NAPOLEON BONAPARTE DOC 20%

Written by Azraelyc



(Only up to the First Coalition War)

EARLY LIFE:

Napoleon's Youth: The Seeds of Greatness

Napoleon displayed an extraordinary ability to learn from an early age. For instance, during his time under the guidance of his tutor Chardon in Autun, he was described as a young boy who would not tolerate being bossed around. If he made a mistake, his response was a calm "I already know." While this might seem arrogant, it wasn't, he was genuinely brilliant. Remarkably, within just three months, he had learned to speak and read French and even write short passages, all at the young age of 9.

himself … He had ability and learned quickly … If I scolded him, he answered in a cold, almost imperious tone: “Sir, I know it.” ’[32] It took Chardon only three months to teach this intelligent and determined lad, with a will to learn, to speak and read French, and even to write short passages.

Having mastered the requisite French at Autun, in April 1779, four months shy of his tenth birthday, Napoleon was admitted to the Royal

It is also mentioned that Napoleon was far more intelligent than his older brother, highlighting that his intellect was well above average.

the first day of January. At the school, Joseph was thought to be a good boy, shy, quiet, and without ambition. Napoleon, on the other hand, was pensive and sombre, taking no part in the games, and walking about alone, which was quite natural as he could not speak French. He was cleverer than Joseph, and learned with greater facility. In three months he acquired sufficient French to converse fluently, and to write little exercises.

Response to the "poor" French Objection: This achievement has faced criticism, with some claiming that Napoleon was poor in French. However, this is clearly a misunderstanding. Napoleon had a solid grasp of French and understood it. His native language was Corsican, which gave him a slight Corsican accent. Moreover, the French he learned in Autun was the form available to him, which was quite different from aristocratic French. As Napoleon rose to prominence and mingled with the nobility, this difference became noticeable. It wasn't due to a lack of understanding of French but rather the combined effect of these two factors.

(Fluid Intelligence, Verbal Comprehension)

By the age of 9, he had read an 800-page novel, *La Nouvelle Héloïse* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and fully understood it. Napoleon himself stated that the book changed his way of thinking.

avoided them, that he found himself a little room on the third floor of the house in which he stayed by himself and didn't come down very often, even to eat with his family. Up there, he read constantly, especially history books.'[21] Napoleon claimed that he first read Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, an 800-page novel of love and redemption, at the age of nine, and said 'It turned my head.'[22]

(Fluid Intelligence, Verbal Comprehension)

He had a passion for history. His mother, Letizia, noted that Napoleon avoided the typical interests of boys his age, instead spending time in his small room on the third floor reading, sometimes even skipping meals. While it's hard to determine everything he read, we know he studied military generals like Hannibal, Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, Gustavus Adolphus, Prince Eugene, and Frederick the Great. He believed that anyone aspiring to be a great commander needed to study these figures. Later in his youth, he also read works by Plutarch, Caesar, Cicero, Voltaire, Diderot, Abbé Raynal, Erasmus, Eutropius, Livy, Phaedrus, Sallust, Virgil, and Cornelius Nepos.

(Crystalized Intelligence)

At Brienne, Napoleon studied a wide range of subjects, including mathematics (in which he excelled), geography, German, Latin, physics, fortifications, weaponry, fencing, dancing, and music. Regarding mathematics, Napoleon demonstrated remarkable talent, mastering trigonometry, algebra, and geometry with ease. He began formal mathematics lessons at the prescribed young age of 12.



of the twelve royal military schools founded by Louis XVI in 1776, it provided Napoleon with a fine education. His eight hours of study a day included mathematics, Latin, history, French, German, geography, physics, fortifications, weaponry, fencing, dancing and music (the last three an indication that Brienne was also in part a finishing school for the *noblesse*).[33] Physically tough and intellectually demanding, the school

His proficiency in mathematics was so exceptional that he became the first Corsican in French history to attend the École Royale Militaire.

To understand the significance of this achievement: out of 202 candidates applying to the military academy, only 14 were selected, and Napoleon was one of them.

(Fluid Intelligence, Mathematical-Logical Intelligence)

It is said that while his classmates played, he read, often skipping meals to save money to buy more books.

always recalled his years at Valence as impecunious – his room had only a bed, table and armchair – and sometimes he had to skip meals in order to afford books, which he continued to read with the same voracious appetite as before. He existed partly on charity; as First Consul he asked one of his

(Discipline)

At the age of 16, Napoleon was commissioned into the Compagnie d'Automne de Bombardiers de la 5ème Brigade du 1er Bataillon du Régiment de la Fédéré in Valence, one of France's oldest and most prestigious artillery regiments. He became one of the youngest officers and the only Corsican to receive an artillery commission in the French army.

(Fluid Intelligence)

By the age of 16, we can infer that Napoleon was proficient in French, Corsican, and had some knowledge of German and Latin.

(Verbal Comprehension)

Napoleon exhibited strong musical intelligence, as evidenced by the letters he sent to his former lover, Désirée Clary, before he married Josephine. In these letters, Napoleon encouraged Désirée to pursue music with an intellectual approach. He even included detailed sections on singing techniques, indicating that he either had substantial knowledge of vocal music or held strong opinions on the subject.

insufficient attention to her solfège lessons. He added a long paragraph on singing technique which suggests that he was knowledgeable about (or at least had opinions on) vocal music. By April 11, 1795 he was finally using the familiar 'tu' form, and writing that he was 'yours for life'.[14] Napoleon was in love.

(Musical Intelligence)

Napoleon's Love for Writing:

During this period, Napoleon had a keen interest in writing. His literary endeavors included essays, short stories, and novellas that reflected his intellectual and emotional growth, influenced by thinkers like Rousseau.

Some notable works from his youth include:

- *"On Suicide"* (*Sur le Suicide*): A melancholic essay expressing his disillusionment and suicidal thoughts, showing the influence of Rousseau and his nationalism.
- *"An Encounter at the Palais-Royal"* (*Une Rencontre au Palais-Royal*): A brief essay recounting an awkward encounter with a prostitute.
- *"The Count of Essex"* (*Le Comte d'Essex*): A brutal historical tale inspired by English history, revealing his fascination with violent narratives.
- *"The Mask of the Prophet"* (*Le Masque du Prophète*): A strange romantic story about a disfigured prophet named Hakeem, who poisons his followers and sacrifices himself, showcasing Napoleon's early interest in the Orient.

(Verbal Comprehension)

FRENCH REVOLUTION:

Le Souper de Beaucaire

https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Le_souper_de_Beaucaire

Le Souper de Beaucaire is a political pamphlet authored by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1793, during his early career as a military officer amid the French Revolution. This work showcases Napoleon's exceptional rhetorical and propaganda abilities.

To understand the context before delving into the analysis of this pamphlet, it's important to note that Southern France was entangled in a civil war between Jacobin revolutionaries and counter-revolutionary fédérés. Through this text, Napoleon aimed to garner support from the

Jacobins and undermine the counter-revolutionaries, positioning himself as a staunch defender of the revolution through effective propaganda.

Summary of the Pamphlet: The pamphlet takes the form of a fictional conversation that unfolds over a dinner between Napoleon, a revolutionary soldier, and a group of counter-revolutionaries known as "the Band of Marseille." The goal of the discussion is to persuade the group to cease their opposition to the Revolution and align with the Jacobins.

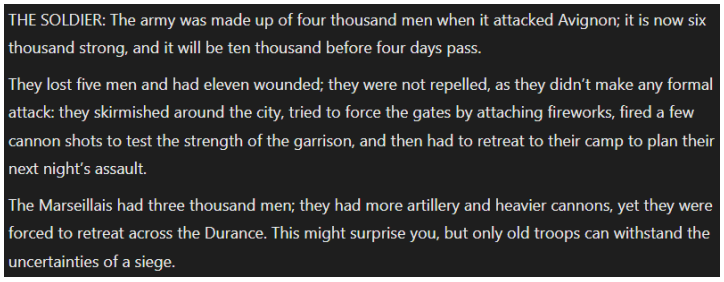
Let's begin with something as straightforward as the format in which this pamphlet is presented.

- **The format:**

The format employed in this pamphlet, utilizing a fictional dialogue rather than straightforward propaganda, is highly astute. The dialogue format enables the presentation of multiple perspectives, granting Napoleon the opportunity to address and refute opposing arguments within the text. Napoleon skillfully capitalizes on this format. For instance, the counter-revolutionaries in the dialogue present arguments that advocate for the continuation of the conflict and suggest that there remains hope for the counter-revolutionaries. In response, Napoleon will methodically deconstruct these notions, providing a detailed refutation of their hopes.

Let's take an example from the first few paragraphs of the pamphlet:

In the text, there's a section where the counterrevolutionaries claim there is still hope because they supposedly won a victory in Avignon against the Jacobins. While this has some truth, Napoleon counters by arguing that their so-called victory was actually a strategic retreat by the revolutionary army, effectively shattering their hope with solid military theory.


THE SOLDIER: The army was made up of four thousand men when it attacked Avignon; it is now six thousand strong, and it will be ten thousand before four days pass.

They lost five men and had eleven wounded; they were not repelled, as they didn't make any formal attack: they skirmished around the city, tried to force the gates by attaching fireworks, fired a few cannon shots to test the strength of the garrison, and then had to retreat to their camp to plan their next night's assault.

The Marseillais had three thousand men; they had more artillery and heavier cannons, yet they were forced to retreat across the Durance. This might surprise you, but only old troops can withstand the uncertainties of a siege.

Napoleon will thoroughly repeat this tactic in his pamphlet.

By framing his work as a dialogue, he enhances his propaganda, making it more convincing by showcasing the logical superiority of his perspective. This approach effectively undermines the reader's morale by presenting both A) the false hope and B) the harsh reality.

- **Demoralization:**

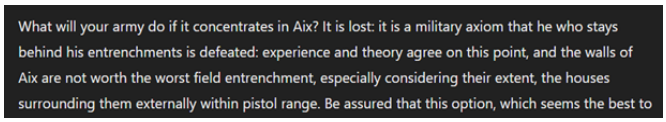
Although I have already explained how Napoleon employs demoralization in this text by offering false hope followed by harsh reality, let's delve deeper into how this actually works.

First, it's essential to understand that Napoleon at the moment is extensively educated in military theory. This knowledge allows him to meticulously identify and highlight errors, even when they seem non-existent. By doing so, he effectively manipulates the reader's insecurities. Additionally, he subtly undermines the reader's understanding by targeting the counter-revolutionaries' overconfidence and ignorance.

For instance, we can observe this exact demoralization process in another excerpt from the pamphlet:

A: False Hope
The men of Marseille will argue that their struggle isn't over. They claim to have an army stationed in Aix—a strategic location—boasting more troops, cannons, and seasoned generals, ready to retake Avignon within days.

B: Harsh Reality
Napoleon counters this by first critiquing their inflated sense of superiority, their belief in their own invincibility, and their assumption that their position in Aix is unassailable. He warns them that such self-assurance is deeply harmful, suggesting that individuals driven by these instincts are naturally prone to anger and poor judgment. Following this, Napoleon turns to dismantling their false hopes using military theory. He argues that despite their newly acquired resources and leadership, the Marseille army remains disorganized and lacks unity. He forecasts that it will take at least two months for them to be ready for action. Additionally, he highlights that Aix's fortifications are inadequate for a strong defense and that the shortage of long-term supplies would make a prolonged siege unsustainable.


What will your army do if it concentrates in Aix? It is lost: it is a military axiom that he who stays behind his entrenchments is defeated: experience and theory agree on this point, and the walls of Aix are not worth the worst field entrenchment, especially considering their extent, the houses surrounding them externally within pistol range. Be assured that this option, which seems the best to

- **White Knight:**

Now I want to describe the most remarkable feat of this pamphlet, highlighting Napoleon's approach to influencing the reader through a technique known as the "white knight manipulation" method.

White knight manipulation is a tactic where an individual presents themselves as a hero or rescuer to gain power or influence over others.

Here, the idea of the "White Knight" entails:

1) Depicting the leaders and supporters of Marseille (Counterrevolutionaries) as villains -> 2) Portraying the Jacobins (revolutionaries) as heroes.

Napoleon employs this tactic throughout the text, and it's only upon reading the entire pamphlet and reflecting on it that we recognize this deliberate manipulation.

Let's first illustrate the initial step of the white knight approach: **1) Depicting the leaders and supporters of Marseille (Counterrevolutionaries) as villains.**

At the start, this becomes apparent when a Marseillais mentions the strategic position in Aix: Napoleon, having previously undermined him with his expertise, will proceed to criticize their leaders. He will not only crush any lingering hope, as he has already done, but will imply that this hope may have been an illusion from the start. Napoleon will argue that their leaders are likely manipulating them into engaging in a futile civil war that could destroy Marseille. To back up his argument, he will reference past instances where Marseille's leaders provided false assurances:

- He will remind them of the deceitful promises about crossing France and leading the Republic, which ultimately failed.
- He will recall that Avignon fell in just twenty-four hours, despite assurances of a prolonged defense.
- He will emphasize that they were abandoned in their fight, despite pledges of support from southern France.
- And he will underline that their supposed allies were surrendering.

Naturally, this will lead the men of Marseille to question their leaders' credibility. Doubts will start to arise. This is Napoleon's objective: to make them believe they are being manipulated. He will not stop there but will continue to reinforce this notion.

> you are influenced by people who, having nothing left to lose, are leading you to their ruin.

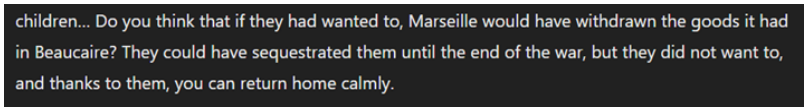
This sets the stage for the second step of the white knight approach: **2) Portraying the Jacobins (revolutionaries) as heroes.**

Napoleon will skillfully reshape the narrative by addressing the tarnished reputation of the Jacobins among the counterrevolutionaries. He will argue that the leaders of Marseille have deliberately distorted the image of the Jacobins, who, in truth, are not as ruthless as they are portrayed.

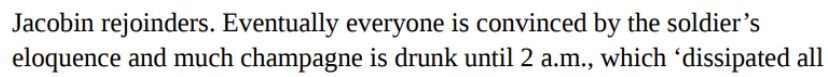
This becomes evident when a Marseillais expresses fear that, by submitting to the revolution, individuals like Dubois de Crancé and Albitte from Allobroges will take control of Marseille. To

the Marseillais, these men are undesirable, labeled as bloodthirsty and opportunistic products of the tumultuous times.

Napoleon will refute this portrayal, positioning Dubois de Crancé and Albitte as steadfast friends of the people, who have consistently adhered to moral principles. He will assert that their depiction as villains is a fabrication by corrupt leaders, a fate often suffered by the virtuous. To further bolster this heroic image, Napoleon will cite examples of other revolutionary figures like Condorcet, Brissot, and Barbaroux, who were similarly maligned despite their integrity. He will argue that true heroes are frequently misunderstood and vilified by those with nefarious intentions. Napoleon will illustrate their benevolence with a compelling example: despite having the authority to confiscate Marseille's goods in Beaucaire during the conflict, Dubois de Crancé and Albitte chose restraint, leaving the goods intact and accessible. This act of leniency, he will claim, demonstrates their compassion and justice, allowing the citizens of Marseille to return home without fear of loss.


children... Do you think that if they had wanted to, Marseille would have withdrawn the goods it had in Beaucaire? They could have sequestrated them until the end of the war, but they did not want to, and thanks to them, you can return home calmly.

In concluding his argument, Napoleon will underline the futility of civil war and how it unjustly divides the French people. He will remind the Marseillais that the Allobroges are not foreign enemies but fellow compatriots, urging them to reconsider their perspective and see the Jacobins not as foes, but as heroic defenders of the Republic. This approach in the text effectively elevates the Jacobins to the status of heroes, casting their actions in a noble light and contrasting them sharply with the manipulative counterrevolutionary leaders.


Jacobin rejoinders. Eventually everyone is convinced by the soldier's eloquence and much champagne is drunk until 2 a.m., which 'dissipated all

- **Aftermath:**

When Napoleon created the pamphlet, although it was technically an effective piece of propaganda, it wasn't particularly remarkable on its own. However, what truly stands out is the influence he gained after its publication. The pamphlet brought Napoleon to the attention of influential Jacobin political leaders, including Augustin Robespierre (cousin of Maximilien Robespierre) and Christophe Saliceti. Saliceti later helped Napoleon officially publish it so it could reach a wider audience. This secured the Jacobin leaders' perception of Napoleon as nothing but a devoted Jacobin and someone they could truly trust—an invaluable trait that was difficult to find at the time.

