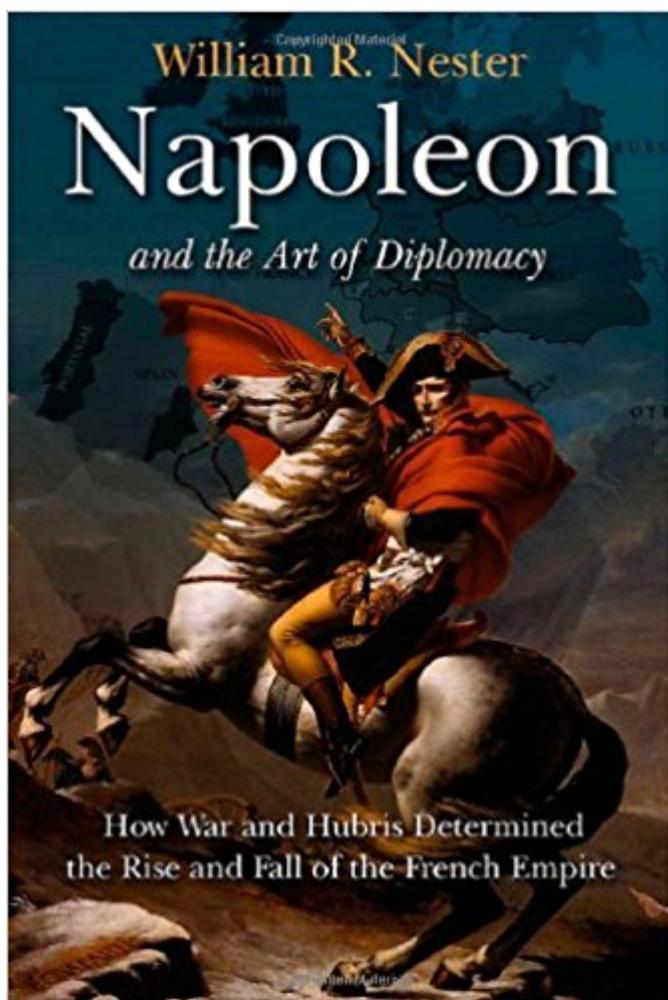


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# Napoleon And The Art Of Diplomacy: How War And Hubris Determined The Rise And Fall Of The French Empire



## Synopsis

A small library could be stocked with books written about Napoleon Bonaparte the general, whose battles and campaigns have been studied extensively. Warriors, however, are not generally known for their diplomatic skills and Napoleon is no exception. After all, conquerors are accustomed to imposing rather than negotiating terms. For Napoleon, however, the arts of war and diplomacy meshed. Napoleon was often as brilliant and successful at diplomacy as he was at war, although at times he could also be as disastrous at the diplomatic table as he was on his final battlefield. William R. Nester's *Napoleon and the Art of Diplomacy* is the first comprehensive exploration of Napoleon the diplomat and how his abilities in that arena shaped his military campaigns and the rise and fall of the French empire. Napoleon's official diplomatic career lasted nearly two decades and involved relations with scores of kings, queens, ministers, diplomats, and secret agents across Europe and beyond. All those involved asserted their respective state (and often their private) interests across the entire span of international relations in which conflicts over trade and marriage were often inseparable from war and peace. For Napoleon, war and diplomacy were indivisible and complementary for victory. Much of Napoleon's military success was built upon a foundation of alliances and treaties. Although not always at war, Napoleon incessantly practiced diplomacy on a steady stream of international issues. Some of his noteworthy achievements in this arena included his 1797 Treaty of Campo Formio with the Austrians after he defeated them in the Italian campaign; the 1807 Treaty of Tilsit, when he incorporated Tsar Alexander of Russia as his junior partner while France was still at war with Britain; and, the 1812 conference of Dresden, where the crowned heads of Europe allied with France as Napoleon opened his massive (and disastrous) invasion of Russia. Nester's masterfully researched and written *Napoleon and the Art of Diplomacy* fills a gaping hole in Napoleonic literature by providing a vital and heretofore neglected dimension that allows readers to fully understand one of history's most intriguing, complex, and powerful leaders.

