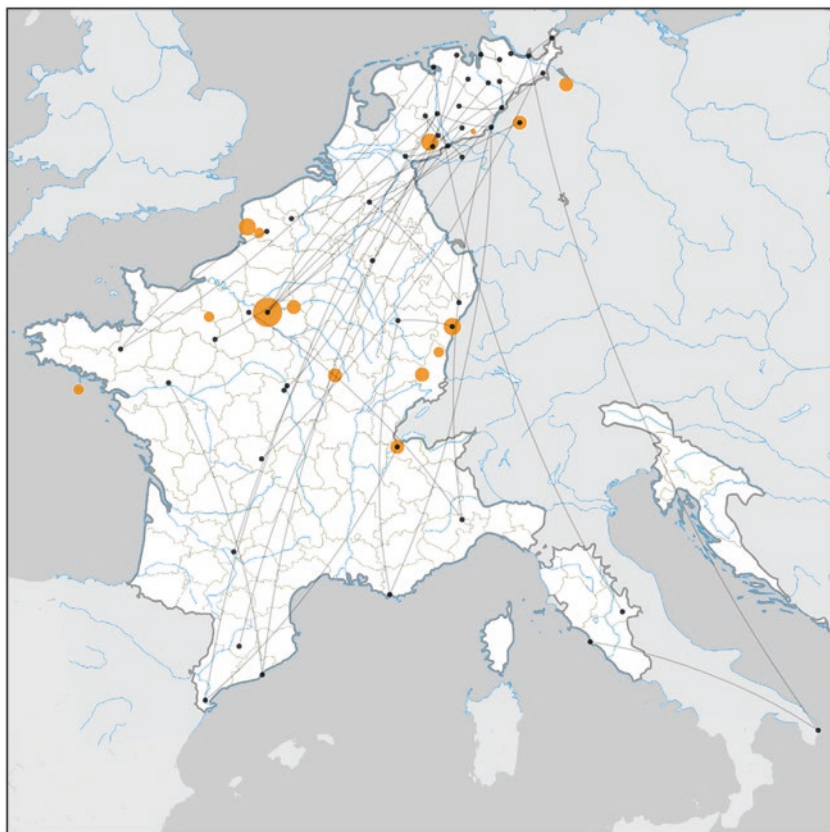
Besides the distinction between native and non-native subprefects, it is also relevant to explore the circulation of subprefects, in other words, the personal mobility within the Empire. Of the 23 subprefects who have been active in Northwest Germany, 10 were also appointed in other parts of the Empire (43 percent) at other moments. In contrast, in the Netherlands, of the 43 subprefects who have been active, 11 also were posted outside the Dutch departments (26 percent).

Maps 6.1 and 6.2 show the origins and geographical mobility of people who were appointed subprefect, respectively in Northwest Germany and in the Netherlands. Black lines visualize the individual administrative careers, which gives insight into the circulation of subprefects within the Empire. Orange circles represent birthplaces; the larger their size, the more often a person from that location was appointed to a new post—or multiple persons, in the case of shared places of birth.

Map 6.1 shows that subprefects active in Northwest Germany traveled over great distances and circulated between Catalonia, Italy and Northwest Germany. The majority originated from Central France. In particular, a group of primarily Old French officials played a surprising linking role

<sup>44</sup>Napoleon to De Montalivet, 14 May 1811. Jourdan ed., *Correspondance générale* X, 27060.

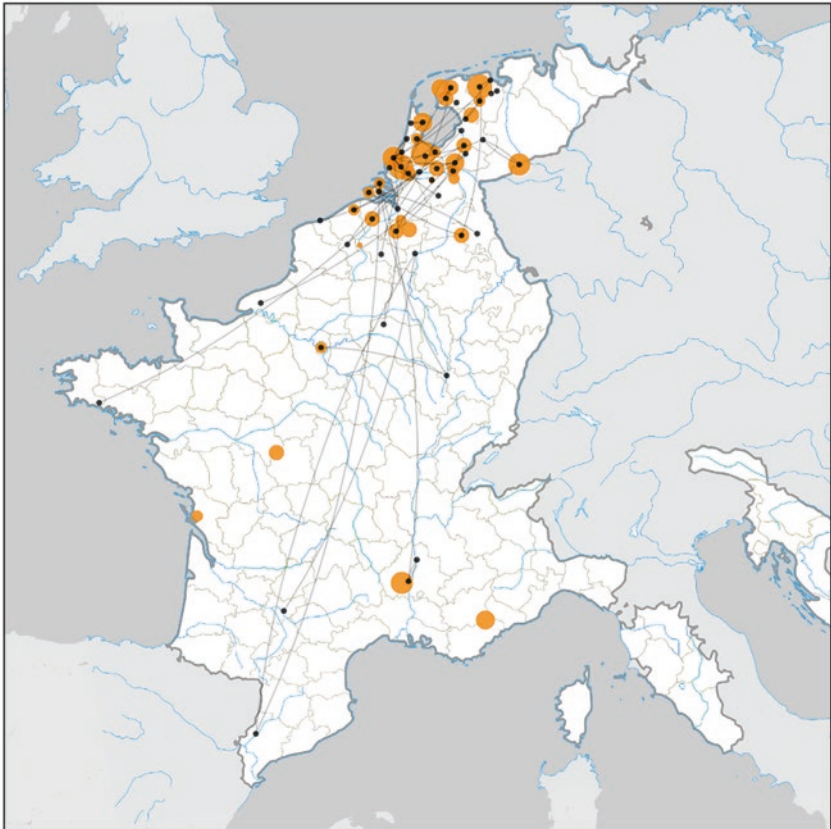
<sup>45</sup>Modderman to Wichers, February 1813. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken* VI, no. 1592.



**Map 6.1** Circulation of the Napoleonic subprefects in the Northwest German departments

between the southern periphery of the Empire and the Northwest German departments.