Being seen as a trustworthy Jacobin during the turbulent times of the French Revolution provided Napoleon with unique opportunities. Trustworthy and devoted individuals were hard to

find amid the political chaos, so Napoleon's reputation positioned him favorably within the revolutionary government. His alignment with the Jacobins not only advanced his military career but also solidified his political connections

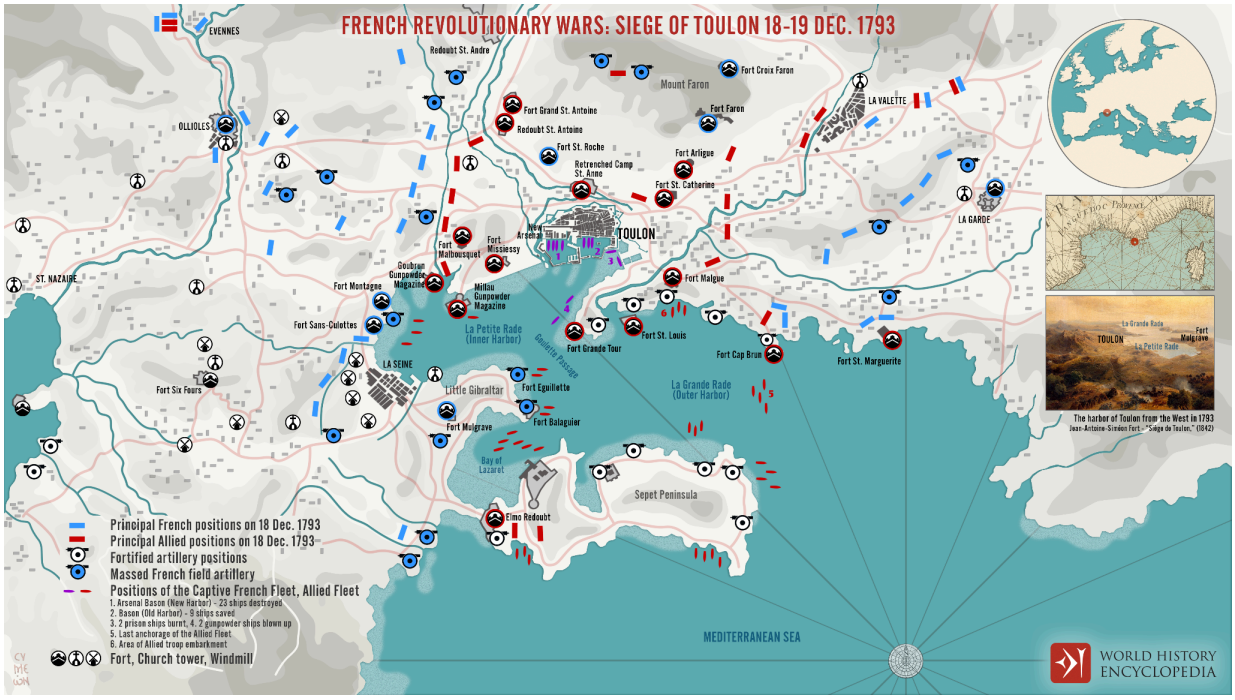
This recognition and trust from influential figures were crucial in establishing Napoleon's political ambitions and paving the way for his future military and political successes. For example, on September 7, Napoleon was appointed chef de bataillon (major) in the 2nd Regiment of Artillery. This promotion was a significant step in his military career and allowed him to be involved in the recapture of Toulon later on.

The pamphlet was read by Augustin Robespierre, brother of Maximilien Robespierre, who was impressed by its persuasive revolutionary spirit.[9] The pamphlet itself had little effect against the rebellious forces,[10] but served to advance Napoleon's career. He soon became recognised for his political ambitions by a Corsica-born politician, and family friend, Christophe Saliceti, who arranged to have it published and distributed.[11] Christophe's influence, along with fellow Convention deputy Augustin Robespierre, advanced Napoleon into the position of senior gunner, at Toulon.[12]

recapturing Toulon was of crucial strategic importance. Napoleon was appointed *chef de bataillon* (major) in the 2nd Regiment of Artillery on September 7, and the following week, perhaps at the behest of the Corsican-born Colonel Jean-Baptiste Cervoni, he presented himself at Carteaux's headquarters at Ollioules, just north-west of Toulon.[53]

(Influence Building, Manipulation: White Knight, Demoralization)

Siege of Toulon



After Napoleon earned a promotion due to his political pamphlet and Saliceti's persuasion of Carteaux to appoint him to a crucial artillery role, he became involved in the siege of Toulon.

Later, on October 9th, he was granted full command.

Toulon had been seized by Admiral Alexander Hood, who led a substantial force of British, Spanish, and Neapolitan troops.

- **Napoleon's Strategy:**

Now, how was Napoleon going to recapture this vital port?

First, we need to understand the layout of Toulon. Toulon, which was a port, consisted of two harbors—the outer harbor and the inner harbor.



During his reconnaissance, Napoleon would have observed this and identified a strategic location called L'Eguillette, a promontory to the west of the city. This position, situated between both harbors, was crucial. Napoleon realized that controlling this high ground was essential for dominating the harbors.

> After some reconnaissance, Bonaparte conceived a plan which envisaged the capture of the forts of l'Éguillette [fr] and Balaguier [fr] on the hill of Cairo (French: *colline du Caire*), which would then prevent passage between the small and large harbours of the port, so cutting maritime resupply, necessary for those under siege. Carteaux, reluctant,

It's even reported that Napoleon informed the war minister, Jean-Baptiste Bouchotte, saying, "To become master of the harbor, one must become master of L'Eguillette."

While this strategy might initially seem like simply securing a strategic position for advantage, it was more intricate. Here, we see Napoleon's reasoning process and foresight in action. By capturing Eguillette, Napoleon anticipated that from there, his forces could bombard the British Royal Navy ships in the inner harbor with heated cannonballs. He foresaw that this would compel the British to withdraw. The reasoning behind this was that targeting the ships would sever essential maritime resupply routes, rendering the siege of Toulon ineffective. Napoleon aimed to force the British and Spanish forces to abandon Toulon without engaging in direct confrontation. Recognizing that a direct confrontation was unfeasible, he intended to exploit their vulnerability— the supply lines. By doing so, they would be left with no option but to retreat, thereby isolating the counter-revolutionaries (fédérés) in Toulon. Although these counter-revolutionaries would still pose a challenge, their numbers would not be sufficient to engage in a direct confrontation against Napoleon's forces.

(Observation, Strategy: Foresight & Logistics, Abductive Reasoning, Prediction)

- **Napoleon's plan to capture L'Eguillette:**

1.

First, Napoleon focused on managing the logistics for his army, which was in a weak state. The Jacobins had already failed to seize the port, and Napoleon had limited cannons remaining. Therefore, he dedicated himself entirely to the mission.

- To support his efforts, he:
- Convinced nearby towns to supply him with cannons and mortars.
- Established an arsenal to produce cannons and cannonballs.
- Acquired horses from towns like Nice, Valence, and Montpellier to transport the heavy artillery.
- Wrote bold and daring letters to key figures such as the war minister Bouchotte and the Committee of Public Safety, actions that even his superiors, like Carteaux, would not have dared to take.

Napoleon threw himself into the project of capturing Fort Mulgrave. By cajoling nearby towns he got together fourteen cannon and four mortars as well as stores, tools and ammunition. He sent officers further afield, to Lyons, Briançon and Grenoble, and requested that the Army of Italy furnish him with the cannon not then being used to defend Antibes and Monaco. He established an eighty-man arsenal at Ollioules to make cannon and cannonballs, requisitioned horses from Nice, Valence and Montpellier, and injected a sense of unceasing activity into his men. Constantly imploring, complaining and raging – there wasn't enough gunpowder, the cartridges were the wrong size, trained artillery horses were being requisitioned for other uses, and so on – he sent scores of letters with demands to Bouchotte and even on occasion to the Committee of Public Safety itself, going over the heads of Carteaux and his immediate superiors.

2.

Once the logistical arrangements were sufficient for Napoleon's plan, he proceeded to the next phase of his plan, which was to attack L'Eguillette. This area was anything but unprotected. Napoleon's plan involved attacking the fort protecting L'Eguillette, known as Mulgrave Fort, from three distinct points. And what stands out in his plan is that he designated the primary attack point, which was the central battery, as "Hommes Sans Peur" (Men Without Fear). By doing so, Napoleon skillfully played on his soldiers' arrogance and sense of manhood, effectively manipulating them emotionally.

This tactic was highly successful later on, demonstrating Napoleon's deep understanding of soldier psychology and his ability to motivate and inspire his troops.

Was there a counter from the enemy? Yes, General Charles O'Hara attempted a counter-attack to sabotage the French artillery by targeting the "Convention" battery in the north. However, Napoleon and Dugommier quickly repelled the attack, capturing and shooting General O'Hara, which led to his surrender.

Pressured by the bombardment, the Anglo-Neapolitans executed a sortie, and took hold of the battery of the "Convention". A counter-attack, headed by Dugommier and Bonaparte, pushed them back and the British general Charles O'Hara was captured. He initiated surrender negotiations with Robespierre the Younger and Antoine Louis Albitte and the Federalist and Royalist battalions were disarmed.

3.

On December 18th, amidst howling wind and rain, Napoleon launched an assault on Fort Mulgrave, a fortification protecting L'Eguillette. This assault required two waves but was ultimately successful.

Following the capture of the fort, Napoleon directed heated cannonballs at the British Royal Navy ships in the harbor below. As he had predicted, chaos ensued, and the allied armies retreated with their ships as quickly as possible. The fédérés were particularly distraught upon witnessing their allies' departure; some managed to escape with the allied armies, but the majority were unable to flee and had to face the consequences and the wrath of the revolution. A notable aspect of this battle is Napoleon's active engagement in the action.

(Planning, Persuasion, Leadership, Risk Assessments, Tactical Response, Emotional Manipulation, Emotional Understanding)

He demonstrated remarkable bravery by taking over the role of a fallen artilleryman. He even picked up a blood-soaked ramrod and continued to load and fire the cannon himself. This was especially impressive and dangerous, as it posed a risk of infection and scabies. During the siege, he was wounded in the left thigh by a spear and nearly died. Thus, any claims that Napoleon lacked bravery or was a coward are unequivocally false.

cannon himself. He believed it was this action that gave him scabies. 'I found myself in a very few days suffering under an inveterate itch,' he later said of this 'terrible malady'.[63] The cutaneous irritation stayed with him through the Italian and Egyptian campaigns and was only cured in 1802 when his doctor, Jean-Nicolas Corvisart, applied sulphur baths and by 'putting three blisters on my chest … brought on a salutary crisis. Before

During one assault on an outlying fort protecting Mulgrave, Napoleon was wounded by an English gunner, who 'ran a pike into' his left thigh. He was trying to enter the battery by its embrasure, but fortunately reinforcements came around by the rear, entering at the same moment.

(Emotional Engagement, Emotional Management, Adversity Capacity: Mental Fortitude, Stress Tolerance, Perseverance)

13 Vendémiaire

The 13 Vendémiaire refers to a significant event during the French Revolution that took place on October 5, 1795. After the fall of Robespierre, the Convention faced opposition from the royalists. On 13 Vendémiaire, the royalists organized an armed demonstration in Paris, aiming to overthrow the Convention and reinstate the monarchy. Napoleon was coincidentally near when he heard about the planned uprising. Barras, the president of the National Assembly, appointed Napoleon as second-in-command of the Army of the Interior, ordering him to crush the revolt by

any means necessary. On that day, Napoleon instructed Captain Joachim Murat to take 100 cavalrymen to the Sablons military camp to secure the cannons and bring them to central Paris. Napoleon then strategically placed the cannons at key locations: **the entrance of rue Saint-Nicaise and facing Pont Royal on Quai Voltaire.**

Napoleon planned to quell the revolt with brutal force.

He understood that gentle methods were effective for persuading good people, but dealing with the rabble required instilling fear. His insight was that treating the mob with kindness made them feel invulnerable, while hanging a few would make them submissive.

headquartered. His cavalry was posted in the Place de la Révolution (today's Place de la Concorde).[48] He then spent three hours visiting each of his guns in turn. 'Good and upstanding people must be persuaded by gentle means,' Napoleon would later write. 'The rabble must be moved by terror.'[49]

Napoleon prepared to use grapeshot, the colloquial term for canister or case shot, which consists of hundreds of musket balls packed into a metal

So when the rebels crossed the Seine bridges, Napoleon ordered an assault with the cannons using grapeshots, a type of ammunition that discharged multiple musket balls, which was a creative and innovative tactic at the time.



This caused significant casualties, forcing the rebels to retreat. The main conflict in Paris ended by 6 p.m., but resistance continued at the church of Saint-Roch, which served as the rebels' headquarters and a place for the wounded. Snipers kept firing from rooftops and barricades until Napoleon positioned his cannons within 60 yards of the church, compelling the rebels to surrender. Approximately 300 rebels were killed that day.

This was a total victory for the Convention and especially for Napoleon. He entered high-level national politics, promoted to général de division by Barras, his income increased to 48,000 francs per year and he became known as the savior of the republic.

This was very relieving for Napoleon, because despite his good reputation from Toulon, Napoleon had been almost forgotten after the fall of Robespierre. **This event marked his return to prominence.**

(Fast Thinking, Creativity, Emotional Understanding, Psychological Warfare: Demoralization)

THE WAR OF THE FIRST COALITION:

Reorganizing the Army

Now we enter the renowned Coalition Wars, where Napoleon truly begins to showcase his exceptional capabilities.

Now, the first aspect I'll examine in this first Coalition war is Napoleon's actions before it, specifically his organization of the army.

It's important to understand that the War of the First Coalition was fought across various regions, with some areas prioritized more than others. Napoleon's campaign in Northern Italy was the least prioritized of all, given only 40,000 francs for the entire campaign. Additionally, his army faced numerous challenges:

- The soldiers endured freezing temperatures without proper overcoats.
- They had not received meat for three months, and bread was delivered inconsistently.
- There were so few horses that mules had to be used to pull artillery, as most draft horses had died from starvation.
- Many soldiers lacked proper footwear, with some wearing clogs, and their uniforms were often scavenged from the dead.
- Some soldiers were only identifiable by their army-issued cartridge pouches, and many muskets were missing bayonets.
- The troops had not been paid for months, leading to discussions of mutiny.
- A widespread fever claimed the lives of 600 men from one unit in just twenty days.

Although Napoleon faced significant obstacles that prevented him from leading any battles personally, he was resolute in his aim to reorganize and strengthen his army. He concentrated on three major initiatives:

1. **Tackling resource shortages**
2. **Addressing internal social issues within the army**
3. **Boosting the morale of his troops**

Tackling resource shortages:

This was a critical issue. Napoleon understood that mere promises of a better future wouldn't suffice. He knew that basic resources, like food, were essential to preventing violence and indiscipline among the troops. He couldn't push them any further without addressing these needs. Therefore, Napoleon took several measures to alleviate the situation:

- He instructed Citizen Faipoult, France's minister in Genoa, to discreetly secure a loan of 3 million francs from Jewish financiers in the area.
- He recalled cavalry from their winter quarters.
- He directed his quartermaster, Chauvet, to overhaul the supply system and threatened corrupt contractors.
- He persistently demanded supplies from Paris and secured 5,000 pairs of shoes for his troops.
- He also insisted on more food supplies, coining the famous quote, **"An army marches on its stomach."**

Addressing internal social issues within the army:

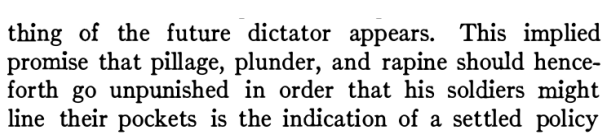
In addition to resource shortages, Napoleon's army faced social instability, with corrupt commanders, anti-revolutionaries, rebellious soldiers, and indiscipline among the troops. To address these issues, Napoleon implemented several social reforms within the army.

- He demoted many commanders whom he deemed corrupt or ineffective, such as Meynier.
- To prevent mutiny, he controlled or, in extreme cases, disbanded battalions. For instance, he disbanded the 3rd Battalion of the 209th Demi-Brigade, dismissed their commanders, and redistributed the soldiers to other units, ensuring uniform adherence to the rules.
- He punished any signs of revolt or anti-revolutionary behavior. For example, he punished soldiers for singing anti-revolutionary songs and in one instance, even court-martialed two officers for shouting "Long live the king!"