**About the Author:** Dr. William Nester is a professor in the Department of Government and Politics at St. John's University in New York and the author of more than a score of books on a wide variety of international relations topics including *The First Global War: Britain, France, and the Fate of North America, 1756-1775* and *Haughty Conquerors: Amherst and the Great Indian Uprising of 1763*. He has spent nearly a dozen years living overseas doing research and traveling in more than eighty countries.

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## Customer Reviews

“Napoleon is usually remembered for his military conquests and triumphs, but he was also a consummate statesman who demonstrated considerable diplomatic skills throughout his career. Napoleon’s diplomatic finesse decreased as he amassed more power and became willing to use force when restraint and diplomacy might have delivered greater benefits. William R. Nester’s Napoleon and the Art of Diplomacy delves deeply into this aspect of Napoleon’s overlooked career. His lucid and engaging study is indispensable for anyone interested in the Napoleonic Era (Alexander Mikaberidze, author of The Battle of Borodino: Napoleon Against Kutuzov and The Russian Officer Corps in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1792–1815) well-written shows how a megalomaniac reshaped Europe into his own image. (Collected Miscellany)

Dr. William Nester is a professor in the Department of Government and Politics at St. John’s University in New York and the author of more than a score of books on a wide variety of international relations topics including The First Global War: Britain, France, and the Fate of North America, 1756-1775 and Haughty Conquerors: Amherst and the Great Indian Uprising of 1763. He has spent nearly a dozen years living overseas doing research and traveling in more than eighty countries.

Nester’s book was very helpful to me while writing an article about the 1813 campaign in Germany. I got some good insights into the minds of Napoleon and those he interacted with. Most books

concentrate on the campaigns, but this shows the goings on behind the scenes. I think its worth having for anybody doing a serious study of one of history's greatest warriors.

The Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras were not only fertile ground for military glory, but also for feats of diplomatic maneuvering. No other period saw so many treaties, agreements and conventions drafted and signed, the majority of which bore the stamp of Napoleon Bonaparte. After the ratification of the Treaty of Mortefontaine, ending French privateering against American ships, on September 30, 1800, American envoy William Van Murray wrote his impression of Bonaparte: "The First Consul was grave, rather thoughtful, occasionally severe--not inflated nor egotistical--very exact in all his motions which show at once an impatient heart and a methodical head....of a most skilful fencing master....He speaks with a frankness so much above fear that you think he has no reserve." That description stands in telling contrast to that given by Prince Klemens Wenzel von Metternich to General Etienne Jacque Joseph Alexandre MacDonald 13 years later: "Your Emperor is in every way a lunatic." In *Napoleon and the Art of Diplomacy*, William R. Nester, professor of the Department of Government and Politics at St. John's University in New York and author of a variety of books, shows that Napoleon owed his rise as much to his skills in diplomacy as to those on the battlefield. Indeed his diplomatic talents can be discerned in his first known letter, written when he was 14, in which he tried to convince his uncle that his brother Joseph was better suited to the priesthood than the army. For Napoleon war and diplomacy were indivisible, a revelation not lost on military scholars such as Karl von Clausewitz. The author regards Napoleon's peak moments as a diplomat in the treaties of Campoformido in 1797 and Tilsit in 1807, and the Conference of Dresden in 1812. He ascribes Metternich's later appraisal to the egopathy inside Emperor Napoleon, which finally pushed him beyond the human limits and finally to fatal hubris. One other reason, however, was that Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, who the author calls the devil of diplomacy, was in reality a traitor who often worked at cross purposes with the emperor while accepting money from Russian Tsar Alexander. Other officials also plotted against him, including Joseph Fouché and Jean-Baptiste Jules Bernadotte. In line with Clausewitz's description of war as politics by other means, *Napoleon and the Art of Diplomacy* gives insights into a less well-known but important facet of the emperor's rise and fall. All scholars of Napoleonic history should find it a worthwhile addition to their libraries. (Note: This review was written by Thomas Zakharis and posted on [by Napoleon and the Art of Diplomacy](#) publisher Savas Beatie LLC at his request.)

