

E. Integrating the story from 476 to 1789

1. The combined culture of Europe in 1789 was the outcome of a long chain of events since the fall of Rome.
  - a) In 1789, the core nations of Europe, France & Germany, had been split since 843—in other words *for nearly a thousand years!*
  - b) Their separation and gradual emergence as nations had been violently punctuated by the Reformation and Religious Wars (1517-1648) where they had been aligned on opposite sides (with France staying Catholic) and Germany mostly leaning towards Lutheranism and Catholicism.
  - c) Spain and Portugal had evolved into separate nations in relative isolation from the rest of Europe during the Reconquista (711-1492). They were strongly Catholic, and they were committed to the Catholic monarchies that had championed their rise as nations.
  - d) England's kings had given up any claims to France and embraced the separation of England from continental Europe by establishing Anglicanism as a national sect.
  - e) Russia had joined the *Europe of Nations* by defeating Sweden in the Great Northern War (1700-22) under the leadership of Peter “the Great.”
2. To integrate these developments into a “medieval” period in our understand, it is useful to focus on the term “medieval” itself.
  - a) The term “medieval” was developed in modern times precisely to describe the transformation of Europe in between ancient times and modern times.
  - b) The word “medieval” comes from the Latin “medium” (middle) and “aevum” (age). In other words, it denotes a *middle age* between ancient and modern.
  - c) The essence of the medieval period of European history is the emergence of European civilization from its tribal roots, resulting in the formation of separate and antagonistic nations.
  - d) Thus the following periodization statement can summarize the material we have studied:

*The Medieval Period in the history of Europe is the period from 476 to 1789 during which its nations emerged from their tribal roots to form into distinctive and antagonistic cultures in separate countries.*

## **VI. The Modern Europe of Nations (1789-1945)**

*The Modern Period in the history of Europe is the period from 1789 to 1945 during which Europe's nations switched from monarchy to national forms of socialism, resulting in massive wars that nearly destroyed Europe.*

### A. The French Revolution Revisited

1. We have seen that the French kings overcame the English kings during the Hundred Years' War of 1337-1453. (Revisit the map on *page 16* and observe how all the land in France became concentrated in the hands of the French kings. This gave rise to the first "absolute" monarchy in Europe.)
2. As the saying goes, "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."
3. The inheritors of a long line of ever more powerful kings were Louis XIV (who built the palace of Versailles), Louis XV, and finally Louis XVI.
4. In 1789, Louis XVI found himself at the end of the line. There was no way to squeeze any more from his desperate people, so when Louis called them together for a meeting called the "Estates-General" in 1789, he found the peoples' representatives uncooperative.
5. Although he ordered them home, they assembled in his Tennis Court and swore not to be dismissed until they had accomplished the goal of establishing a government accountable to the people. Because of their deliberations from this point forward, *democratic socialism* was born in Europe.
6. Seeing the rise of popular government first in America, and now in France, the kings of Europe became alarmed by the prospect of similar changes occurring in their own countries. They allied with one another and resolved to put a stop to the French Revolution by invading France.

### B. The Rise of Napoleon

1. As the wars of the French Revolution raged, a young officer named Napoleon Bonaparte gradually climbed up the ranks of the French army.
2. At first he postured as a champion of the Revolution, but his ability and desire to command men was not limited to the battlefield.
3. As the Revolution proceeded along an increasingly violent path, with not only the king executed by guillotine, but also many of the revolutionaries turning on each other, France became virtually devoid of leaders in its most desperate hour.
4. As a military commander who could deliver shocking military victories, Bonaparte became increasingly prominent, and was chosen to be the leader of the new French government, with the title "first consul." It was a mere formality, which he used to displace his temporary allies and make himself "Emperor of the French."



Napoleon evolved from celebrated military commander, to “first consul,” to Emperor of the French, bringing the French Revolution to an ironic end: a new monarchy. The French people would forgive this outcome, however, because he nearly gave them control of all of Europe during the *Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815)*.

### C. The Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815)

1. Although many of Napoleon’s greatest military exploits came before 1799, he was still technically a general in the army of the revolutionary government. Thus the French Revolution is dated from 1789 to 1799. When he took over as “first consul” in 1799, a new phase of history begins with Napoleon himself making all the decisions in France.
2. The key outcome of Napoleon’s conquests in European history is his conquest of Germany. As we shall see in detail in the next section, Germany had yet to coalesce into a single, formally united country under one government, and thus Napoleon made short work of its various parts.



Napoleon enters Berlin in 1806. Compare this image to the photograph from page 11. The famous “Brandenburg Gate” is in the background of both. Napoleon’s conquest of Germany was the first time the two had been unified in an empire since Charlemagne—*almost exactly a thousand years earlier*.

3. Although Napoleon made a bargain with the Tsar of Russia to divide the continent between them, Russia refused to give up trade with Britain, which Napoleon could never conquer because of its powerful navy.
4. Napoleon thus resolved to punish Russia, invading it in 1812.
5. The outcome was nothing like what he expected. The Russians gave ground easily and allowed him to penetrate all the way to Moscow, which he found deserted and aflame. There was no one there to capitulate. There was no one to rule. It was unprecedented! Napoleon was at a loss.
6. Too late, he realized the need to avoid the harsh Russian winter, and retreated back to the heart of Europe. The campaign essentially cost him his empire. What soldiers the weather did not kill, a grande alliance of all Europe's other powers did.
7. In 1815, despite Napoleon's cunning, the final blow to his ambitions was dealt at the Battle of Waterloo, and he was exiled to an island called Elba in the South Atlantic, where he lived out the rest of his years.