Boosting the morale of his troops:

Finally, to motivate his soldiers, Napoleon recognized the profound fatigue and weariness pervading his ranks. Understanding that these men were largely unpaid veterans, exhausted from numerous wars, he realized that conventional methods might not restore their dwindling spirits. Therefore, he employed a controversial one: he permitted them to pillage the lands they conquered. Napoleon didn't just allow this practice; he emphasized it as a motivational tool. He delivered impassioned speeches that directly addressed their hardships and promised substantial rewards. It is said that he declared, "Soldiers, you are poorly clothed and poorly fed. The government owes you a lot. Great provinces and cities will be yours. There you will find glory and wealth." Napoleon's psychological insight was evident in this approach. He understood that by appealing to their immediate needs and desires for improvement, he could reignite their enthusiasm and commitment. By offering tangible incentives and acknowledging their struggles,

he aimed to transform their exhaustion into a driving force for conquest.



thing of the future dictator appears. This implied promise that pillage, plunder, and rapine should henceforth go unpunished in order that his soldiers might line their pockets is the indication of a settled policy

Días después de su matrimonio, Bonaparte tomó el mando del Ejército francés en Italia, que llevó con éxito a la invasión de dicho país. Antes de partir, arengó a sus tropas con estas palabras: «Soldados: estáis mal vestidos y mal alimentados. El gobierno os debe mucho. Grandes provincias y ciudades serán vuestras. Allí hallaréis gloria y riqueza». Por aquella época ganó el apodo de «Pequeño Cabo»

Later on, Napoleon began to impose stricter control over pillaging, particularly after the events at Mondovi. He observed that, although it initially boosted his army's morale, it also fostered a degree of indiscipline and, at times, even perverse behavior among the troops.

(Problem Solving, Psychological Warfare: Demoralization, Creativity, Emotional Understanding, Emotional Manipulation)

Before moving on, it's important to highlight Napoleon's aura and charisma. When he first met his army, doubts surrounded him due to his limited command experience. His small stature and youth were seen as disadvantages, and his visible affection for his wife led some to suspect favoritism. However, Napoleon's rapid and decisive actions quickly changed perceptions. His eyes burned with determination, and his divisional commanders were soon impressed by his hard work and dedication. He swiftly energized the staff, who had been idle for years.

To illustrate his determination and diligence: between his arrival and the end of 1796, Napoleon sent over 800 letters and reports on various topics, showcasing his attention to detail.

The first general to be convinced of Napoleon's leadership was Augereau, followed by Masséna. Their support helped him organize the army as he envisioned. Napoleon also leveraged his reputation as a 'political' soldier to gain his troops' trust, promising them a better future and emphasizing the government's support.

(Emotional Engagement, Aura, Leadership, Charisma, Persuasion)

Napoleon's Montenotte Campaign

- **Napoleon's Divide and Conquer Strategy:**

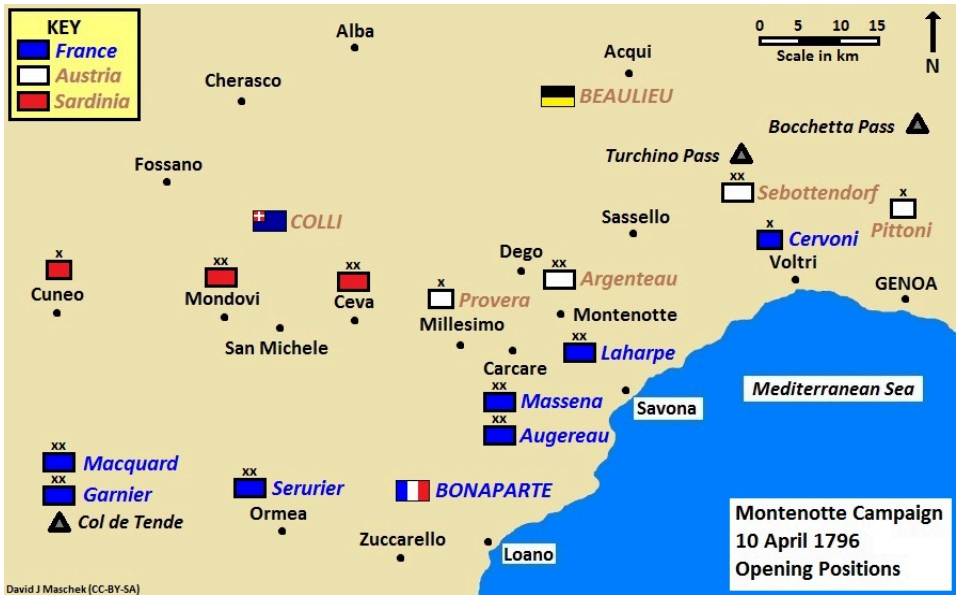
On April 5, 1796, Napoleon revealed his strategy for the war in Northern Italy to his troops, now known as the "strategy of the central position,". This strategy involved positioning his forces between two opposing armies and launching an attack on one before the other could unite. You see, Napoleon was facing an interesting challenge: he was outnumbered but…. Not by one individual army, but by two separate armies. The Piedmontese army consisted of 25,000 soldiers, while the Austrian army comprised 30,000 soldiers. Despite having a substantial force of 38,000 men, Napoleon knew that if these two enemy armies united, their combined strength would vastly outnumber his own, thus lose.

To counter this threat, Napoleon decided to strike before the Piedmontese and Austrian forces could converge. He foresaw that if either army felt threatened, they would retreat to their respective bases, the Austrians to Milan and the Piedmontese to Turin, the latter to protect their capital. By causing this separation, Napoleon aimed to weaken their unity and **defeat each army individually (defeating in detail),** thereby improving his chances of success.

time they arrived they had been overtaken by events. By contrast, Napoleon planned to adopt a daring manoeuvre now known in military academies as 'the strategy of the central position': he would remain between the two forces opposing him and would strike first at one and then at the other before they could coalesce. It was a strategy to which he would adhere throughout his career. 'It is contrary to all principle to make corps which have no communication act separately against a central force whose

(Strategy Forecasting, Psychological Warfare: Abusing Insecurities)

- **The Planning:**



Now let's see Napoleon's planning phase.

Once he had finally brought order to his disorganized army, Napoleon advanced his headquarters to Albenga. Why Albenga? Because it was a strategic forward position, closer to the frontlines and the Ligurian Alps. From there, he could more effectively coordinate troop movements through the mountain passes and monitor enemy activity.

It was from this location that Napoleon began to execute his operational plan.

- **Operational Plan: Isolate and Divide the Enemy**

To make his strategy work, he created an operational plan to Isolate and Divide the Enemy. He decided to launch an offensive between the towns of Carcare, Altare, and Montenotte. At the time, the Austrians were stationed to the east near Genoa, a city they had recently taken from the French, cutting off a critical supply line. Meanwhile, the Piedmontese forces were positioned to the west. The area between Carcare and Montenotte was the critical point where both enemy armies were attempting to unite, making it the ideal target to disrupt their coordination.

> passes of Liguria. When he reached Albenga on April 5 he told Masséna and Laharpe his plan to cut the enemy off between Carcare, Altare and Montenotte. The Austrian commander, Johann Beaulieu, had much

By striking right at this middle point, Napoleon aimed to split their forces in two.

This was key. If he could divide them, he could thus isolate each one and then focus on defeating them one at a time. And as his Strategy indicated: if either army felt seriously threatened, they would retreat to defend their bases; the Austrians would fall back east toward Milan, and the Piedmontese would go west to protect Turin, their capital.

Napoleons Coverage:

Still, there was a real danger: what if the Austrians and Piedmontese managed to join forces before he could cut them off? Napoleon was aware of this risk. So how did he plan to neutralize it?

To answer that, we need to understand two key facts Napoleon likely considered:

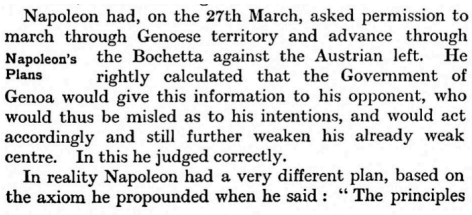
1. The Austrians had moved east, toward Genoa, a strategic point they had recently taken, severing French supply lines.

> In the spring of 1796, Bonaparte planned to launch an offensive against the combined armies of Sardinia and the Habsburg Monarchy. However, the Habsburg army moved first, attacking the French right flank at Voltri, near Genoa. In response, Bonaparte counterattacked the center of the enemy array, striking the boundary between the armies of his adversaries. Beating the Austrians at Montenotte, the budding military genius strove to drive

2. Napoleon had studied the Austrian commander Beaulieu's past campaigns and recognized that he was extremely cautious by nature. If Beaulieu sensed a threat, he would likely overreact and move to protect his position (The captured town of Genoa).

> Montenotte. The Austrian commander, Johann Beaulieu, had much experience and some talent, but he was seventy-one and had been beaten by French armies before. A keen student of past campaigns, Napoleon knew that Beaulieu was cautious, a flaw he planned to exploit. The Austrian

With these points in mind, Napoleon set up a clever deception. On March 27, he formally asked the Genoese government for permission to move French troops through their territory, deliberately giving the impression that he planned to attack through the Bochetta Pass and retake Genoa. Napoleon correctly assumed that Genoa would pass this information to the Austrians, thus indirectly manipulating Beaulieu.



Napoleon had, on the 27th March, asked permission to march through Genoese territory and advance through the Bochetta against the Austrian left. He rightly calculated that the Government of Genoa would give this information to his opponent, who would thus be misled as to his intentions, and would act accordingly and still further weaken his already weak centre. In this he judged correctly.

Napoleon's Plans

In reality Napoleon had a very different plan, based on the axiom he propounded when he said: "The principles

And this act of deception misled Beaulieu into believing an attack on Genoa was imminent. But in truth, Napoleon had no such plan. The request was a calculated misdirection, a smokescreen designed to distract the Austrians while he carried out his real operation elsewhere.

(Planning Process, Planning Formulation, Info Gathering Bluffing, Misdirection, Planning Coverage)

- **The Battle of Montenotte**

Even though Napoleon's overall strategy and operational planning were solid, an unforeseen development disrupted his plan. He had expected to have more time to prepare, but the Austro-Piedmontese force, positioned around Carcare, Altare, and Montenotte that were trying to link up, launched a premature attack. They struck five days earlier than Napoleon had intended to begin his own offensive, and, critically, they advanced through the same mountain pass Napoleon had planned to use to carry out his maneuver.

This was a serious challenge. Napoleon had been caught off guard and could have suffered a major defeat. But this is where his ability to adapt made the difference.

Within 48 hours, Napoleon completely turned the situation around.

When he was hit by the enemy's advance, he quickly withdrew his forces and regrouped. During this short pause, he made two important observations:

1. The terrain was mountainous and heavily forested.
2. The enemy had stretched their lines too far, which made them vulnerable to being hit at specific points.

With this in mind, Napoleon reorganized his army and decided to strike back immediately. He launched a frontal assault to pin the enemy, and at the same time, during the early hours of the morning, at 1 a.m., in heavy rain and darkness, he sent General Masséna around the right flank to

envelop the enemy. Thus the mountainous and heavily forested terrain helped the French, since it hid their movements and created confusion among the Austro-Piedmontese troops, thus in this manner taking advantage of the terrain.

hours Napoleon had turned the situation around. Once he got his troops back from the town of Savona largely unscathed, he was able to organize a counter-attack. On the evening of April 11, realizing that the Austrian line was overextended, he fixed the enemy in place with an attack at Montenotte, a mountain village 12 miles north-west of Savona in the valley of the River Erro and then sent Masséna around the right flank in the pouring rain at 1 a.m. to envelop them. It was a tough environment in which

The result was a decisive French victory at the Battle of Montenotte. The enemy forces, shocked and overwhelmed, were forced to retreat in disorder.

After this minor setback, Napoleon chose to move forward with his original operation and strategy. The enemies still had not fully converged, and this setback actually shows us how versatile his planning really is, he didn't need to throw out or completely redesign his entire plan or strategy just because of a minor setback.

(Adaptability, Tactical Response, Observation)

- **Napoleon's plan to disrupt the link between the Austrian and Piedmontese forces:**

After winning the battle at Montenotte, and taking advantage of the momentum, Napoleon wasted no time and advanced quickly to the town of Carcare (one of the towns where he aimed to separate the Austrian and Piedmontese forces, reaching it meant he was now inside the zone where he planned to disrupt the wedge between them) and the next step was figuring out how he could break this wedge. With this in mind, he began to create another plan, this time aimed at disrupting their wedge.

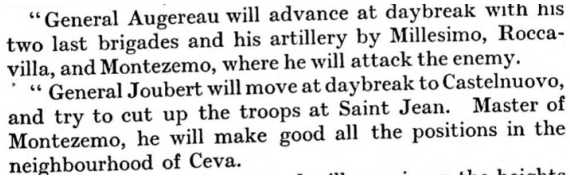
He identified three principal goals/threat's:

1. **The Austro-Piedmontese forces under General Provera**, which had retreated westward;
2. **A second enemy contingent at Dego**, a strategically located force capable of reinforcing Provera;
3. **General Beaulieu**, the Austrian commander, who was stationed farther east and not immediately involved in the fighting but still posed a potential threat if he moved to support the other forces.

To address these threats simultaneously, Napoleon launched a multi-pronged operation:

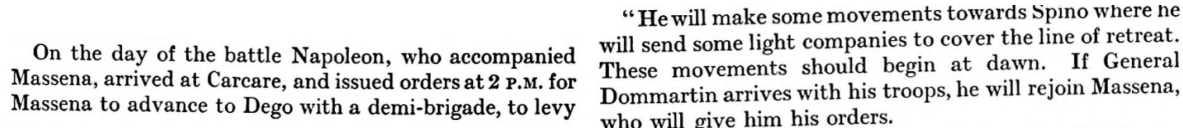
- **Against Provera's forces (1):** He deployed Generals Augereau and Joubert. Augereau was instructed to engage the enemy from Millesimo and advance toward Montezemolo,

while Joubert was tasked with cutting off the troops at Saint-Jean and later surround Ceva, a strategically vital fortress for the Piedmontese.


"General Augereau will advance at daybreak with his two last brigades and his artillery by Millesimo, Roccavilla, and Montezemo, where he will attack the enemy.
" General Joubert will move at daybreak to Castelnuovo, and try to cut up the troops at Saint Jean. Master of Montezemo, he will make good all the positions in the neighbourhood of Ceva.

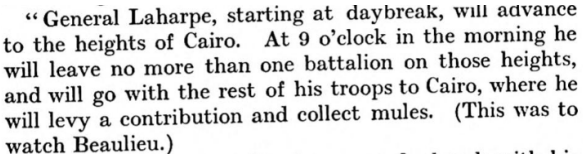
Capturing the Stronghold of Ceva would directly threaten Turin, the Piedmontese capital, and likely compel them to withdraw and defend their homeland, thus breaking their unity with the Austrians.

- **At Dego (2):** Napoleon ordered General Masséna to confront and pin down the Austro-Piedmontese forces led by General Argenteau, preventing them from linking up with Provera. To support this, he sent Dommartin as reinforcements and held Menard in reserve should additional support be required. Acknowledging the risks of a tough engagement, Napoleon also instructed Masséna to secure a fallback route through Spinola by stationing light troops there, ensuring an organized retreat in case of a setback (Contingency).


On the day of the battle Napoleon, who accompanied Massena, arrived at Carcare, and issued orders at 2 P.M. for Massena to advance to Dego with a demi-brigade, to levy

"He will make some movements towards Spino where he will send some light companies to cover the line of retreat. These movements should begin at dawn. If General Dommartin arrives with his troops, he will rejoin Massena, who will give him his orders.

- **Concerning Beaulieu (3):** General Laharpe was dispatched toward Cairo to monitor Beaulieu's movements and maintain French pressure in the eastern sector. This was intended to delay or divert any Austrian attempt to reinforce the forces at Dego or with Provera.


"General Laharpe, starting at daybreak, will advance to the heights of Cairo. At 9 o'clock in the morning he will leave no more than one battalion on those heights, and will go with the rest of his troops to Cairo, where he will levy a contribution and collect mules. (This was to watch Beaulieu.)