To begin with, the young Pierre Emmanuel Frochot was appointed subprefect of Oldenburg. Frochot was the son of prefect of the Seine department, Nicolas-Thérèse-Benoît Frochot, a protégé of Charles-François Lebrun. Early 1811, the young Frochot was appointed subprefect of Angers, but held that post for only a few months as he applied for a position as special envoy (*service extraordinaire*) in Barcelona, which was about to



**Map 6.2** Circulation of the Napoleonic subprefects in the Dutch departments

be formally incorporated into the Empire.<sup>46</sup> His Catalan achievements contributed to his promotion to auditor first class, and subsequently his assignment in Oldenburg. A French contemporary there remembered him as a ‘rather spoiled young man, hot-tempered and distrustful’; in the national-colored German memory he became ‘a well-thinking, finely-built young man’. It seems, Frochot preferred the path of gradual integration, like

<sup>46</sup> Jean Sibenaler, *Les premiers préfets du Maine-et-Loire: naissance d’un département français* (2000) 34, 159–160.

many protégés of Lebrun, aiming at true *ralliement*. When in March 1813 French troops tactically withdrew, Frochot had to flee Oldenburg. The subprefect passed on his authority to a committee of five renowned local dignitaries, who called on the population to keep the peace. However, when Oldenburg was recaptured, their attempts to keep the peace were interpreted by the returning military authorities as a call to rebellion. Frochot was unable to protect the locals from a show trial by the army. Two of them, Christian Daniel von Finckh and Albrecht Ludwig von Berger, were shot, the others imprisoned.<sup>47</sup> In the last year of French rule in Northwest Germany, Frochot's freedom of action must have been limited.

In Minden, Constantin Marie Louis Léon de Bouthillier-Chavigny was installed as subprefect. De Bouthillier-Chavigny came from a distinguished old French military family with close ties to the Bourbons. After the French Revolution, he fought against revolutionary France in the royalist Army of Condé, just like Lippe's prefect Lasteyrie du Saillant. During this close cooperation with Austrian troops, De Bouthillier-Chavigny most likely became (somewhat) proficient in the German language. With Napoleon's seizure of power, he considered the time ripe to return to his fatherland, where he lived for several years without official function. Financially, he was forced to seek a position, on which he was appointed in Autouillet (department of Yvelines), then subprefect in Alba (department of Stura, in Piedmont).<sup>48</sup> He may not have been a loyal supporter of Napoleon, but his military upbringing and international experiences must have contributed to his relocation from Alba to newly incorporated Minden.

Late 1811, Jules David, eldest son of painter Jacques-Louis David, was appointed subprefect of Stade. David had started his career in 1805 as vice-consul in Civitavecchia (Papal States) and three years later in Otranto (Kingdom of Naples). This considerable experience in Italy contributed to Intendant De Chaban's calling David to Northwest Germany, first as an employee of the General-Government, and then to managing the integration process in Stade.<sup>49</sup>

Less is known about other subprefects circulating between Southern Europe and Northwest Germany. Louis Zoé Ducros, former subprefect of

<sup>47</sup> Stubbe da Luz, *'Franzosenzeit' in Norddeutschland*, 190–191.

<sup>48</sup> *Biographie des hommes vivants, ou histoire par ordre alphabétique de la vie publique...* I (Paris 1816) 460–461; Joulia, 'Les institutions administratives', 886.

<sup>49</sup> Stubbe da Luz, *'Franzosenzeit' in Norddeutschland*, 239–242; Vidalenc, 'Les notables', 789.

Spoletto (capital of the Trasimeno department), was appointed subprefect of Emden (capital of Ems-Oriental). Ducros came from a wealthy family, and was on the Breton island of Belle-Isle-en-Mer.<sup>50</sup> In the district of Lingen Jacob Bouthillier de Beaumont was appointed as subprefect. This Swiss-born came from the old Geneva bourgeoisie. Bouthillier de Beaumont started his career as subprefect in Geneva, before traveling to Northwest Germany via Tortosa, a town in the very south of Catalonia.<sup>51</sup> A little-known figure, François Maurice Billig (likely from the Alsace), had been subprefect in Solsona, in the interior of Catalonia. His new task was to act as subprefect in Nienburg.

Map 6.2 reveals that most subprefects active in the Netherlands came from the Low Countries, the majority from the Provinces that had formed the Dutch Republic. The visualization of their personal mobility shows that many of them were relatively less mobile, compared to their colleagues in Northwest Germany. Subprefects of Dutch descents seldom traveled over great distances. This is partly explained by the denser urban network in the Netherlands. Also, the General-Government's wish for continuity and *ralliement* has to be taken into account. In this way, the appointment policy reflected different views on integration.

Illustratively, the limited circulation across the Empire of subprefects active in the Dutch departments was a thorn-in-the-eye for some—take prefect De Celles of the department of Zuyderzée. In a letter to high police official Réal, De Celles wrote the French were right to rally many Dutchmen, but stressed that *fusion* could be accelerated if the French custom of circulating state officials was fully embraced. ‘The inhabitant of the South is transported to the North, that of the East to the West, and in a department one finds very seldom natives’, De Celles stated, ‘I would further observe that the Dutch employees in the various administrations have preserved ancient, and rude forms’. Here, De Celles shows the typical Napoleonic preoccupation with ‘modernization’, wanting to replace ‘archaic’ institutions.<sup>52</sup> Another example is the subprefect of Zierikzee, Alban de Villeneuve-Bargemon, born in the southern French town of

<sup>50</sup>Michael Broers, *The Napoleonic empire in Italy, 1796–1814: Cultural imperialism in a European context?* (Basingstoke 2005) 203; Aurélien Lignereux, *Les impériaux: administrer et habiter l'Europe de Napoléon* (Paris 2019) 207.

<sup>51</sup>Lignereux, *Les impériaux*, 34.