William Nester's latest book; "Napoleon and the Art of Diplomacy" had me a bit worried when I

ordered it. I wasn't keen to read a dry & dull exposé of the art and use of diplomacy by Napoleon and his court (however I do acknowledge the importance of diplomacy). I started this book off then with some trepidation but soon found it to be an easy to read book of Napoleon and his campaigns with accounts of his use of diplomacy interwoven within the story. I don't think there are any ground-breaking revelations here, nothing entirely new for those readers of Napoleonic history, but the author has managed to put together a great story of Napoleon's style of diplomacy, how and why it worked or didn't work. As usual I was frustrated and annoyed to read of Talleyrand and Fouche causing problems for the Emperor. I wonder how he achieved so much sometimes with those two and a few others in the wings wrecking his plans but that's history. There are a number of errors; Sir Sidney Smith appears in the book as Sydney Smith, and Pasha Djezzar becomes Pjezzar along with a few other examples but nothing that detracts too much from the story. This is not an in-depth study of the use of diplomacy by Napoleon, more a general history of his campaigns and how he used his style of diplomacy to further his aims. Overall a good general study and well worth the effort to read.

Napoleon and the Art of Diplomacy fills a gaping hole in Napoleonic literature by providing a vital and often neglected dimension that allows readers to fully understand one of history's most intriguing, complex, and powerful leaders. William Nester recently discussed his upcoming book with publisher Savas Beatie LLC. SB: Why did you decide to write a book about Napoleon? WRN: I've been fascinated with Napoleon since I was a boy. I began writing books on various aspects of international relations and war back in the late 1980s. So far I have twenty-five published books. About half of my books deal with more recent subjects and the other half take place in the eighteenth or early nineteenth century. Given my interest in Napoleon, writing a book on him was inevitable sooner or later. SB: What makes your book unique from other books about Napoleon? WRN: Napoleon-related books could fill a small library. Yet my book is the first ever to explore Napoleon and the Art of Diplomacy. Warriors are not generally known for their diplomatic skills and Napoleon Bonaparte was no exception. Conquerors are accustomed to imposing rather than negotiating terms. Yet for Napoleon, the arts of war and diplomacy meshed. Indeed Napoleon was often just as brilliant and successful at diplomacy as he was at war. And at times he could also be as disastrous at the diplomatic table as he was on the battlefield. SB: What are some features of Napoleon and the Art of Diplomacy that you think readers will really enjoy? WRN: I tried to write Napoleon and the Art of Diplomacy so that it would be as vividly written as it was scholarly and comprehensive. Readers may be surprised by dimensions of Napoleon's character and behavior

that they might not have known about before, and think about those aspects of his life and times that they are familiar with in new ways.SB: What do you hope readers will gain from reading Napoleon and the Art of Diplomacy?WRN: Like any author I hope that my readers will enjoy an entertaining and insightful exploration of the subject.SB: What was your approach to writing Napoleon and the Art of Diplomacy?WRN: Writing about Napoleon was the culmination of four decades studying and thinking about him.SB: Where did you conduct your research on the book?WRN: I spent an idyllic summer in Paris with a half dozen hours most days at the Napoleon Foundation, National Archives, or some other research site which gave my most of my afternoons and evenings to enjoying the full spectrums of pleasures that wonderful city provides. Then I traveled for a couple of months elsewhere in France and other European countries to visit various archives, museum, and battlefields, along with great restaurants and historic inns.SB: Why was Napoleon's diplomatic career so successful?WRN: For years, Napoleon was as brilliant at diplomacy as he was at war until his hubris overwhelmed him. The result was a tragedy for himself and millions of others on a scale so profound and vast that Sophocles or Shakespeare would have undoubtedly loved to have explored it in their dramas.SB: Thank you for your time, we appreciate it.WRN: You're welcome.

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