In the end, everything went according to Napoleon's plan:

Augereau and Joubert succeeded in defeating Provera's forces at the battle of Millesimo and surrounding Ceva, forcing the Piedmontese to retreat and breaking their connection to the Austrians. **Masséna** was victorious at Dego after a hard-fought battle, requiring all the reinforcements Napoleon had provided. This outcome validated Napoleon's precautionary measures. **Laharpe** successfully prevented Beaulieu from intervening.

Although Beaulieu did send a detachment under General Wukassovich toward Dego, it was easily defeated.

As a result, the Austro-Piedmontese coalition was decisively split, and Napoleon secured the central position he had been aiming for since the outset of the campaign.

(Planning Formulation, Planning Process, Planning Coverage, Planning Contingency)

The Defeat of the Piedmontese:

- **From Ceva to the Fall of Mondovì**

After successfully dividing the Austrian and Piedmontese armies, Napoleon aimed to eliminate them one by one. He chose to deal with the Piedmontese first, since they posed the smaller threat. While he advanced westward to apply pressure on them, he left General La Harpe to keep watch over the Austrians in the east, ensuring they wouldn't interfere (Coverage).

Piedmontese, who had occupied the strongly-intrenched camp at Ceva; while Massena held the Austrians in check between the western branch of the Bormida and the Tanaro, until relieved of this duty by Laharpe, when he

At that time, General Colli, the last major commander of the Piedmontese, was stationed in the fortified town of Ceva. However, once Napoleon surrounded the region, Colli became afraid that his forces would be encircled. Instead of risking a trap, he decided to retreat toward Mondovì to make a stand there.

In essence, he fled out of fear, and this move reflected just how low Piedmontese morale had fallen by that point.

When Napoleon reached Ceva, he encountered resistance from the town's elderly governor, Tornaforte, who refused to surrender despite being clearly outmatched. However, Napoleon didn't want to waste precious time on a drawn-out siege. While Ceva had strategic value, defeating Colli's army and removing the piedmontese from the war was the real priority. So, instead of wasting time in a siege, Napoleon left a significant French force to contain the town. He also secured local support to further isolate and weaken it. This meant that even if Tornaforte held out, he would be completely surrounded, unable to break out, and ultimately irrelevant to the overall campaign.

Napoleon continued his pursuit of General Colli, moving swiftly to cut off key routes such as the Lesegno–Mondovì road.

he remained until the 20th April. That night by Napoleon's direction he crossed the Tanaro near Ceva, to occupy the Lesigno-Mondovi road, a movement which determined the retreat of Colli to Vicoforte, pursued by Stengel's cavalry. Here Colli made a stand against the

By doing so, he effectively isolated Colli near San Michele, just at the gates of Mondovì. This left Colli with no choice but to retreat through Vicoforte, a poor, narrow, and exposed route that offered little protection. At one point, as Colli attempted to reach Vicoforte, he tried a deceptive maneuver. He ordered his troops to quietly withdraw under the cover of night, leaving campfires burning to create the illusion that his forces were still in position.

It was a tactic reminiscent of Hannibal's escape at Ager Falernus.

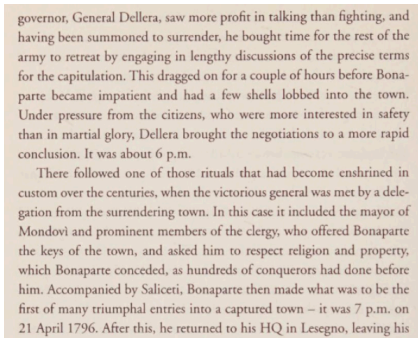
However, Napoleon was not fooled. Trusting his intuition, he suspected a trick and sent out scouts to verify the enemy's movements.

emptied. During the night of the 20th/21st, the army pulled back under the cover of darkness, taking the usual precaution of leaving camp-fires burning, which permitted them to march off unnoticed. As Bonaparte magnanimously remarked to some Piedmontese officers a few days later, 'You escaped from my clutches very adroitly.'[19] The escape was not complete, however. At midnight on the 20th, Bonaparte arrived in Lesegno, and had the bridge at San Michele reconnoitred. On being informed that it had been demolished, he ordered some scouts to cross the river. These managed to find a ford and came back with the news that the enemy camp-fires were burning, but the army had gone. The French immediately set off in pursuit, and at about 10 a.m. caught up with the Piedmontese at Vicoforte, where they were attempting to take up a defensive position. It seems unlikely that Colli was intending to do

The scouts confirmed his suspicions.

Despite the late hour and the exhaustion of his troops, Napoleon immediately resumed the chase. He caught up with Colli at Vicoforte just as the Piedmontese general was trying to form a defensive line. Taken by surprise, Colli's forces were attacked before they could properly organize. The Piedmontese panicked and fled in disorder, with Colli retreating further west in chaos.

With Colli gone, Mondovì lay open and undefended. Napoleon reached the town without facing resistance. However, the Piedmontese governor, Dellera, intentionally delayed its surrender to buy time for Colli's escape. This angered Napoleon, as his campaign depended entirely on speed, every day counted, and the Austrians could send reinforcements at any moment. In a cold, calculated, and ruthless move, Napoleon ordered the city to be bombarded until surrender. Eventually, Mondovì surrendered. At 7 p.m., French forces made a ceremonial entry. Town officials presented the keys to the city and formally requested protection.



governor, General Dellera, saw more profit in talking than fighting, and having been summoned to surrender, he bought time for the rest of the army to retreat by engaging in lengthy discussions of the precise terms for the capitulation. This dragged on for a couple of hours before Bonaparte became impatient and had a few shells lobbed into the town. Under pressure from the citizens, who were more interested in safety than in martial glory, Dellera brought the negotiations to a more rapid conclusion. It was about 6 p.m.

There followed one of those rituals that had become enshrined in custom over the centuries, when the victorious general was met by a delegation from the surrendering town. In this case it included the mayor of Mondovì and prominent members of the clergy, who offered Bonaparte the keys of the town, and asked him to respect religion and property, which Bonaparte conceded, as hundreds of conquerors had done before him. Accompanied by Saliceti, Bonaparte then made what was to be the first of many triumphal entries into a captured town – it was 7 p.m. on 21 April 1796. After this, he returned to his HQ in Lesegno, leaving his

lihood of any illegal search for food by individuals. Sérurier's division was to receive 8,000 rations of bread, 3,000 of biscuit, 8,000 of meat and 4,000 bottles of wine, with a similar amount to be provided before 10 a.m. on the following day. In addition, 30,000 rations of biscuit were to be sent to Lesegno, and 1,500 rations of everything to Joubert's troops at La Bicocca. All arms and munitions were also seized.

Though Mondovì was spared from being looted, it was required to support the French army. Thousands of rations of bread, meat, wine, and biscuits were demanded, and delivered, to feed the occupying troops.

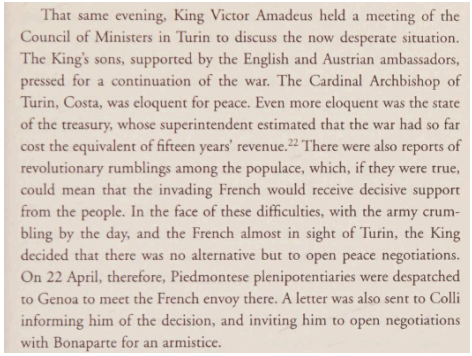
(Planning Coverage, Planning Flexibility, Indirect Manipulation, Intuition, Psychological Warfare: Demoralization & Reinforcements, Emotional Manipulation)

- **General Colli Resignation**

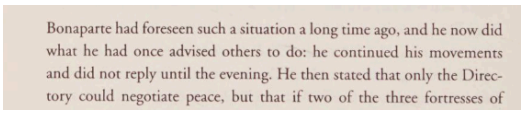
After suffering repeated humiliations at the hands of an upstart, King Victor Amadeus in Turin finally decided it was time to seek peace.

- He ordered envoys to approach General Colli with instructions to begin an armistice with Napoleon and halt the fighting.
- While also dispatching diplomats to Genoa to initiate formal peace talks.

However, once Colli made the request, Napoleon began acting strangely. He didn't stop his advance, instead, he pushed forward and delayed his response until the evening. Even then, he didn't agree to the armistice. Instead, he demanded that two of the three key cities, Cuneo, Alessandria, or Tortona, be handed over to the French before he would consider a ceasefire. On top of that, he instructed his representative in Genoa, Faipoult, to reject the Piedmontese peace envoys entirely.



That same evening, King Victor Amadeus held a meeting of the Council of Ministers in Turin to discuss the now desperate situation. The King's sons, supported by the English and Austrian ambassadors, pressed for a continuation of the war. The Cardinal Archbishop of Turin, Costa, was eloquent for peace. Even more eloquent was the state of the treasury, whose superintendent estimated that the war had so far cost the equivalent of fifteen years' revenue.[22] There were also reports of revolutionary rumblings among the populace, which, if they were true, could mean that the invading French would receive decisive support from the people. In the face of these difficulties, with the army crumbling by the day, and the French almost in sight of Turin, the King decided that there was no alternative but to open peace negotiations. On 22 April, therefore, Piedmontese plenipotentiaries were despatched to Genoa to meet the French envoy there. A letter was also sent to Colli informing him of the decision, and inviting him to open negotiations with Bonaparte for an armistice.



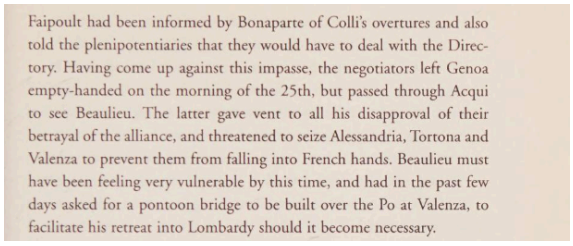
Bonaparte had foreseen such a situation a long time ago, and he now did what he had once advised others to do: he continued his movements and did not reply until the evening. He then stated that only the Directory could negotiate peace, but that if two of the three fortresses of

Why would he do this?

Everything could have proceeded smoothly had Napoleon simply accepted the peace and armistice. But his actions raise suspicion. So let's analyze this using what we know in hindsight:

Known Facts (Premises):

1. Napoleon received a legitimate peace proposal via Colli, approved by King Victor Amadeus.
2. He didn't accept right away and instead delayed his reply.
3. He continued his military advance, further cornering Colli.
4. When he finally responded, he demanded control of strategic fortresses, territory he later received and used against Austria after defeating Piedmont.
5. He instructed Faipoult to block any peace talks in Genoa.



Faipoult had been informed by Bonaparte of Colli's overtures and also told the plenipotentiaries that they would have to deal with the Directory. Having come up against this impasse, the negotiators left Genoa empty-handed on the morning of the 25th, but passed through Acqui to see Beaulieu. The latter gave vent to all his disapproval of their betrayal of the alliance, and threatened to seize Alessandria, Tortona and Valenza to prevent them from falling into French hands. Beaulieu must have been feeling very vulnerable by this time, and had in the past few days asked for a pontoon bridge to be built over the Po at Valenza, to facilitate his retreat into Lombardy should it become necessary.

This is interesting, because we can't really say that Napoleon was aiming for normal peaceful negotiation. If that were the case, he wouldn't have stalled or demanded control over key strategic cities, nor would he have continued pressing Colli's forces.

First let's address the obvious, Napoleon clearly had a long-term strategic plan in mind for defeating the Austrians after knocking Piedmont out of the war, and it hinged on controlling those crucial forteresse.

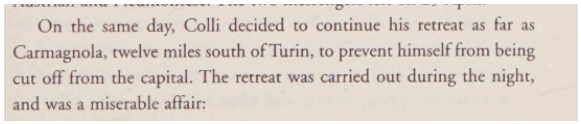
But then why keep advancing? Why delay peace negotiations? Wasn't he worried the Austrians might catch up or that King Victor Amadeus could reconsider the armistice?

At first glance, it seems irrational. But everything becomes clear if we assume Napoleon was thinking like this: Colli's army was Piedmont's last card to play. As long as it stood, negotiations would need to be mutual. But if Napoleon crushed it, he could dictate the terms, securing not just any territory, but vital strongholds like Cuneo, Alessandria, and Tortona, which were key for launching his next moves against Austria.

Seen this way, his delays and continued offensives weren't irrational, they were calculated moves to eliminate all leverage from the enemy and secure strategic superiority. It wasn't hesitation; it was brilliance.

Now that we understand Napoleon's weird behaviour, let's continue.

Colli relentlessly pursued,it was clear he was in the final phase of his resistance. He attempted to retreat to Carmagnola, just south of Turin, highlighting how dangerously close Napoleon had gotten to the Piedmontese capital. But the retreat turned into a disaster: rain, snow, and mud turned the march into a nightmare, costing Colli many of his remaining troops. Desperate, Colli made repeated efforts to secure an armistice with Napoleon. This was Napoleon's plan. He decided to cross at Piacenzaut Napoleon refused each time, insisting on the cession of specific territories, demands Colli couldn't fulfill without direct authorization from the king. Meanwhile, Napoleon kept pressing forward. Eventually, the pressure shattered Colli both physically and mentally. He had been completely outmaneuvered, worn down, and broken. Napoleon had become his worst nightmare. At last, Colli wrote to the king, announcing his resignation and admitting he could no longer continue. And just like that, Colli's campaign came to an end.



On the same day, Colli decided to continue his retreat as far as Carmagnola, twelve miles south of Turin, to prevent himself from being cut off from the capital. The retreat was carried out during the night, and was a miserable affair:

these dismal conditions, Colli moved his HQ back to la Loggia, only five miles from Turin, and sent his ADC to get the King's decision on the terms of the armistice. In the afternoon, Colli informed Beaulieu that he was writing to the King to tell him that he was going to retire. His health was ruined, he said, and he no longer had the strength to walk, he was so worn out by the fatigues of the campaign.

The French, meanwhile, were making efforts to get ready for the next clash with the Austrians. At daybreak on the 27th, Fiorella sent a

(Analytical & Convergent Thinking, Indirect Manipulation, Psychological Warfare: Abusing Insecurities & Demoralization)

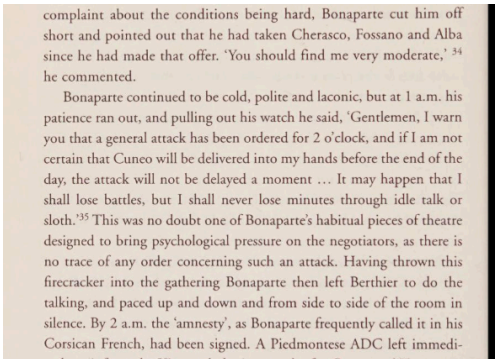
- **Peace Negotiations**

After General Colli resigned and the Austrians abandoned any hope of rescuing the Piedmontese, King Victor Amadeus finally gave in and accepted Napoleon's terms. He sent two commissioners, General de La Tour and Colonel La Costa. for peace negotiations.

When they arrived at Napoleon's camp, the atmosphere was eerie: silent, calm, with the entire base asleep. They were quietly greeted by the French staff and brought before Napoleon. General de La Tour attempted to renegotiate the terms, arguing they were too severe. Napoleon grew irritated and snapped, "You should find me very moderate. I've already taken Cherasco, Fossano, and Alba." It was a sharp reminder of the leverage he now held.

Still, La Tour persisted. At one point, Napoleon theatrically checked his watch and bluffed:

"A general attack is scheduled for 2 a.m.… If I don't receive Cuneo before the end of the day, the attack will begin."
Then he added, "I may lose battles, but I shall never lose minutes through idle talk or sloth."



complaint about the conditions being hard, Bonaparte cut him off short and pointed out that he had taken Cherasco, Fossano and Alba since he had made that offer. 'You should find me very moderate,' [34] he commented.

Bonaparte continued to be cold, polite and laconic, but at 1 a.m. his patience ran out, and pulling out his watch he said, 'Gentlemen, I warn you that a general attack has been ordered for 2 o'clock, and if I am not certain that Cuneo will be delivered into my hands before the end of the day, the attack will not be delayed a moment … It may happen that I shall lose battles, but I shall never lose minutes through idle talk or sloth.'[35] This was no doubt one of Bonaparte's habitual pieces of theatre designed to bring psychological pressure on the negotiators, as there is no trace of any order concerning such an attack. Having thrown this firecracker into the gathering Bonaparte then left Berthier to do the talking, and paced up and down and from side to side of the room in silence. By 2 a.m. the 'amnesty', as Bonaparte frequently called it in his Corsican French, had been signed. A Piedmontese ADC left immedi-

This was pure bluffing, there was no planned assault, but it was a classic Napoleonic tactic: psychological pressure through manufactured urgency. He even walked around the room and left Berthier to continue the talks, reinforcing the illusion that time was slipping away. Ultimately, the Piedmontese gave in and accepted the terms.