<sup>52</sup>De Celles to Réal, 18 February 1813. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken* VI, no. 835.

Grasse.<sup>53</sup> The loyal Villeneuve-Bargemon had been sent to Zierikzee to replace a Dutch subprefect (Samuel Boeye) who was suspected of smuggling.<sup>54</sup> He enjoyed the privilege of corresponding directly with the Minister of the Interior. Zierikzee's subprefect was unpleasantly surprised by the lack of cooperation from the old elite families. Although the population was generally obedient and law-abiding, he believed increasing the share of Frenchmen was necessary.<sup>55</sup>

Alban de Villeneuve-Bargemon also complained about the lack of French officials with his superior Pycke, prefect of Bouches-de-l'Escaut. Early 1812, he argued that although Zeeland had already been incorporated for a year and a half, and that many institutions had been successfully introduced, the long-term project of integration needed a different approach: 'More than eighteen months have passed today since Zeeland's reunion with the Empire. [...] But the regeneration of a corrupt people cannot be the work of a few years. [...] To entrust this country for a long time only to French civil servants or employees [will hasten the return of political morals and give a more secure guarantee to the government]'.<sup>56</sup> Villeneuve-Bargemon would receive a new post five weeks later, on 12 February 1812. He was promoted to prefect of the new Catalan department of Bouches-de-L'Èbre—one of the few (sub)prefectoral movements between the Dutch departments and Catalonia departments. This indicates Villeneuve-Bargemon's Dutch experiences were seen as valuable for the integration of Catalonia into the Empire. And in his place came, significantly, not a Dutchman but a Frenchman, Joseph Laurent Hippolyte de la Boissière, originally from Vivarais, who had been appointed the year before as subprefect of Neufchâteau in the Vosges.

## POTENTIAL TOOLS OF INTEGRATION

From a strictly institutional viewpoint, the implementation of the French *arrondissement* framework was reasonably successful; in essence, the Napoleonic model was adopted in the North. Nevertheless, behind this seemingly well-organized structure, numerous problems were hidden,

<sup>53</sup>A. Rampal, 'Le comte de Villeneuve-Bargemon. Préfet des Bouches-du-Rhône (1815–1829)', *Provincia. Revue trimestrielle d'histoire et d'archéologie provençales* 9 (1929) 141–172.

<sup>54</sup>Napoleon to De Montalivet, 16 April 1811. Colenbrander ed., *Gedenkstukken* VI, no. 225.

<sup>55</sup>De Villeneuve-Bargemon to De Montalivet, 6 August 1811. *Ibid.*, no. 533.

<sup>56</sup>De Villeneuve-Bargemon to De Montalivet, 8 January 1812. *Ibid.*, no. 534.

such as imprecise territorial demarcations, unclear and slow information flows, and a recurring shortage of competent local staff—especially in rural areas. In times of adversity, subprefects were also the first to be under attack from below. This required diplomatic, linguistic, and technical skills to make the pursuit of *ralliement* truly a success. Within this context, a successful subprefect could demonstrate his qualities extensively, therefore the office was a sought-after step in an imperial career.

The filling in of the corps of subprefects in the Netherlands shows that the existing political-administrative elite was preserved where possible, supplemented with Old and New Frenchmen, who ideally had a certain affinity with the Dutch. Subprefects in Northwest Germany, on the other hand, were mainly ambitious young auditors from Old France. Consequently, the subprefects in the Netherlands were generally older and more experienced: a mixture of well-to-do urban citizens and rural noblemen. They carried out their work, but usually did not excel in their diligence. In some cases, there was so much ‘inertia’ that conflicts broke out with French superiors or colleagues. This was less the case in Northwest Germany. There, eager and skilled Frenchmen were a good choice, to build the prefectoral system from scratch. Few subprefects were of German origin; Germans had to make do with lower positions. Over time, the Dutch situation became more like the Northwest German situation as the central government appointed more subprefects of (neo-)French descent.

An explanation for the differences in the composition of the corps of subprefects is that a French-inspired system of territorial governance already existed in the Netherlands. The *kwartierdrosten* could quite easily be absorbed into the Napoleonic system. Also, Governor Lebrun was one of the most outspoken supporters of maintaining local officials. In contrast, the proportion of Germans with similar experiences was limited to a small number of former Westphalian subprefects. Moreover, the intermediary government in Hamburg pursued the policy to selecting many Frenchmen. And when *ralliement* was pursued, this did not mean that local subprefects were given equally important posts. In general, the more important a district was, the greater the chance that an experienced Old French subprefect was appointed, especially when the department’s prefect was of non-French origin.

Just as with the prefects, distinctive patterns in the circulation of subprefects can be distinguished in the northern part of the Napoleonic Empire. There are striking differences between both regions under

scrutiny. In the Netherlands, highly mobile subprefects were a minority. Nor was there much personal mobility between the Netherlands and other outlying imperial areas. However, in Northern Germany, officials from elsewhere were much clearly present in the prefectorial system. Subprefects posted in at some time in Northwest Germany, often traveled over great distances. Connecting different parts of the Empire, such subprefects were truly ‘transregional’ actors helping to hold together the Empire.

Strikingly, the Dutch cluster and the Northwest German cluster within the imperial network of subprefects were entirely unconnected. It seems that, for instance, the distance between Emden and Spoleto (1250 kilometers) was more easily bridged than the distance between Emden and Groningen (45 kilometers). And, for example, Lingen and Tortosa (1400 kilometers apart) were, for a Napoleonic subprefect, closer to each other than Lingen and Almelo (47 kilometers apart). These circulation patterns have been congruent with the opinions on integration, as reflected in ego documents. Circulating Napoleonic high officials often held more pronounced ideas on powerfully integrating the northern *departments réunies*. Also, subprefects in the Northwest German departments, more often than in the Netherlands, had a military background. Thus, differences in the composition, and mobility, of the subprefects’ corps bear evidence of conflicts within the Napoleonic state machinery concerning the advancement of integration and *ralliement*—and thereby effectively reveal conflicts about the nature of Napoleonic governance itself.