At dawn, Napoleon watched the sunrise beside Colonel La Costa. Casually, yet with prophetic confidence, he told him that Beaulieu wouldn't be able to stop him before he reached Mantua, and that his army would always strike at the enemy's flank. La Costa listened, both amazed and crushed. Napoleon's vision and intellect overwhelmed him, but it was a bitter admiration, he stood before the man who had just symbolized the collapse of his nation.

- Final Reflection:

Piedmont had been at war with France since 1792. Yet in just 12 days of fighting and five days of bold maneuvering, Bonaparte shattered their army, captured key fortresses, and brought a king to his knees.

(Bluffing, Psychological Warfare: Abusing Insecurities, Emotional Manipulation, Foresight)

The Conquest of Lombardy:

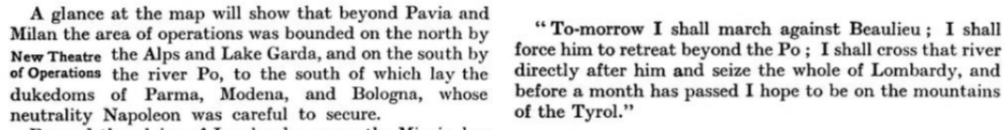
- **Strategic Means of Taking Lombardy:**

Following the decisive victory over Piedmont, the campaign shifted to the Po Valley against the Austrians. In Tortona his new headquarters, a position previously mentioned in this document as

one Napoleon had deliberately sought even prior to the Franco-Piedmont negotiations (demonstrating his strategic forecasting, as we can confirm here he selected it as a strategic place advantageous from which to launch offensives against the Austrians once the Piedmont were covered).

From Tortona, he formulated his strategic goals. His immediate and prime goal was the conquest of Lombardy, a region of immense economic value, abundant in both financial resources and essential supplies that his army urgently required to sustain the ongoing campaign. Yet Napoleon's intentions extended beyond mere material gain. The occupation of Lombardy carried significant strategic implications: by seizing control of this territory, he would effectively interpose his forces between General Beaulieu and Austria itself, cutting the Austrian commander's line of retreat and trapping him.

Part of his strategy also involved keeping nearby Italian states, Parma, Modena, and Bologna, neutral. He couldn't afford more enemies while focusing on Lombardy.



New Theatre of Operations

A glance at the map will show that beyond Pavia and Milan the area of operations was bounded on the north by the Alps and Lake Garda, and on the south by the river Po, to the south of which lay the dukedoms of Parma, Modena, and Bologna, whose neutrality Napoleon was careful to secure.

"To-morrow I shall march against Beaulieu; I shall force him to retreat beyond the Po; I shall cross that river directly after him and seize the whole of Lombardy, and before a month has passed I hope to be on the mountains of the Tyrol."

Beyond that, Napoleon already had his sights set on Mantua. He saw it as both a strength and a liability for Austria: heavily fortified, yes, but a garrison there was effectively stuck, limiting Austria's ability to maneuver, so maneuvering them there would be an advantage to him.

(Analytical Thinking, Strategy Building, Strategy Forecasting, Planning Coverage)

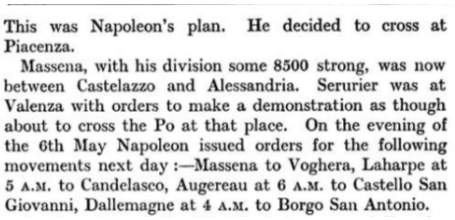
- **The Cross of the Po River**

At this point, General Beaulieu had already moved into Lombardy, while Napoleon remained on the opposite side of the Po River. To enter Lombardy, Napoleon needed to cross the river, but the obvious crossing points were heavily guarded. Realizing that Beaulieu expected him to attempt a crossing at Valenza, Napoleon devised a deception. He secretly planned to cross much farther east, at Piacenza, around 70 miles away.

To do so he divided his forces like this:

- Sérurier was ordered to stage a diversionary attack at Valenza, keeping Beaulieu convinced that the main French advance would occur where he thought.
- Augereau, Laharpe, and Dallemagne each received detailed orders to march toward Piacenza and nearby towns, preparing for the real crossing.
- Masséna, commanding around 8,500 men, was positioned near Alessandria to support Napoleon once the river had been crossed.

All these movements occurred simultaneously. Napoleon's aim was to confuse Austrian intelligence, ensuring Beaulieu wouldn't realize where the true crossing would happen until it was too late.



This was Napoleon's plan. He decided to cross at Piacenza.

Massena, with his division some 8500 strong, was now between Castelazzo and Alessandria. Serurier was at Valenza with orders to make a demonstration as though about to cross the Po at that place. On the evening of the 6th May Napoleon issued orders for the following movements next day :—Massena to Voghera, Laharpe at 5 A.M. to Candelasco, Augereau at 6 A.M. to Castello San Giovanni, Dallemagne at 4 A.M. to Borgo San Antonio.

The plan worked perfectly. Once Napoleon's forces successfully crossed into Lombardy, Beaulieu suddenly understood the danger, his lines of supply and communication were exposed, and Napoleon had effectively moved behind him and was about to flank him. In a panic, Beaulieu abandoned his position at Valenza and rushed to Casalpusterlengo to link up with General Liptay, the only Austrian commander close to Napoleon.

Liptay initially resisted the French advance, but Dallemagne defeated him at Fombio. Beaulieu hurried to intervene, managing a brief local success against Laharpe, but the situation collapsed quickly. With Liptay defeated, Napoleon's army across the Po, and his own flank in danger, Beaulieu had no choice but to retreat from Lombardy altogether.

Napoleon's speed and deception had been overwhelming.

(Misdirection)

- **The Battle of Lodi:**

As the Austrians withdrew, the French pursued them without pause. Napoleon left one column advancing through Lombardy toward Milan while he personally chased the main Austrian force. By this stage, Beaulieu had already crossed the Adda River, retreating toward Tyrol, but he left General Sebottendorf stationed in Lodi to cover his rear.

When Napoleon reached the river, he found Sebottendorf's troops fortified on the opposite bank, ready for battle.

Napoleon could have ignored them and gone straight for Milan, securing the capital and Lombardy itself. But he saw beyond that. Milan was just a trophy; the real objective was to cut Beaulieu entirely from Austria. To do that, Napoleon had to control both sides of the Adda River, because whoever holds both banks dictates movement. The river ceases to be a defensive barrier and instead becomes a weapon of control. And Beaulieu's only escape routes toward Austria lay along those crossings. If Napoleon could seize them, he could isolate Beaulieu, drive him south toward Mantua, and complete the first stage of his Italian campaign by besieging the fortress

there. Keeping Beaulieu pinned near the Po would have risked prolonging the campaign or changing his goals entirely, so maneuvering him toward Mantua was essential.



His troops on the hither bank of the Adda having crossed, Sebottendorf caused two spans of the wooden bridge nearest the farther bank to be broken. It was Napoleon's plan not only to enter Milan, the road to which was now open to him, but to occupy both banks of the Adda, and so be in a position to drive Beaulieu into the Tyrol or Carinthia. It was necessary to lose no time during which the Austrians could be reinforced on the Adda, and he therefore determined to drive them from the neighbourhood of Lodi and from Pizzighettone, farther down the river, and thus secure the approaches to the fortress of Mantua.

Returning to the immediate tactical situation: Napoleon initially ordered General Beaumont's cavalry to cross upstream at a ford near Mozzanica and attack the Austrians' right flank. But Beaumont moved too slowly, and Napoleon's patience wore thin. Every minute of delay was dangerous, Beaulieu might send reinforcements, the Austrians could strengthen Lodi's defenses, and if Napoleon failed to secure the river quickly, his strategy to drive the enemy toward Mantua would fail.

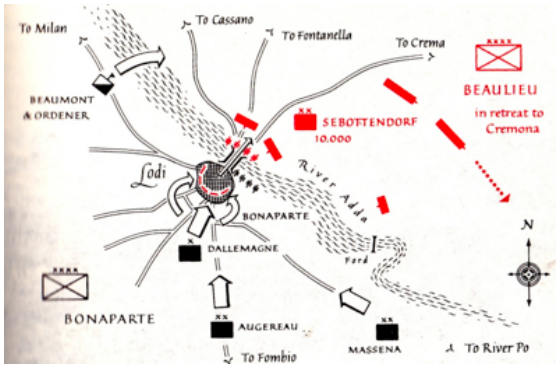
So he abandoned the plan and decided on the boldest possible move: **a direct assault across the bridge.**

He called for volunteers to lead the attack, knowing full well it was suicidal. Austrian guns and muskets commanded every inch of the bridge. Still, about a thousand grenadiers stepped forward, inspired by Napoleon's sheer force of will. He ordered the drums to thunder, banners to wave, and bands to play music, drowning fear in noise and defiance.

As the grenadiers charged into a hail of cannon and musket fire, Napoleon sent sharpshooters in boats to a small islet under the bridge, from where they could rake the Austrian flank and relieve the pressure on the attackers.

with drawn swords. With desperate courage and appeals to the love of glory of their soldiers they led a renewed assault; a party of sharp-shooters, despatched in boats by Napoleon, landed on the islet below the bridge to support the attack, which now pressed forward; on the Lodi bank the bands played martial music, and the fire of the guns,

The assault at Lodi became legendary. Against impossible odds, the French forced their way across, engaging in fierce hand-to-hand combat once they reached the opposite bank. The Austrians broke and fled. With control of the Adda River secured, Napoleon gained leverage over Lombardy and it was wide open for him.



(Strategy Forecasting, Critical Thinking, Deductive Reasoning, Field Envisioning, Strategy Building, Tactics, Communication, Psychological Warfare: Emotional Inducement)

- **Napoleon enters Milan:**

When Napoleon entered Milan following Masséna's capture of the city, he was met with public acclaim. He understood, however, that the cheers were mostly ceremonial rather than true signs of loyalty. It seems, he sized up the population, dividing it into two groups. While most Italians welcomed the Austrians' departure, many remained cautious about French rule. The other group though small, which he identified were the educated elite, were drawn to revolutionary ideas and showed a genuine curiosity. Capitalizing on this, he cast himself as an enlightened liberator to the first: when he was invited to the opulent Palazzo Serbelloni, he entertained intellectuals, artists, and aristocrats, promoting meritocracy, free thought, and the notion of Italian nationalism.

staff in the kitchens. He needed them, because his guest began to entertain on a lavish scale, receiving writers, editors, aristocrats, scientists, academics, intellectuals, sculptors and opinion-formers, and revelling in Milan's opera, art and architecture. There was a political purpose to all this. 'As a celebrated artist you have a right to the special protection of the Army of Italy,' he wrote to the sculptor Antonio Canova in Rome. 'I have given orders for your board and lodging to be paid at once.'[64] Wishing to appear

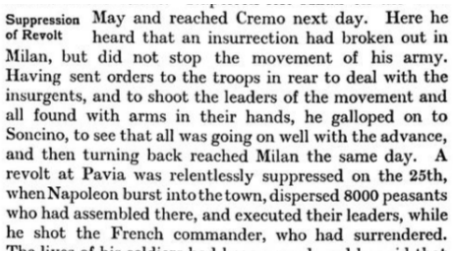
received with joy' by the populace.[63] Although Napoleon was cheered loudly as he rode through the streets, he understood that conquerors always tended to be welcomed into cities they were about to occupy. While many Italians were delighted that the Austrians had been expelled, they felt little real warmth and plenty of apprehension towards their French replacements. A small but nonetheless significant group, however, was genuinely excited about the effect that French revolutionary ideas might have on Italian politics and society. As a rule, the educated, professional and secularized elites were more likely to regard Napoleon as a liberating force than the Catholic peasantry, who saw the French armies as foreign atheists.

The next day, he declared the Lombardic Republic, abolished Austrian institutions, reformed universities, held elections, founded a National Guard, and collaborated with advocates of Italian unification like Francesco Melzi d'Eril, granting them significant authority. At the same time, he and his officials levied a 20-million franc contribution, highlighting the tension between French "liberation" and fiscal demands. Beyond politics, Napoleon implemented sweeping social reforms across newly conquered territories: abolishing internal tariffs, dismantling feudal privileges, restructuring finances, ending restrictive guilds, promoting religious toleration, opening ghettos, and occasionally nationalizing Church property. These measures modernized society, won the support of progressive middle classes, and embodied Enlightenment principles of equality, free trade, and intellectual freedom.

(Emotional Perception, Mass Manipulation, Charisma, Leadership)

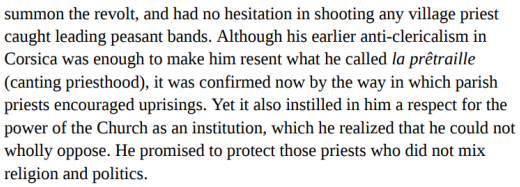
But Napoleon also uses fear as a weapon in Lombardy. For example:

When a revolt broke out in Milan and Pavia, he ordered a ruthless suppression: anyone found with a weapon was to be shot, the rebel leaders executed. He personally crushed the uprising in Pavia and even punished the French commander who had surrendered too easily, making it clear he wasn't to be taken lightly. He declared that if even one of his soldiers had been killed, he would have wiped out the entire town.

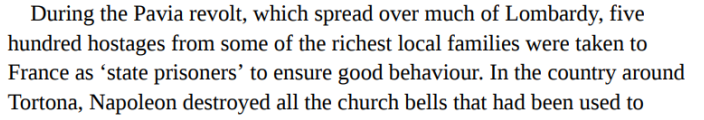


Suppression of Revolt May and reached Cremo next day. Here he heard that an insurrection had broken out in Milan, but did not stop the movement of his army. Having sent orders to the troops in rear to deal with the insurgents, and to shoot the leaders of the movement and all found with arms in their hands, he galloped on to Soncino, to see that all was going on well with the advance, and then turning back reached Milan the same day. A revolt at Pavia was relentlessly suppressed on the 25th, when Napoleon burst into the town, dispersed 8000 peasants who had assembled there, and executed their leaders, while he shot the French commander, who had surrendered.

Along with that he cracked down on the Church and didn't hesitate to eliminate priests who resisted him. However, despite his anti-clerical stance from his Corsican youth, he promised to safeguard priests who kept religion separate from politics. It seems he recognized the Church's influence as an institution, one he understood he couldn't completely challenge.



summon the revolt, and had no hesitation in shooting any village priest caught leading peasant bands. Although his earlier anti-clericalism in Corsica was enough to make him resent what he called *la prêtraille* (canting priesthood), it was confirmed now by the way in which parish priests encouraged uprisings. Yet it also instilled in him a respect for the power of the Church as an institution, which he realized that he could not wholly oppose. He promised to protect those priests who did not mix religion and politics.



During the Pavia revolt, which spread over much of Lombardy, five hundred hostages from some of the richest local families were taken to France as 'state prisoners' to ensure good behaviour. In the country around Tortona, Napoleon destroyed all the church bells that had been used to

Napoleon also took hundreds of hostages from local families, creating a tie that was difficult to break and ensuring their cooperation through fear and obligation. It was a calculated move, he needed their loyalty, one way or another.

In Conclusion: when expanding his control, as seen here, Napoleon divides the population into supporters and oppositors. He wins over the supporters presenting himself as a liberator. And the opposition faces fear and punishment—executions, hostages, and repression—binding them to his rule.

(Psychological Warfare: Demoralization & Abusing Insecurities, Emotional Understanding)

After many victories, the Directory began to become alarmed by Napoleon's growing fame, and they tried to limit his power by forcing him to share command with General Kellermann, Napoleon saw it as both an insult and a stupid idea. He rejected the proposal immediately,

grounding his refusal in his reasoning that command must be singular. In war, he argued, decisiveness and unity of direction are everything. Two brilliant generals with competing ideas would paralyze an army, arguing over plans instead of executing them.

"It is better to have one bad general than two good ones," he wrote.

Meaning that even flawed leadership, if undivided, preserves speed, clarity, and authority, qualities far more vital in war than shared brilliance. His reasoning revealed an instinctive understanding of power: authority diluted is authority lost. To back his words, Napoleon threatened resignation, perfectly timing it right after his triumphs at Lodi and Milan.

"Each to his own way of making war. Kellermann will do it better than me; but both of us doing it together will do it extremely badly."

His victories made him untouchable; the Directory, desperate for continued success, couldn't afford to lose their most effective general. The threat worked. The plan to split the command was quietly dropped.

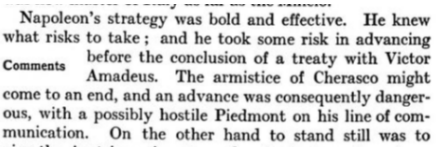
(Critical Thinking, Abductive Reasoning, Direct Manipulation)

- **Napoleon faces a Dilema:**

At this moment, Napoleon had just taken Milan and established control over Lombardy. His army was on the offensive, and Austrian forces were retreating. But he then faced a dilemma:

1. Should he press forward to crush the Austrians before they could regroup?
2. Or pause to let his troops recover, secure supply lines, and reduce risk?

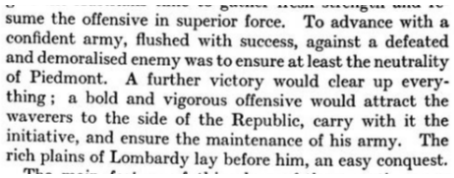
On the surface, waiting seemed reasonable, especially because the Piedmont armistice was fragile, and could come to an end at any given moment.


Napoleon's strategy was bold and effective. He knew what risks to take; and he took some risk in advancing before the conclusion of a treaty with Victor Amadeus. The armistice of Cherasco might come to an end, and an advance was consequently dangerous, with a possibly hostile Piedmont on his line of communication. On the other hand to stand still was to

Comments

Napoleon, however, thought differently. While the armistice appeared weak, backed only by a piece of paper, in reality it was held together by fear. Piedmont was a demoralized enemy (Now neutral), intimidated by the French. If Napoleon's army slowed or suffered a setback, there was a risk Piedmont might perceive Austria as stronger and rejoin them, since its loyalty was to the coalition, not him. Thus, the peace was mostly psychological. Napoleon understood he had to keep Piedmont afraid enough to remain neutral.

He also grasped the strategic danger of waiting: Austria could regroup and strike offensively with superior forces, and even a single defeat (as mentioned) could trigger a chain reaction leading to Piedmont switching sides. With this in mind, he realized the first option, pursuing the Austrians, was the only one viable. Because the armistice depended on fear, he could afford to abandon extreme caution, as long as his reputation remained intact. Napoleon saw his reputation as a weapon pointed at Piedmont's head: the stronger he appeared, the less likely they were to betray him.


sume the offensive in superior force. To advance with a confident army, flushed with success, against a defeated and demoralised enemy was to ensure at least the neutrality of Piedmont. A further victory would clear up everything; a bold and vigorous offensive would attract the waverers to the side of the Republic, carry with it the initiative, and ensure the maintenance of his army. The rich plains of Lombardy lay before him, an easy conquest.

Basically given the scenario:

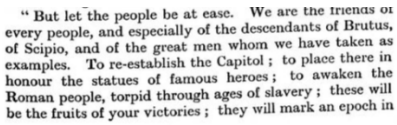
- Momentum > caution.
- Psychological dominance > temporary army recovery.
- Reputation = real strategic leverage.

(Analytical Thinking, Abductive Reasoning, Field Envisioning, Psychological Warfare: Demoralization, Emotional Manipulation, Strategy Logistics)

- **Napoleon using Roman symbolism to motivate his troops:**

After reorganizing his troops quickly, he went on the offensive, but not before he motivated his soldiers by appealing to both their pride and their sense of destiny. Napoleon praised their past victories, while simultaneously shaming any hint of hesitation: *"days lost for glory are lost for happiness."*

He framed their campaign as more than a military conquest, casting it as a mission of liberation and resurrection. Drawing on the legacy of Rome, he invoked the great figures of the past, Brutus and Scipio, and presented the army as the heirs of Roman virtue. Soldiers were promised that their victories would: *"re-establish the Capitol; place there in honour the statues of famous heroes; awaken the Roman people, torpid through ages of slavery."*


"But let the people be at ease. We are the friends of every people, and especially of the descendants of Brutus, of Scipio, and of the great men whom we have taken as examples. To re-establish the Capitol; to place there in honour the statues of famous heroes; to awaken the Roman people, torpid through ages of slavery; these will be the fruits of your victories; they will mark an epoch in

By framing their actions with restoring the glory of Rome, Napoleon made them feel that they were not just conquering, but reviving an ancient moral and cultural order.

(Communication)

- **Napoleon's Intelligence:**

Napoleon was known to not just rely on second-hand reports, he sought raw intelligence straight from the source so he could judge its reliability himself. He didn't trust other officers to interpret it for him.

His methods of gathering info were:

- He'd question deserters and captured soldiers.
- He sent out cavalry patrols to scout terrain and enemy movements.
- Sometimes he disguised his own troops as farmers to gather local intel, and even held the real farmers' wives hostage to make sure they didn't expose the disguise.

Napoleon also knew that spies and scouts could exaggerate or misinterpret what they saw, like mistaking a small unit for a whole corps, so he tried to account for human error and panic in their reports.

Finally, his standing orders for intelligence officers were basically:

- Scout every possible route, crossing, and choke point (like fords and passes).
- Get trustworthy local guides.
- Question priests and postmasters—they always knew the gossip and routes.
- Make friendly contact with locals fast.
- Send spies regularly and try to intercept public messages or mail.

attach to each piece.[19] Methods of gaining intelligence included interrogating deserters and prisoners, sending out cavalry patrols, and even dressing soldiers as farm labourers after having taken the real labourers' wives hostage. Napoleon was conscious of the way that spies and officers on scouting missions could mistake corps for detachments and vice versa and often repeated what they had heard from 'panic-stricken or surprised people' rather than what they had witnessed.[20] His orders for his intelligence officers were: 'To reconnoitre accurately defiles and fords of every description. To provide guides that may be depended upon. To interrogate the priest and the postmaster. To establish rapidly a good

(Info Gathering, Direct Manipulation, Analytical Thinking, Critical Thinking)

- **Crossing the Minicio River:**

As the Austrians retreated and the French gave chase, they made a final stand along the Mincio River, their last stance before Mantua, (which Napoleon needed as mentioned before to set the last stage in).

Well-positioned and regrouped, the Austrians made the river an even tougher obstacle.

Napoleon used the same strategy he had at the Po River: Misdirection. His plan was to place his headquarters in Brescia and send Augereau near Peschiera, creating the illusion that the French intended to cross Lake Garda. Meanwhile, he advanced toward Borghetto with Masséna, the ruse strengthened by the fact that his HQ (in Brescia) directly faced Peschiera, making the feint believable to Beaulieu.



Napoleon's plan was to make a demonstration in the direction of Brescia and Peschiera, to cover the movement **Movements of the French** towards the real point of attack at Borghetto, where he intended to force the passage of the Mincio. He had his headquarters at Brescia. On the 29th May Kilmaine was with the cavalry at Castiglione. Augereau's division was at Ponte San Marco, on the direct line for Peschiera; Massena, destined to force the passage at Borghetto, was placed far back at Montechiari. Serurier was farther back, at Ghedi. Secrecy was

Fun Fact: Napoleon this time kept his plan completely under secret. Seems he was being cautious, after having pulled the same trick on Beaulieu twice already, he didn't inform anyone, not even his most trusted generals, until the day before the operation, on May 29th.

essential to success, and it was not until the 29th May that Napoleon's plans were made known to his generals. Kilmaine was ordered to make a night march with the cavalry

When Napoleon crossed the river, facing only minor resistance, he once again outsmarted Beaulieu. Realizing he was about to be outflanked, Beaulieu barely escapes north into the Tyrol mountains, leaving roughly 12,000 men in Mantua, hoping they could hold out until reinforcements arrived. Napoleon then secures northern Italy, and sends Masséna to establish the HQ in Verona and station troops around Lake Garda, Salò, Rivoli, and Legnago to monitor any Austrian movements from the Tyrol.

The Siege of Mantua Begins.

(Misdirection, Bluffing, Strategy Castling, Planning Preparation, Planning Coverage, Info Control)

Siege of Mantua (First Phase):

Napoleon quickly began the siege of Mantua, but it proved far from easy. The city was a fortress surrounded by a lake and marshes, and he lacked sufficient heavy siege artillery; some pieces remained in Milan, while others had been intercepted by Admiral Horatio Nelson. The siege promised to be a nightmare. To make matters worse, the Directory ordered him to lead an

expedition deeper into Italy, now that the peninsula lay open before him. Napoleon refused, arguing that launching a campaign in summer would be suicidal, with disease likely wiping out his army. The Directory ignored him. Caught between the ongoing siege, the threat of Austrian reinforcements from the north, and the Directory's unrealistic demands, Napoleon pressed on, maintaining the siege while preparing to take control of Italy at the same time, and he had to do it fast, before Austrian reinforcements arrived.

- **Taking control over Central and Southern Italy:**

Napoleon obviously realized he couldn't launch a full military campaign in Italy, so he relied on manipulation to force their surrender. On June 7, he explicitly argued to the Directory that a deeper invasion was unnecessary, suggesting that Rome would comply if presented with clear incentives and threats.

- Southern Italy: Napoleon easily forced Naples out of the war through an armistice. When Naples faced the threat of invasion, their negotiator, Prince de Belmonte-Pignatelli, signed the treaty within two hours.
- Central Italy: Central Italy required more finesse. Napoleon first used the armistice with Naples as a bargaining chip to pressure Rome. Through negotiations with Spain's envoy, d'Azara, he signaled that the Pope could either cooperate or face the consequences of French influence. He demanded vast contributions, silver, food, and cultural treasures, and secured the release of patriots imprisoned for revolutionary activities, presenting himself as both generous and intimidating.

Once he was threatened with invasion, the Neapolitan negotiator, Prince de Belmonte-Pignatelli, signed the treaty that was put before him in two hours flat. Napoleon was by then willing to disparage the Directory, asking Pignatelli whether he really thought that he 'was fighting for those scamps of lawyers'.[85] (Although Napoleon liked and admired some individual lawyers, he utterly detested them en masse, and of the five Directors, three

By means of this armistice with Naples, we are in a position to dictate to Rome all the conditions we like … From the conversation that I had this morning with M. d'Azara, minister of Spain, sent by the Pope, it seemed to me that he had orders to offer us contributions. Soon I shall be in Bologna [in the Papal States]. Do you wish me to accept then, in order to agree an armistice with the Pope, 25,000,000 in contributions in silver, 5,000,000 in food, 300 paintings, statues and manuscripts in proportion, and that I have put at liberty all the patriots arrested for acts of Revolution?[18]

After breaking Italy's resistance without much fighting, Napoleon was ready to stop. And then he learned the Austrians were soon coming to relieve Mantua, so he then refocused his efforts back on the war.

Around July 5th, 1796, Napoleon returned north from his lightning campaigns in Tuscany and the Papal States

(Direct Manipulation, Psychological Warfare: Demoralization)

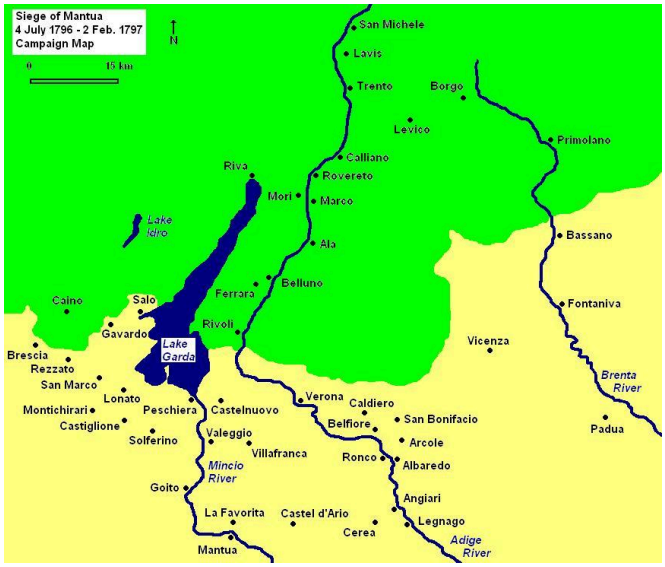
- **Napoleon's strategy for the Siege of Mantua:**

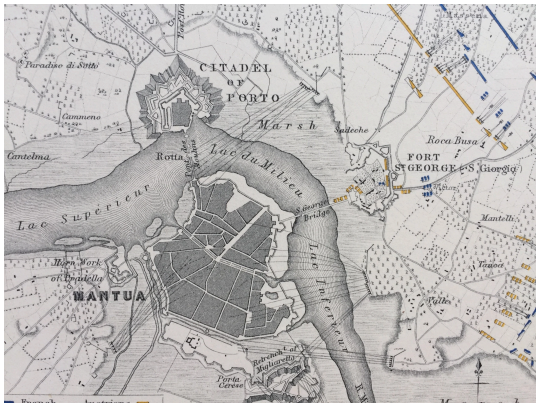
Mantua was the last major Austrian stronghold in northern Italy, and its fall would effectively end Austrian control in the region. Napoleon recognized its strategic significance from the start.

His strategy to capture Mantua was conceptually straightforward but harsh in execution:

1. **To compel surrender through starvation.**Without heavy siege artillery, and with Nelson having cut off any chance to get some, Napoleon faced formidable natural obstacles, including lakes and malaria-infested marshes, making a direct attack nearly impossible. His only feasible strategy was indirect: harass the fortress with his limited artillery and trap the defenders until starvation forced their surrender.

2. When he returned, the Austrians were already preparing to relieve the siege, complicating the situation. Napoleon sets up his headquarters at Roverbella, a smart central location that allows him to both manage the siege and monitor any Austrian counterattacks. Napoleon plans to fight the Austrians at the same time as he keeps up the siege, his aim was simple and brutal: **destroy the Austrian army so Mantua would be left with no hope of relief.**





The approaching Austrian army is formidable, large and led by a new General; Marshal Wurmser, a far smarter commander than Beaulieu. Napoleon is now facing an opponent who isn't naive, so he must commit fully and use every resource at his disposal.

(Strategy Forecasting, Strategy Building, Strategy Logistics)

But then the situation turns dire. Wurmser commands 50,000 troops, about the same as Napoleon, but 10,000 of Napoleon's men are tied up besieging Mantua, and the rest are

spread thin. Some are with Masséna guarding the Tyrol passes at Rivoli, others near Lake Garda, some defending Lombardy, and a few at Brescia protecting the vital supply route.

When Wurmser launches his offensive, he strikes from three directions:

- **The main assault comes from Tyrol, where Masséna is stationed. Massena is pushed back.**
- **The second column, led by Quasdanovich, advances west of Lake Garda towards Brescia. He manages to capture it, threatening Napoleon's supply lines to Lombardy.**
- **The third, a smaller 5,000-man force under Mészáros, approaches from the east, Wurmser's reserve, meant to strike once the main battle peaks.**

Napoleon's overall position in the north collapsed, his generals pushed back, supply lines nearly cut, key positions lost. Even Josephine barely escapes capture when Brescia falls. Everything points to Napoleon losing and it's his greatest crisis until now. But the question is, how will Napoleon now turn the tide of this dire situation?

- **Napoleon's Strategy to defeat Wurmser:**

It's straightforward but risky, he'll concentrate his scattered forces, crush one enemy column, then turn and strike the other. The real dilemma is which one to hit first?

1. He knows if he goes after Wurmser, he has to win decisively, anything less and not will he only lose, but Quasdanovich will overrun his supply lines and trap him.
2. But if he turns on Quasdanovich, he leaves Mantua completely exposed to Wurmser's advance.

Napoleon chooses survival over position. He decides to strike Quasdanovich first.



This also highlights Napoleon's strategic flexibility, his ability to adapt and abandon Mantua when the situation demanded it.

The Planning:

1. First, he commands most of his generals to gather west of Lake Garda to strike Quasdanovich.
2. To strengthen that attack, he needs more troops, so he orders Sérurier to abandon the siege of Mantua, destroy or bury the artillery, and join the main force. If Mantua's doomed, so be it, Napoleon won't waste 10,000 men defending a fortress that Wurmser could overrun anyway.
3. Once those reinforcements link up, Napoleon plans to move north quickly to back up Masséna and Augereau, aiming to crush Quasdanovich's army.

Aftermath:

Surprisingly, Masséna manages to defeat Quasdanovich at Lonato, and with reinforcements joining in, Quasdanovich realizes he's outnumbered and begins to retreat. Augereau recaptures Brescia, restoring Napoleon's vital supply lines.