Just as prefects have been Napoleon’s ‘tools of conquest’, as Stuart Woolf pointed out (or perhaps ‘tools of incorporation’), subprefects were potential tools of integration. The actual implementation of measures of all kinds often depended on the commitment of subprefects. Subprefects were able to directly monitor mayors and interfere personally in case a for the local community harmful policy was not fully implemented. And subprefects could operate independently of the prefect if, in their view, the prefect did not adhere to the official line. As such, a skilled and loyal subprefect was invaluable to the central government in Paris.

All this was also the Achilles heel of the system of (trans)regional subprefects. Higher authorities were quite dependent on the willingness of individual subprefects. To do justice to the official *ralliement* efforts, pre-existing political elites had to be persuaded to cooperate, but in doing so, state-power was partly surrendered. As with other parts of the Napoleonic administration in the northern periphery, there was no overarching figure or authority who could genuinely oversee the entire area that had been



incorporated in 1810. Consequently, regional variations were considerable, both between the Netherlands and Northwest Germany, as well as within each area. The lack of coordination and uniformity led to a degree of integration that differed from district to district, depending on the profile, the balancing skills and the network connections of the subprefect in question.

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## Conclusions: Incomplete Integration

**Abstract** This study set out to provide insight into the integration of the Netherlands and Northwest Germany into the Napoleonic Empire, through the implementation of Napoleonic governance, distinguishing several phases. This concluding chapter puts the research findings into a larger context. After exploring the collapse and legacy of Napoleonic rule, the successive stages of conquest, incorporation, and integration are reflected upon. Both areas experienced similar tensions between the Napoleonic desire for uniformity and diverse traditions. Either a ‘harsh’ approach or a ‘mild’ approach was chosen, depending on the actors involved and the interaction between core and periphery. Interests and actions were not aligned, and in more extreme cases, there was downright animosity between Napoleonic officials. Therefore, in neither the Netherlands nor Northwest Germany complete integration was achieved. However, there was no definite blueprint for integration, as different groups had conflicting ideas on the desirable level of, and path to, integration. Ultimately, integration was incomplete, but the degree of incompleteness depends on the divergent norms set by the various parties.

**Keywords** Napoleonic governance • Restoration • Conquest • Incorporation • Integration

## THE VIEW FROM THE REGIONS

The vast Napoleonic Empire has captured the imagination of generations of historians. Whether proponents or opponents of Bonaparte, historians often portrayed the French state as a continent-wide monolith, tightly directed by the Emperor. But the past few decades have seen an upsurge in innovative studies that, taking a bottom-up view, distance themselves from traditional interpretations. Now, the Empire's diversity is acknowledged and attention drawn to regions and peripheries. The present study examined two of such peripheral regions. It has sought to provide insight into the integration of the Netherlands and Northwest Germany into the Empire, highlighting the implementation of Napoleonic governance.

Although a comparative analysis is hampered by gaps in historiography and archival sources, this small-scale study indicates that a transregional approach to Napoleonic governance can yield relevant results. Notwithstanding the relative brief duration of Napoleonic rule in these regions, its possible impact on state and society should not be dismissed beforehand. Attempts at suppressing traditional governing practices and local institutions, in favor of Napoleonic ones, succeeded and failed at the same time. Efficiency and uniformity, the spearheads of Napoleonic governance, were appealing to many, but nevertheless not easy to achieve. Moreover, Napoleon's heirs, the Restoration governments, later gave their own interpretations to Napoleonic governance.

This concluding chapter begins by examining the downfall of the French Empire in the North. It will then go on to explore the legacy of Napoleonic governance. Finally, it assesses the extent to which Napoleonic state representatives have succeeded in their endeavors of conquering, incorporating, and integrating the North.

## THE COLLAPSE OF NAPOLEONIC RULE IN THE NORTH

Early 1813, Prussia and Russia declared war on Napoleonic France, starting the Sixth Coalition War. More to the West in Germany, the population turned against the French, starting in the Grand Duchy of Berg where, because of conscription, thousands of farmers and workers harassed *gendarmes*. Only with great difficulty uprisings were suppressed. Unrest also reached the Hanseatic departments. Fearing the approach of Russian troops, Napoleonic authorities fled mid-March, many toward the Dutch departments. Concurrently, the wave of protest moved to Ostfriesland,

and subsequently the Netherlands. The French in the Netherlands became restless. For example, Police Director De Villiers du Terrage made evacuation preparations. It was not until mid-April, when a French counter-offensive was launched, that rest was restored to the northern periphery and conscription intensified.<sup>1</sup> As shown in the chapters on the prefectural system, numerous prefects and subprefects were transferred or replaced. In one extreme case, Bremerlehe's subprefect Von Gruben was declared an enemy of the state and banished from the Empire in July 1813, as was Secretary-General Johann Michael Gries.<sup>2</sup> Exiled Hanseatic Germans formed the 'Hanseatic Directory' to promote their common interests and stimulate the armed struggle against France. Meanwhile they entered into negotiations with the Allies to ensure post-war independence.<sup>3</sup>

In the autumn of 1813, the French authorities were put under still further pressure. On 4 October 1813, De Villiers du Terrage warned the prefects of Frise, Verstolk van Soelen, and Ems-Occidental, Petit de Beauverger, about a possible underground anti-French network connecting the Dutch departments, via Westphalia and Münster, with German rebels. The latter were allegedly associated with the (disbanded) Prussian secret society the *Tugendbund*. De Villiers du Terrage feared that secret messengers and insurgents were wandering around in the northern periphery, and local policemen were summoned to track them down. Whether there really was a transregional resistance network is unclear, but it was certainly feared by the French.<sup>4</sup>

Autumn 1813 was characterized above all by chaos. Following Napoleon's defeat against the Sixth Coalition, on 19 October at the Battle of the Nations, the French authorities definitively lost their faith in the Dutch. Beginning of November it was rumored that the Emperor had died and Davout was heading for Amsterdam to discuss with Charles-François Lebrun the surrender to the Allies.<sup>5</sup> Fear took possession

<sup>1</sup> Katherine Aaslestad, *Place and politics: Local identity, civic culture and German nationalism in North Germany during the Revolutionary Era* (Leiden 2005) 297.