Quasdanovich makes one last attempt to push Masséna out of Lonato, but by then Napoleon has reorganized his entire army south of Lake Garda, and the Austrians are crushed. Masséna attacks from multiple directions, Salò, Brescia, and Gavardo, smashing Quasdanovich's forces. Around 3,000 Austrians are lost, and the survivors flee north into the mountains.

Half of Wurmser's army is effectively destroyed. Now, with 30,000 men still under his command, Napoleon can turn his full strength against Wurmser's remaining 25,000, holding the upper hand.

counter-marching, but by noon the next day Napoleon realized that the main body of the enemy were in fact to his north and west. If he faced Wurmser's main advance and didn't achieve a complete victory he would lose Mantua anyway, so he decided to deal with Quasdanovich first. On July 30 therefore he ordered Sérurier to abandon the siege of Mantua to increase his numbers in the field by adding General Louis Pelletier's brigade to Augereau's force and Dallemagne's to Masséna's.[27] His order to Augereau to retreat to Roverbella read: 'Every moment is precious … The enemy has broken through our line at three places: he is master of the important points of Corona and Rivoli … You will see that our communications with Milan and Verona have been cut. Await new orders at Roverbella; I will go there in person.'[28] Augereau lost no time.

Battle of Lonato

On the 3rd August Quasdanovich marched against Massena at Lonato, but was defeated and driven back with heavy loss. Guieu now seized his opportunity, and, issuing from Salo while other French forces co-operated from Brescia and Gavardo, attacked Quasdanovich, who was finally defeated and driven northwards into the mountains, having suffered a total loss of some 3000 men. One wing of Wurmser's divided forces was thus beaten from the field, and Napoleon was in a position to oppose the Austrian Marshal's remaining 25,000 with a superior force of 30,000 men.

(Strategy Logistics, Strategy Castling, Strategy Flexibility, Strategy Forecasting, Field Envisioning. Planning Preparation)

- **The remarkable incident**

During the previous fight, two Austrian battalions, lost and cut off from their main force, accidentally by bad luck stumbled upon Napoleon himself and his small staff. Napoleon was in

serious danger, he had barely 1,000 men, while the Austrians numbered around 3,000. Capture or death was a very real possibility.

But Napoleon bluffed his way out. Acting with total confidence, he claimed to command 60,000 troops nearby and demanded their immediate surrender, warning:

"If your division hasn't laid down its arms in eight minutes, I'll spare no one."

To make the deception believable, he even shouted fake orders to Berthier, telling him to move imaginary grenadiers and artillery into position.

The Austrians, completely fooled and panicking, surrendered on the spot, only realizing afterward that they'd been tricked by a tiny escort. Had they known the truth, they could have captured or killed Napoleon himself.

held responsible for the personal insult offered. I declared that if his division did not pile arms within eight minutes, I would pardon none of them. The envoy appeared to be astonished to see me there, and shortly afterwards the whole column piled arms. It was 4000 strong, with two guns and fifty cavalry."

man.'[32] He supported this ruse by issuing orders to Berthier about grenadier and artillery units that Berthier knew were entirely bogus. The Austrians only discovered once they had surrendered and been disarmed that there were no French forces nearby, and that they could have captured Napoleon with ease.

(Strategy Castling, Bluffing, Fabrication, Sophistry, Acting Skills Fast Thinking)

- **Second Battle of Castiglione:**

So to all this, what actually happened to Wurmser? Where did he go?

Well, remember his strategy: relieve Mantua, disrupt Napoleon's supply lines, and send a small force from the east during the chaos. For a while, Wurmser stuck to his plan. He got reports saying French troops were still near Mantua, but that intel was already outdated Napoleon had moved on, and by the time Wurmser figured it out, he rushed north along the Mincio River, captured Borghetto and Valeggio, and then started besieging Peschiera. He still thought he could connect with Quasdanovich, but when he learned that Quasdanovich had already been defeated and had left, it was too late, Napoleon's forces were regrouping and ready for him.

Wurmser, brave but stubborn, refuses to retreat. He's counting on Quasdanovich's forces to return, though he has no real idea where they actually are. Still, he pushes forward toward Castiglione, arriving on August 3 and spreading out his troops. There he clashes with the French under Augereau (First Battle of Castiglione) until Napoleon arrives on August 4. Now face to face with him, Wurmser has to choose whether to hold his ground or pull back. He chooses to stand and fight. On August 5, the two armies face each other in their first real tactical showdown.

Napoleon opens with a frontal assault, and Wurmser answers in kind. At first, it looks like Wurmser's winning, he's pressing hard and nearly flanking Napoleon's left.

But Napoleon's real plan unfolds.

The day before the battle, when he first reached the field, he'd already ordered Sérurier's division (now under Fiorella) to move from Marcaria to Guidizzolo (near the Austrian rear). Napoleon had positioned them in Marcaria long earlier precisely for the purpose of:

- Guarding a key road,

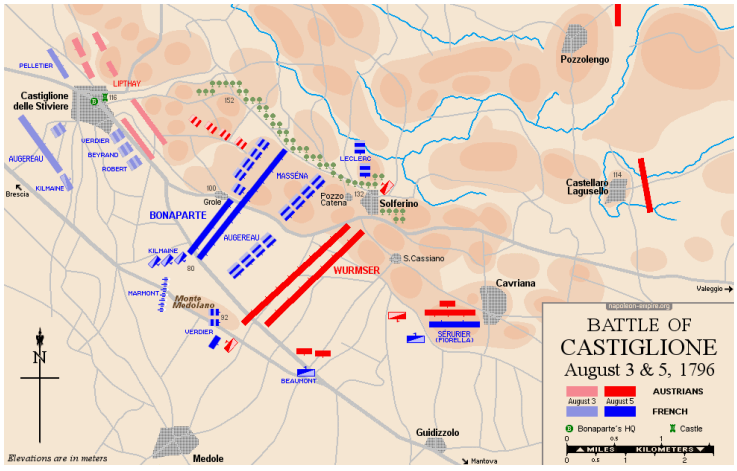
But now its purpose changed

- To act as a hidden strike force if the Austrians overextended themselves.

This was that moment.

The Jean-Mathieu Philibert Sérurier division was at Guidizzolo, ideally placed to fall on the Austrians. It arrived from Marcaria, thirty-five kilometers to the south on the banks of the Oglio, where it had moved after the evacuation of Mantua, in order to cover the road to Cremona and Piacenza. On August 4, it was ordered to advance to its new position the following night. Sérurier, ill, temporarily handed over command of his division to brigadier general Pascal-Antoine Fiorella.

He'd hold Wurmser in place, distract him with a seemingly desperate fight, and lure all Austrian attention to the front, while Fiorella swung in unseen from the south. When Fiorella's division suddenly appeared in Wurmser's rear, it was chaotic. Napoleon immediately went on the full offensive, dropping the act. Wurmser's army broke under the double attack. He was forced into a hasty retreat, narrowly avoiding total destruction. Napoleon's victory at Castiglione secured his control over northern Italy once again, leaving Mantua isolated and pushing Wurmser to retreat to the north of the Alps.



against the Austrian left through Guiddizolo. Napoleon made a show of attacking the Austrian right with Massena's division, until the pressure of Serurier's advance should make itself felt; Wurmser extended his right to envelop the French left, still hoping to join hands with Quasdanovich.

By August 6th, Napoleon had crushed Wurmser's first offensive so thoroughly that he wrote to Paris bragging, "Another campaign done in five days."

(Misdirection, Bluffing, Concealment, Tactics, Planning Coverage, Planning Contingency, Strategy Building)

Siege of Mantua (Second Phase):

After Castiglione, Napoleon returned to lay siege to Mantua. It's said that in his letters to the Directory, he wrapped himself in false humility. By then, every victory had tightened his grip on political power, and he knew it. So, when he claimed that if anyone doubted his loyalty he'd nobly resign, it wasn't sincerity,, it was bait. He understood perfectly that the Directory feared losing him, the one man turning France's fortunes around. His humility was a mask to keep the directory calm; behind it, he was quietly tightening the strings of command while they applauded his "virtue."

from Paris. His reputation in France was growing with each victory and the Directory increasingly suspected he could not be contained. 'If there be in France a single pure-minded and honest man capable of suspecting my political intentions,' he told Carnot and Barras, 'I shall at once renounce the happiness of serving my country.'[36] By then he knew there was little danger they could call his bluff. Previously, he had had to negotiate with them over which generals he could promote, as they had a pool of 343 on the active list. The more successful he was on the battlefield, however, and the more the Directory depended on him for their solvency and prestige, the less interference he would face over his choices.

(Acting Skills, Bluffing, Emotional Manipulation)

- **Napoleon's Strategic Net**

Eventually, Napoleon learned that Wurmser had been reinforced and was planning another push toward Mantua. Rather than wait, he decided to act first. His strategy was to: attack and defeat Wurmser as fast and aggressively as possible, force him to retreat north, trap the Austrians in the mountains, and at the same time advance to join forces with Moreau in Germany. With this strategy, he moved his army across northern Italy, taking the initiative and seizing the offensive.

The problem was, he didn't know which route Wurmser would use, so he turned that uncertainty into a strategic net. He split his army with calculated precision:

- Vaubois with 11,000 men advanced along the west side of Lake Garda to seal that path.
- Masséna with 13,000 and Augereau with 9,000 formed the central line between Rivoli and Verona, ready to pivot in any direction.

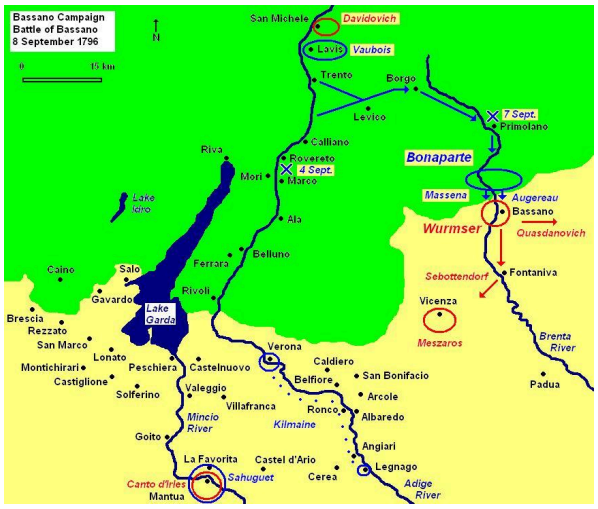
Napoleon arranged them like chess pieces within reach of his masse de manœuvre, his mobile strike core that could swing toward any emerging threat.



Meanwhile, Kilmaine patrolled the east with 1,200 infantry and most of the cavalry, covering the least likely approach, but covering it nonetheless (Coverage).

And even in the middle of this strategic net, Napoleon kept his machine running: brandy, flour, ammunition, and hard-tack flowed to the front without pause. Every detail was sharpened for the moment he'd unleash the blow.

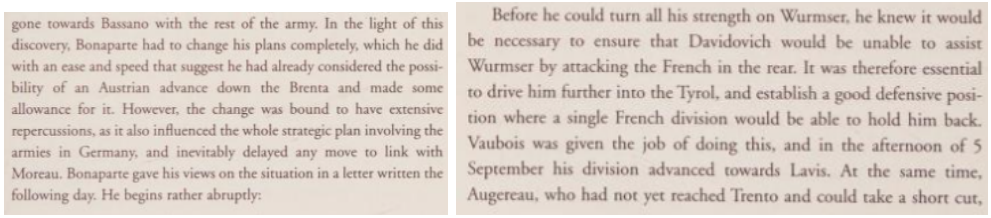
In the end, his strategy works. When he learns that Wurmser is advancing through the Vallagarina Valley along the Adige River, he immediately gathers his troops and launches a rapid and aggressive attack on Wurmser's vanguard. The Austrians are taken so completely by surprise that at Calliano they're literally caught cooking breakfast.



(Strategy Building, Planning Coverage, Risk Assesments)

After the Austrians were defeated and scattered, Napoleon learned from interrogating prisoners that the Austrian army had split, with Wurmser heading east toward Bassano to relieve Mantua. This was unexpected, since Napoleon had planned for the Austrians to retreat north, allowing him to trap them and link up with Moreau. Even though Wurmser had lost much of his force, he was still advancing toward Mantua. Recognizing the situation, Napoleon quickly understood he

had to change his strategy: intercept Wurmser before he reached Mantua. The city's strategic value was too high to ignore.



gone towards Bassano with the rest of the army. In the light of this discovery, Bonaparte had to change his plans completely, which he did with an ease and speed that suggest he had already considered the possibility of an Austrian advance down the Brenta and made some allowance for it. However, the change was bound to have extensive repercussions, as it also influenced the whole strategic plan involving the armies in Germany, and inevitably delayed any move to link with Moreau. Bonaparte gave his views on the situation in a letter written the following day. He begins rather abruptly:

Before he could turn all his strength on Wurmser, he knew it would be necessary to ensure that Davidovich would be unable to assist Wurmser by attacking the French in the rear. It was therefore essential to drive him further into the Tyrol, and establish a good defensive position where a single French division would be able to hold him back. Vaubois was given the job of doing this, and in the afternoon of 5 September his division advanced towards Lavis. At the same time, Augereau, who had not yet reached Trento and could take a short cut,

Napoleon couldn't just chase Wurmser down the Brenta: Davidovich's division in the Tyrol could attack the French rear, which would be disastrous.

Solution: pin Davidovich in the Tyrol and push him further back to prevent interference, while a single French division (Vaubois) could hold him.

(Strategy Flexibility, Risk Assessments, Planning Coverage)

So Napoleon kept up the pursuit. Wurmser believed he could join forces with the rest of his army near Mantua, but as mentioned Napoleon had them already pinned down and in retreat. Regardless, Wurmser was bound to head for Mantua, he had no real choice if he wanted to relieve the fortress and keep it from collapsing.

In the end, Wurmser manages to reach Mantua, but that wasn't really Napoleon's fault. Critics often blame him, but in truth, Napoleon did everything possible to stop him. He ordered Masséna to intercept Wurmser near Arcole, yet Masséna took a longer route and missed the chance. Meanwhile, Napoleon had already commanded that all bridges near Mantua be destroyed before even battle with Wurmser started. Unfortunately, one of his officers, SAHUGUET, failed to demolish key bridges at Villimpenta and Molinella. SAHUGUET's blunder therefore allowed Wurmser to slip through, cross safely, and reach Mantua without resistance, while Napoleon's pursuit arrived too late.

So although Napoleon couldn't prevent Wurmser's entry, it was clearly the fault of his subordinates who didn't execute orders precisely, ironically proving Napoleon's judgment was correct.

Even with Wurmser now inside Mantua, the broader picture was still a French victory. Most of Wurmser's forces had been split, beaten, or scattered in the north. He reached Mantua with only a fraction of his army, essentially defeated and now trapped inside, surrounded by Napoleon's forces. Still, it wasn't a total win for Napoleon either. Strategically, Mantua was now slightly stronger from within, commanded by a capable general. His main strategy; to starve the garrison, remained intact, but it would now take longer and face greater resistance.

Siege of Mantua (Third Phase):

From this point, Napoleon's campaign would enter its toughest phase. Up to now, he'd mostly faced mediocre commanders like Beaulieu, and a few somewhat capable ones like Colli and Wurmser who at least tried to counter him. But now, a far more dangerous rival appeared, one who would prove to be among the finest generals of the Napoleonic Wars: Józef Alvinczy. The Austrian Emperor, still determined to free Mantua, appointed Feldzeugmeister Alvinczy to lead a new relief effort. A seasoned Hungarian officer, old-fashioned yet shrewd, and the Austrian Emperor's personal teacher, Alvinczy would be the first to truly challenge Napoleon and push him into difficult situations.

Alvinczy met with officers Davidovich, Spork, and Weyrother. Together, they made the following plan.

The idea was a pincer movement:

- Davidovich would come down from the Tyrol, pushing south.
- Alvinczi would advance west from Friuli toward Bassano and challenge the French near Verona.
- Meanwhile, Wurmser, still trapped in Mantua, was supposed to break out and hit Napoleon's army from behind.



Meanwhile, Napoleon remained tied down at Mantua, though he still held scattered forces in the areas where Alvinczy was preparing his offensive. Unfortunately for him, Alvinczy's army heavily outnumbered the French. Masséna, positioned at Bassano, was forced to abandon the town, while farther north, Vaubois was driven back toward Rivoli by Davidovich. The Austrian pincer movement was unfolding perfectly, closing in on Napoleon's stretched lines. The French fought hard to hold their ground, but the Austrians maintained their momentum.