<sup>2</sup> Arrêté de amnistie, 24 July 1813.

<sup>3</sup> Aaslestad, *Place and politics*, 298.

<sup>4</sup> Johan Joor, *De Adelaar en het Lam: onrust, opruiing en onwilligheid in Nederland ten tijde van het Koninkrijk Holland en de inlijving bij het Franse keizerrijk (1806–1813)* (Amsterdam 2000) 500–501.

<sup>5</sup> Johanna W. A. Naber, *Overheersching en vrijwording: geschiedenis van Nederland tijdens de inlijving bij Frankrijk, juli 1810–november 1813* (Haarlem 1913) 243; Bart Verheijen, *Nederland onder Napoleon: partijstrijd en natievorming 1801–1813* (Nijmegen 2017) 283.

of the French. De Villiers de Terrage's home went up in flames. Prefect De Celles was confined to bed because of gout and De Villiers du Terrage struggled to secretly bring him to safety. On 11 November he wrote: 'If we are not saved within six days, we are dead [...] a different governor and eight hundred men would have been able to retain these provinces'. When, on 15 November, French soldiers left Amsterdam to combat the advancing Cossacks, the population of Amsterdam rebelled. The people's anger focused mainly on the repressive forces: the customs, police, *gendarmérie* and tax collectors. *Douaniers* were lynched. General-Governor Lebrun urged Amsterdam's notables to restore order, but they politely refused to help. Escorted by the *gendarmérie*, Charles-François Lebrun left, without being harassed.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, the situation in Northwest Germany was also chaotic. For example, after the expulsion of French troops from Bremen, the city was briefly recaptured. But the French left Bremen permanently by the end of October, when Davout was ordered to preserve Hamburg after the Battle of Leipzig. Beginning of December the French sway over Lübeck ended. This was followed by the siege of Hamburg which lasted four months. Living conditions in Hamburg grew worse, as food became scarce. Many starved. Also, the French army and the population of Hamburg were plagued by typhoid. Intendant De Chaban also fell prey to the disease. Enclosed by Allies, the French were only remotely aware of the First Empire's collapse.<sup>7</sup> Davout only left the city at the end of May 1814, long after Napoleon had abdicated.

## NAPOLEONIC FOUNDATIONS FOR THE NEW STATES?

### *The Low Countries*

On 17 November 1813, as the French fled the Netherlands, a provisional government was formed in The Hague. Stadtholder William V's son Prince William Frederick was requested to return from England and accept the dignity of Sovereign Prince of the Netherlands.<sup>8</sup> For continuity's sake,

<sup>6</sup>Auguste de Caumont la Force, *L'architrésorier Lebrun, gouverneur de la Hollande, 1810–1813* (Paris 1907) 328–329, 336–338.

<sup>7</sup>Alexandre Boudet de Puymaigre, *Souvenirs sur l'émigration, l'empire et la restauration* (Paris 1884) 160–165.

<sup>8</sup>Jeroen Koch, *Koning Willem I, 1772–1843* (Amsterdam 2013) 226.

and to guarantee rest, the invaded Allies ordered all Dutch members of the prefectoral system to remain at their posts. In cases where prefects or sub-prefects of French origin had been employed, Dutchmen took over their functions, for example, the Secretary-General or the *maire* of the district's capital.<sup>9</sup> Also on the national level, most former Napoleonic administrators were kept and contributed to the construction of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands.<sup>10</sup>

Although few political purges took place in the Netherlands, not every former Napoleonic official was directly accepted by the new government. An individual case shows how forgiving and reprimanding were balanced. The 30-year-old Bernard Hendrik Alexander Besier had from the beginning of the incorporation been subprefect of Brielle, on the island of Voorne, southwest of Rotterdam. On 15 November 1813, rebellious farmers, on Brielle's market day, threatened to clash with the French garrison. *Maire* Jan Marcus Heeneman (an administrative veteran of Oranienstein origin) managed to prevent French troops from brutally intervening and sent the farmers away. Prefect Besier immediately reported the *maires'* intervention to the prefect, also dissatisfied that the *maire* no longer respected his authority. Three days later, a similar incident took place between citizens and French customs officers, in which Heeneman could also prevent bloodshed.

A group of notables, including Heeneman, secretly contacted the new government in The Hague, planning to seize power. They were betrayed and it was subprefect Besier who, together with the *gendarmes*, forced Heeneman to leave his post. Besier sent a threatening message to all *maires* in his district. Retaliations were taken against openly unwilling surrounding villages. French soldiers, for example, took several local dignitaries hostage. Besier further made himself unloved by the rural population because, on French orders, he seized foodstuffs for the army. The local population took the initiative when French troops, together with the subprefect, entrenched themselves in the town center, awaiting reinforcements. They were attacked by a combination of deserted Dutch cannoneers and local militia members. In the following days, Besier was taken

<sup>9</sup>J. A. M. Y. Bos-Rops, J. G. M. Sanders, and A. P. van Vliet ed., *Noord-Brabant in de Bataafs-Franse Tijd, 1794–1814: een institutionele handleiding* ('s-Hertogenbosch and Hilversum 2002).

<sup>10</sup>Matthijs Lok, *Windvannet: Napoleontische bestuurders in de Nederlandse en Franse restauratie (1813–1820)* (Amsterdam 2009).

prisoner, his functions taken over by the returned Heeneman, and transferred to The Hague awaiting trial.<sup>11</sup>

Besier was the only Dutch former member of the prefectorial system who was subsequently brought to trial. He was accused of excesses, violence, and exactions, in function. The court in The Hague pronounced its verdict on 17 May 1814 and decided that ex-subprefect Besier should not be prosecuted, since he had acted on orders of the French military commander. The court ruled that it was unreasonable to ‘judge his actions in his capacity as a French civil servant by the principles of the present government’.<sup>12</sup> In this vein, all Dutch former Napoleonic officials were assessed. That individuals had collaborated with the French was not held against them, however, very devoted and persistent ones were frowned upon. The case of Besier (who was to continue his career in Indonesia) indicates which behavior was just barely considered acceptable.

Although Napoleonic governance was essentially preserved, as well as former (sub)prefects, many Dutch jurists and politicians deemed it an example of excessive centralization, in which lower governments were suppressed in favor of the central government.<sup>13</sup> Main author of the new Dutch constitution Gijsbert Karel van Hogendorp, argued that a restoration of old provincial institutions would be beneficial, even to a nation-state. He pointed out that the traditional provinces could serve as a political platform for the nobility, and that only provinces truly respected the country’s ‘spirit’ and that of its inhabitants. However, prominent Dutch politicians who had been active during the incorporation, or under Louis Bonaparte, objected to the historically inspired federal state envisaged by Van Hogendorp. A provincial revival could threaten the nation, as provincialism had caused so many problems in the past. They argued that Van Hogendorp did not sufficiently take into account the experiences of the years 1795–1813. Furthermore, William I wanted to preserve the centralist essence of Napoleonic governance to strengthen his personal power. Thus the unitary state was successfully preserved, and with it the

<sup>11</sup> Herman Bosscha, *Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche staats-omwenteling in achttienhondert dertien. Tweede deel* (Amsterdam 1917) 63–71; G. J. W. Koolemans Beijnen ed., *Historisch gedenkboek der herstelling van Neêrlands onafhankelijkheid in 1813. Derde deel* (Haarlem 1913) 185–187, 205.

<sup>12</sup> Bosscha, *Geschiedenis* II, 75–78.

<sup>13</sup> Nico Randeraad, ‘Thorbecke en de inrichting van het lokale bestuur’, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 107, 537–558.

achievements of the revolutionary and Napoleonic era, as guarantee for national unity.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile in the Belgian departments, after the collapse of the Empire, the Allies replaced Napoleonic prefects with *intendants*. Various intermediary governments were formed, in line with Napoleonic practice, among which the *Gouvernement général de la Belgique* under supervision of the Dutch prince. More and more former imperial departments were added to ‘Belgium’. At the Congress of Vienna it became evident that the Northern and the Southern Low Countries were to be united into one state. The Kingdom of the Netherlands was intended to be a buffer state against France and included the former Dutch Republic, the Austrian Netherlands, and the Prince-Bishopric of Liège. In this process, the Dutch state made good use of the knowledge and skills of former Dutch Napoleonic officials. For instance, in August 1814, former prefect of Frise, Johan Gijsbert Verstolk van Soelen, was sent to Liège in newly occupied Belgium to prepare this region for incorporation and integration into United Kingdom of the Netherlands.

With the union of the North and the South, territorial governance was again reexamined. Because in the South the departmental structure had been functioning properly for 20 years, Belgian members of the constitution commission of 1815 advocated its preservation. A complete reform would also require a lot of effort. And the former departments had the right size to fit into the Kingdom, they observed. Only the names of the southern provinces should have a traditional ring to them, referring to the past, instead of French neologisms.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the provinces regained some influence, but the central government, headed by an autocratic monarch, wielded considerable power. The prefectoral system was essentially kept; prefects were renamed *gouverneurs*. Most were loyal servants of the king, and served as his eyes and ears, just like Napoleonic prefects had done.<sup>16</sup> All in all, Napoleonic governance took root in the Low Countries, albeit tailored to traditions and national demands.

<sup>14</sup>Brecht Deseure and Diederik Smit, ‘Pre-revolutionary provinces in a post-Napoleonic state’, *BMGN—Low Countries Historical Review* 133 (2018) 103–104. <https://doi.org/10.18352/bmgn-lchr.10589>; Matthijs Lok, ‘Op een gelijksoortige klip schipbreuk leiden’. De politieke argumentatie van voormalige napoleontische bestuurders in de grondwetscommissie van 1814’, *Leidschrift: historisch tijdschrift* 19 (2004) 93–94, 101–102.

<sup>15</sup>Deseure and Smit, ‘Pre-revolutionary provinces’, 111.

<sup>16</sup>F. J. M. Otten, *Gids voor de archieven van de ministeries en de Hoge Colleges van Staat, 1813–1940* (Den Haag 2004) 35.



### *Former Napoleonic Germany*

Evidently, in Germany the restoration was more fragmented, because the Congress of Vienna distributed the French departments over several new or restored states. And in the former Northwest German departments there initially was relatively little personnel continuity since territorial governance had relied heavily on French prefects and subprefects. Some of them fled, others, like prefect Jannesson, were captured by Allies. Many of them returned to France and could make use of the experiences they had gained in peripheral departments.<sup>17</sup>

Prussia (re)claimed large parts of Germany; for instance, Münster returned under Prussian rule, as did the Rhineland. Although Prussia later in the century pursued a more restrictive recruitment policy, on the basis of criteria such as Protestantism and former attitude toward the French, the Napoleonic period seems to have had a limited effect on the subsequent careers of former Napoleonic officials of German descent.<sup>18</sup> In the Prussian provinces, experienced Napoleonic officials were quickly reemployed, allowing, for instance, the prefects and subprefects of Westphalia and Berg to continue their careers in Prussian service. Take Clemens von Oer, the former subprefect Steinfurt, who became *Kreiskommissar* in Steinfurt, and subsequently *Landrat* in the Province of Westphalia, as was Gerhard von Lommessen, former subprefect of Goes and Aachen.

The preservation or rejection of Napoleonic governance shows to which extent French innovations were accepted. Michael Rowe has shown how Napoleonic state-building has been an enduring legacy in Germany. Even though few longed back to Napoleonic authoritarian rule, with its high taxes and merciless conscription, the local elite of the Rhineland strongly defended the French institutions, since local socioeconomic circumstances fitted the French inheritance. Napoleonic officials had partly condoned old governing practices and traditions in order to assert their rule. In this way regional traditions could survive within a French institutional framework.<sup>19</sup> The elites in the now Prussian Rhineland were strongly

<sup>17</sup> Aurélien Lignereux, *Les impériaux: administrer et habiter l'Europe de Napoléon* (Paris 2019).

<sup>18</sup> Nicola Peter Todorov, 'La réintégration des fonctionnaires des États napoléoniens par les États allemands: l'exemple de la Prusse', *Histoire & mesure* 29 (2014) 23–46. <https://doi.org/10.4000/histoiremesure.5056>

<sup>19</sup> Michael Rowe, 'Napoleon and the 'modernisation' of Germany', in: P. Dwyer ed., *Napoleon and his Empire. Europe, 1804–1814* (Basingstoke 2007) 216.

aware of their provincial identity. This tendency was reinforced as each province had its own deliberative body, whereas the kingdom as a whole had none. Regional sentiments manifested themselves in adherence to the Napoleonic legacy, such as French legislation and the relatively liberal system of local governance. Regionalist sentiments also flourished in the neighboring, highly composite Province of Westphalia. The Westphalian and Rhenish sentiments were a catalyst for German nation-building, referring to a larger German nation instead of the Prussian monarchy.<sup>20</sup>

In the now Grand Duchy of Oldenburg, Peter Friedrich Ludwig returned, also being made Prince of Lübeck. The Grand Duke appointed a provisional government committee, predominantly conservative in character, bypassing former Napoleonic officials. Although they wanted to distance themselves from Napoleonic governance, a return to the old situation was not considered, as it was recognized that the French structures were well-regulated. Nor did the Peter Friedrich Ludwig advocate political purges. The new government consisted of a mix of conservatives and former Napoleonic officials. Take Gerhard Anton von Halem, former Secretary-General of Bouches-du-Weser, who was appointed highest government representative in exclave Principality of Lübeck.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, in the Kingdom of Hanover, ruled by the British monarch, political purges were initially opted for. However, many officials were quickly reinstated. Take, Adolf von Grote, the former subprefect and ex-member of the imperial *Corps législatif*, who was appointed *Landrat*. Ostfriesland was united with the Kingdom of Hanover. There, Johann Christian Friedrich Eisendecker, formerly subprefect in Nienburg and Quakenbrück, became *Amtmann* in Emden.

Likewise, in the Hanseatic city-states, collaboration with the French was hardly an issue. Few had to defend themselves afterward.<sup>22</sup> For instance, former Secretary-General Bouches-de-l'Elbe, Johann Michael

<sup>20</sup>Michael John, 'The Napoleonic legacy and problems of restoration in Central Europe: The German confederation', in: D. Laven and L. Riall ed., *Napoleon's Legacy. Problems of government in restoration Europe* (Oxford 2000) 83–96; Julian Wright and Christopher Clark, 'Regionalism and the state in France and Prussia', *European Review of History* 15 (2008) 285–287. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13507480802082607>

<sup>21</sup>Gerd Steinwascher, 'Das Herzogtum Oldenburg', in: S. Brüdermann ed., *Geschichte Niedersachsens: Band 4. Vom Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zum Ende des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Göttingen 2016) 165–170.

<sup>22</sup>Helmut Stubbe da Luz, *Franzosenzeit in Norddeutschland (1803–1814). Napoleons Hanseatische Departements* (Bremen 2003) 254.

Gries, was reappointed Syndicus in Hamburg. As for the Hanseatic cities at large, no new joint central government was set up. True, the Hanseatic cities had worked together, but attempts at new reforms that transcended the urban level, let alone democratic reforms, were seen as dangerously revolutionary. Allies impeded the reform agenda of former Patriots and thus restored the sovereignty of the time-honored traditional local councils. In Hamburg, for example, voices were raised to preserve the best of Napoleonic governance, but the dominant sentiment was highly conservative.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the reaction in the restored Hanseatic city states was, remarkably, significantly more conservative than in the surrounding monarchies and principalities in the Low Countries and the Low German Plain.

### DEGREES OF COMPLETENESS

Whether the Netherlands and Northwest Germany were successfully integrated into the Napoleonic Empire, has been matter of debate. Antoinette Joulia's observations from her 1972 dissertation on the Ems-Supérieur department still hold up. She considered the introduction of Napoleonic governance in Ems-Supérieur a partial success. Joulia showed how at the highest level, reforms were carried out rather systematically and thoroughly. But for the layers below, that cannot be said. A lack of clarity, time, and staff hampered the process. To quote Joulia: 'the work [has] remained incomplete', but 'one [can] only be amazed at the degree of its realization'.<sup>24</sup> To a certain extent, her conclusions can be extrapolated to the entire North. Attempts to integrate these regions were only partly successful, therefore integration was incomplete.

Since Joulia, the body of literature on Napoleonic Europe has grown enormously. Speaking of Europe as a whole, several different explanations have been put forward for the extent to which Napoleonic integration was successful. Summarizing historiography, Geoffrey Ellis distinguishes on the one hand between historians who emphasize the geographical distance from France and the length of Napoleonic rule as an explanation for the degree of integration; and, on the other hand, historians who believe local circumstances determined how French institutions took root, or not. And Alexander Grab has noticed that it is often assumed that the way Napoleonic

<sup>23</sup> Aaslestad, *Place and politics*, 299, 307–309.

<sup>24</sup> Antoinette Joulia, 'Ein französischer Verwaltungsbezirk in Deutschland: Das Oberemsdepartement (1810–1813)', *Osnabrücker Mitteilungen* 80 (1973) 98.

institutions were received locally usually depended on, first, the duration of the incorporation into the Empire; second, the place that the area was allocated within it (*pays alliés*, *pays conquis* or *pays réunies*); third, the existing local socioeconomic, cultural, and political structures; and lastly, the level of local resistance to the Napoleonic authorities.<sup>25</sup>

In other words, the success, or failure, of integration is often explained in terms of *distance*, *duration*, *legal status* or *local circumstances*. However, perhaps the problematic nature of Napoleonic governance has been overlooked. By this I mean that more attention could be given to the ways in which the various territories were actually governed, and how that affected the state's functioning. To limit myself to the integration of the North, its incompleteness can be explained in several ways.

Firstly, from early on, coordination was an issue, since no overall plan of approach to integration was conceived. Around 1800 various forms of temporary governing bodies had emerged in conquered lands. Initially, these were more civilian in character, but gradually hybrid forms between military and civil administration developed. Concerning the North, the Emperor was ambivalent toward Dutch and Germans, so his intents were not always consistent, let alone those of his collaborators. Both 'harsher' and 'milder' approaches were considered desirable, depending on the parties at hand. Paradoxically, precisely the actors who questioned the need for rigid integration, in certain cases contributed to making integration more 'complete', understood as creating support from locals and letting Napoleonic governance take root.

Consequently, in the regions, there was less uniformity than desired in territorial governance. Paris was often reliant on the willingness of actors at lower levels. Supervision was partly delegated to the intermediary bodies of governance, which had a not always clearly defined scope of decision-making discretion. Though formally not autonomous, in practice these intermediary governments were responsible for balancing the interests of Paris and those of the departments they oversaw. Even more frequently, integration in essence depended on mediating individuals. Prefects had the difficult task of actually introducing strict Napoleonic measures. Stimulating personal mobility between different parts of the Empire was a possible means of accelerating integration and increasing uniformity, as governance knowledge could be disseminated. Lack of uniformity also presented itself at district level. In one district there could be

<sup>25</sup> Geoffrey Ellis, *The Napoleonic empire* (2nd ed.; Basingstoke 2003) 91–93; Alexander Grab, *Napoleon and the transformation of Europe* (Basingstoke 2003) 24–26.

a diligent subprefect, in other districts policies could be only partly implemented. So where measures succeeded, or failed, could be rather arbitrary.

Scant coordination and lack of uniformity partly resulted from, and contributed to, animosity and opposition within the Napoleonic state apparatus. This ranged from passivity to outright conflict with colleagues, which hindered the workings of the Empire. The General-Governments in Amsterdam and that in Hamburg could have been partners in integrating the North, but remained within their own circles, not sharing a common view. So remote from the supervision of the imperial capital, many actors competed for influence. At lower levels, prefects and subprefects had clashes, internally as well as with third parties. Admittedly, other state bodies in the Netherlands and Northwest Germany, such as the police, customs, and *gendarmérie*, were organized more strictly, but these often worked poorly together with the members of the prefectural system, slowing down integration. So although some branches of the Napoleonic state performed better than others, in many fields competition prevailed over cooperation.

The abovementioned shortcomings do not necessarily mean that the workings of the Napoleonic Empire were ineffective. Often the Empire's ability to raise huge armies is presented as an example of its success, as well as other military feats, or institutional and administrative reforms. To separate different, possibly contradictory, developments, this study distinguished three different phases of empire-building. The phases of 'conquest' and 'incorporation' can be regarded as 'completed'. French military supremacy was a given fact, which made conquest straightforward. Subsequently, the Netherlands and Northwest Germany were incorporated in two steps: first, a sort of 'declaration of intent', ensued by more elaborate decrees. These were followed in both areas by a clash between the traditional political culture and the imported French governing mentality, something that could not be solved with a stroke of a pen. In this phase, Napoleon and many of his close collaborators underestimated the resilience of existing ideas. Consequently, whereas on certain terrains the integration phase proceeded smoothly, on other terrains there was no linear progression, and phases overlapped.

Not seldom, there was no agreement about the phase in which an area was situated, nor about the extent to which the phase had to be completed. Contemporary reflections on the status of conquered lands can illustrate this. Napoleon on occasions spoke of (conflicts over) phases in the integration of conquered lands. For instance, when explaining his

right of conquest concerning Northern Italy, he discriminated between the phase of ‘the right of conquest’ and that of the ‘work of peace’. In particular, Napoleon criticized the new rulers he had installed for assuming themselves to be in the latter phase while, in his eyes, the first was not finished.<sup>26</sup>

In sum, integration was incomplete, but the degree of incompleteness highly depends on the divergent norms set by the different parties. The *Grande Armée* had made conquest possible. Yet, the next steps of incorporation and integration could have been easier if there had been more coordination, a clearer division of tasks and competences, and less internal rivalry. This seems to have been a shortcoming of Napoleonic governance. Of course, conclusions of this study are based on the northern periphery and hence do not necessarily apply to other regions of the Empire. And, certainly, the immense financial and personal costs of warfare, as well as imperial exploitation, must not be ignored in assessing degrees of incompleteness. Notwithstanding these limitations, it is plausible that aforesaid structural flaw manifested itself in many corners of the Empire. Therefore, the issue of Napoleonic governance and empire-building, specifically from a transregional perspective, is a relevant one that deserves further exploration.

<sup>26</sup> Pierre-Marie Delpu et al. ed., *Le Royaume de Naples à l'heure française: revisiter l'histoire du decennio francese (1806–1815)* (Villeneuve-d'Ascq 2018) 13–29.

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