Frustration boiled in Napoleon. His northern flank in the Tyrol was collapsing under pressure, and in the east he was being battered by Alvinczy. Napoleon decided to join Massena, but then at Caldiero, he suffered his first defeat against Alvinczy, having been lured into a trap and

overwhelmed. He confessed the grim reality himself: “We may be on the eve of losing Italy,” admitting that his army was worn down, depleted, and left to fend for itself.

- **Napoleon’s Indirect warfare Strategy against Alvinczy**

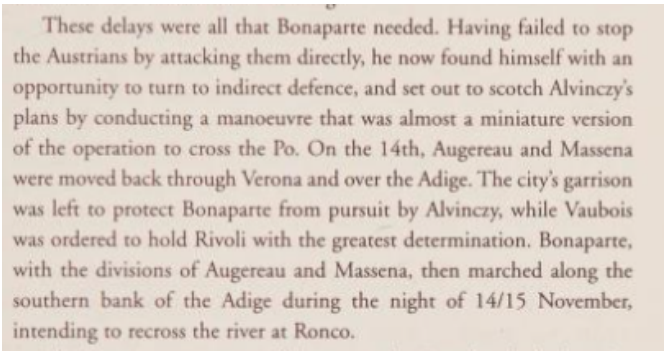
Although Napoleon appeared to be on the brink of defeat, he was in fact far from beaten. Even in this moment of apparent crisis, he was calmly calculating his options with precision. He recognized that a direct engagement against Alvinczy, given the severe numerical disparity, would lead only to destruction. Any hope of success, therefore, lay not in frontal battle but in indirect action, which became the core of his strategy.

Therefore:

Rather than confronting the Austrian commander head-on, Napoleon sought to force him into a strategic dilemma. This required rapid movement and strict secrecy. His aim was not to attack Alvinczy’s front, but to suddenly emerge in the Austrian rear, threatening the enemy’s line of retreat and communications, simultaneously forcing them into bad terrain. By placing Alvinczy’s withdrawal routes, supplies, artillery, and baggage at risk, Napoleon aimed to halt the Austrian advance without seeking immediate battle.

The execution of this maneuver was constrained by extreme time pressure. Austrian forces were steadily breaking through on the French northern front, leaving Napoleon with little room for delay. Speed was therefore critical.

To secure the time needed for this high-risk operation, Napoleon ordered Vaubois to maintain his position in the north for as long as possible, fully aware that this meant exposing those forces to serious danger while the decisive maneuver was carried out elsewhere (Coverage).



These delays were all that Bonaparte needed. Having failed to stop the Austrians by attacking them directly, he now found himself with an opportunity to turn to indirect defence, and set out to scotch Alvinczy's plans by conducting a manoeuvre that was almost a miniature version of the operation to cross the Po. On the 14th, Augereau and Massena were moved back through Verona and over the Adige. The city's garrison was left to protect Bonaparte from pursuit by Alvinczy, while Vaubois was ordered to hold Rivoli with the greatest determination. Bonaparte, with the divisions of Augereau and Massena, then marched along the southern bank of the Adige during the night of 14/15 November, intending to recross the river at Ronco.

The plan to execute this Strategy would follow:

1. Leave Macquard at Verona to maintain the illusion that the French army hadn’t moved, keeping the Austrians distracted (Coverage).
2. Secretly cross the Adige River at Ronco.

3. Maneuver behind Alvinczy's main force, the Friuli Corps.
4. Cut off their line of retreat.
5. Force them north into the mountains or trap them completely, destroying the enemy from a position of advantage.



Although the route through Ronco formed one of the strangest and most constricted battlefields of the campaign, dominated by marshes, high dikes, and narrow causeways, it still offered a dangerous but viable path. Movement was channelled into a few raised roads, turning the terrain into a severe bottleneck where large forces could neither deploy nor manoeuvre freely.

Napoleon had actually identified this corridor weeks before and had already foreseen its potential value, whether exploited by himself or by the enemy, possibly as early as September, as suggested in the text that follows.

This crossing-point was well known to the French, who had used it going in the opposite direction when they were pursuing Wurmser in September, and had left a pontoon bridge there until 9 November, when Bonaparte had ordered it to be taken down, and the boats made safe.[34] Foreseeing that the crossing would be useful, or that the enemy might try to use it himself, he had also posted a guard there on the 9th.

Dangerous though it was, the corridor represented the only viable route for turning Alvinczy's flank and threatening his rear. Alvinczy was aware of the area's vulnerability and had posted forces to watch it, yet the French night movement and the construction of the pontoon bridge at Ronco was so fast that it escaped Austrian detection.

(Critical Thinking, Adaptability, Planning Coverage, Misdirection, Concealment, Indirect Manipulation, Strategy Logistics, Strategy Castling, Anticipation)

- **Alvinczy's Thin Line, Napoleon's Desperate Stand**

But then when the French crossed the Adige river at Ronco and advanced toward Arcole, they encountered a prepared Austrian defence. The approaches to the village were swept by musketry and artillery fire from Croat battalions positioned behind barricaded, loopholed houses and guns

emplaced along the dikes. The final stretch of the causeway became a lethal killing zone, halting repeated French assaults and turning the fight into a brutal struggle for control of a single narrow approach.





Alvinczy likewise seems to have understood the weakness of the Adige crossing, prompting him to secure Arcole with a small defensive force.

This moment represented one in which Napoleon came dangerously close to losing everything. Although his strategy was genius, the conditions on the ground were relentlessly hostile. The terrain was nearly impassable, troop morale was low, and Alvinczy was smart enough to have left a small but effective detachment at Arcole. This force proved enough to block the final bridge and prevent a direct crossing.Once Alvinczy realized that Napoleon's presence in the area was genuine rather than a diversion, he immediately dispatched reinforcements, correctly identifying this sector as the decisive point upon which the campaign would turn.

These additional Austrian forces were, fortunately for the French, delayed by Masséna, largely through circumstance rather than design.

Even so, the situation at Arcole remained dire. Napoleon quickly concluded that a frontal assault was futile, the bridge could not be taken head-on. He therefore altered his approach: abandoning direct attacks on the bridge, he ordered a detachment to march away from the crossing, recross the river by ferry, and attempt to approach Arcole from the rear. The maneuver was slow and fraught with danger. Time was slipping away, Austrian reinforcements were closing in, and the margin for error was vanishing.



Back on the French right wing, Bonaparte had decided that the continued lack of success of the attacks on Arcole demanded a different approach, and had ordered Guieu to take the 18th and 25th Line along the right bank of the Adige to a point beyond the confluence of the Alpone, and ferry across to Albaredo. If he was successful in this, he could march along the left bank of the Alpone and attack Arcole directly, thus avoiding the deadly causeway that led up to the bridge. It

Meanwhile, Napoleon was forced to hold the enemy at Arcole with increasingly strained forces. He attempted to press the advance himself, even exposing his own person in an effort to inspire movement.

(Adaptability, Critical Thinking, Misdirection)

In the end, Napoleon's plan unfolded as intended. The troops he had sent on the wide turning movement succeeded in surprising the defenders and capturing Arcole. Tactically, it was a success. Yet Napoleon did not regard it as a true victory. His concern was no longer tactical; he was thinking in operational and strategic terms, beyond the present. Although he had achieved his immediate objectives, crossing the river, emerging in Alvinczy's rear, and securing Arcole, Napoleon was acutely aware of the delay this had required. That delay raised a far more dangerous possibility: Davidovich may already have defeated Vaubois at Rivoli, despite Napoleon's earlier orders for him to hold out for as long as possible. This fear was justified, as the coverage Napoleon had left in the north was thin and inflexible. If Vaubois had indeed been beaten, Napoleon's army would be strategically outflanked and cut off from Mantua. Faced with this risk, Napoleon chose speed over consolidation. He withdrew from Arcole as rapidly as possible, recognizing that the only viable course now was to reunite with Vaubois, confront Davidovich (this shows strategy flexibility). It was this overriding strategic consideration, rather than the situation at Arcole itself, that compelled Napoleon to abandon the position.

Years later, ***Marmont*** *reflects:*

> *Renouncing apparent success to obtain real success later.*

This decision confused soldiers at the time, sparked later controversy, but showed operational maturity and detachment from battlefield ego. Napoleon sacrifices a village, a symbol, to preserve freedom of maneuver.

This is important to take in mind for what is about to happen next….

(Critical Thinking, Abstract Reasoning, Abductive Reasoning, Strategy Flexibility)

- **The Battle of Arcole**

During the withdrawal, Napoleon suddenly received important news; that Vaubois had not been attacked and that Davidovich had not advanced at all.

This news meant that Napoleon still possessed a narrow but vital window of time.

Alvinczy's inaction proved to be a serious error, one that Napoleon was quick to recognize and exploit. He then immediately halted the retreat and ordered his forces to reverse course and return to the offensive.

Alvinczy, meanwhile, moved into Arcole after Napoleon's departure, only to find himself once again confronted by the French army.

The French crossed the Adige yet again at Ronco.



Austrian forces initially attacked them on the left bank near Bionde, but Masséna decisively repelled the assault through skillful and deceptive maneuvering. Augereau, however, was less successful in his attempt to advance toward Arcole, as the Austrians had reoccupied the ground and established strong defensive positions.

Napoleon's Strategy at Arcole:

Napoleon now appeared to be locked in a stalemate. Although he was able to beat back repeated Austrian attacks, he could not force his way back into Arcole. The question, then, was what course of action remained open to him. From his earlier attempts, Napoleon already understood that Arcole could not be taken through frontal assaults alone; success required crossing by alternate routes and striking the Austrians by surprise. As before, this principle would guide his strategy. This time, however, the circumstances were far more difficult. Napoleon was no longer facing minor decoy forces, but Alvinczy himself. For this reason, his initial attempts to cross at Albaredo, made twice, failed. Aware that the Austrian commander was anticipating further maneuvers, Napoleon recognized that only greater subtlety would succeed. He therefore devised

a new and more elaborate plan, one designed to break the deadlock and decisively shift the course of the battle.

The plan to execute this Strategy would follow:

Napoleon's primary objective in his plan **was to cross the Alpone River, thereby gaining access to the rear of Arcole.**



Previous attempts had been frustrated, but this time he intended to succeed through careful preparation.

He first ordered the construction of a bridge to secure the crossing, but the plan extended far beyond that single measure.

Fortification of the Strategy:

1. Napoleon assigned the 51st Line to guard the new bridge, ensuring its immediate security.
2. At the same time, Augereau received detailed instructions: a battalion of the 40th Line and fifty cavalry were to be dispatched to Legnago, **from where they would advance north along the left bank of the Adige in support of the new crossing.** Although this movement from Legnago would take longer to develop, once in position it would reinforce the forces crossing the Alpone.

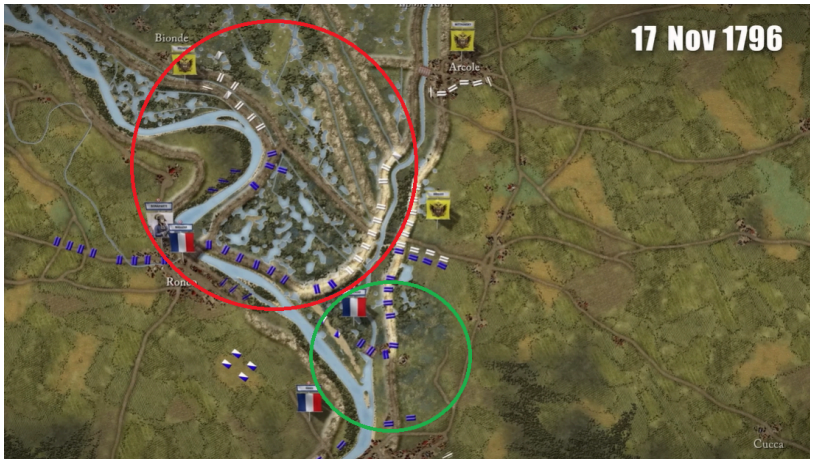


During the evening, Bonaparte, who seems to have concluded that continuing to direct his main effort against the bridge at Arcole would be pointless, began to organise a more co-ordinated attempt to outflank this obstacle. At 10 p.m., he informed Augereau that during the night a bridge would be built over the Alpone near the confluence, and instructed him immediately to send a battalion of the 40th to Legnago with 50 cavalry. A column was to be ordered to advance from there up the left bank of the Adige to support the troops who would cross the new bridge over the Alpone. The Austrians who had been positioned near the intended bridging-point withdrew during the night, and the French were able to bring four pontoons from the Adige to the Alpone

In this way, Napoleon planned 2 successive layers to his strategy, one to protect the crossing itself and another to strengthen it once established, further reinforcing the strategy's resilience.

Napoleon still needed to hold the Austrian forces in the north in check and block any renewed advance from Bionde. To do this, he instructed:

1. Masséna to contain Austrian attacks on one flank **while continuing to apply pressure at Arcole…↓**
2. As he ordered Robert to advance along the causeway toward the Arcole bridge. This forced the Austrians to keep their attention fixed on the bridge and to commit their infantry and artillery there. By pinning the enemy in place, Napoleon created the distraction necessary to carry out his decisive river crossing maneuver.



The battle was now approaching its climax, and the French were making an attack on Arcole from both sides, Robert towards the bridge, and Augereau's men towards the village. At about 3 p.m., Robert had almost reached the bridge, and on the other side the French were on the point of entering the village when, in Sulkowski's words, 'We saw a column of more than 4,000 enemies come out of it, rush onto the fatal

Augereau's division to cross, while Massena's division would both hold back the Austrians on the left, and attack the bridge at Arcole on the right. Part of the 51st was detailed to guard the bridge over the Alpone, and a redoubt was hurriedly constructed to defend the new bridgehead.

RED: MASSENA AND ROBERT PIN DOWN THE ENEMY.

GREEN: AUGEREAU'S CROSSING,

(Strategy Castling, Strategy Forecasting, Planning Process, Planning Intricacies, Planning Coverage, Planning Versatility, Misdirection, Tactics)

The Battle:

The attack from multiple directions was launched, and by its very nature it limited the Austrians' ability to concentrate their fire effectively. For the most part, the plan unfolded as intended. Augereau's division succeeded in crossing the Alpone, although their bridge came under heavy

fire and only part of the force was able to pass. This setback did not stop the advance. Augereau continued toward Arcole, eventually engaging the enemy and driving them back, steadily compressing the Austrian position within the village. Shortly afterward, the French column marching from Legnago arrived to support Augereau as planned; they threatened the Austrian flank at Arcole while Augereau fixed them in place from the front.

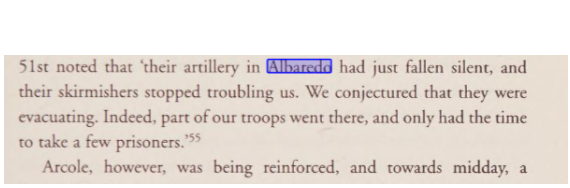
Under this growing pressure, Austrian resistance began to falter.

At the same time, on Masséna's sector, Austrian assaults once again failed. Masséna repelled the attacks and pushed the enemy back, maintaining control of his front and pinning them down; meanwhile Augereau continued his maneuver.

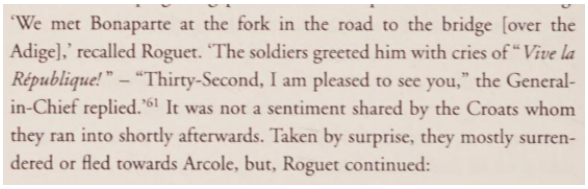
Up to this point, Napoleon's plan had worked almost perfectly.

But the situation changed when the Austrians, recognizing that defeat was imminent, launched a desperate counterattack. Roughly four thousand men surged out of Arcole and charged along the narrow dike in an attempt to disrupt the French forces pinning them. The sudden blow threatened the French momentum, even killing Robert in the process, but the effort came too late. Masséna, having already defeated the earlier attacks and facing little pressure, still had fresh troops available. Napoleon immediately shifted his forces toward the crisis, and not only Masséna's but nearly all the available units he had, an example of his classic concentration of force applied at a tactical level.

Napoleon's decision to concentrate his forces in that moment was based from his observations of the Austrian line, which he concluded was beginning to give way. Fire from the guns at Albaredo diminished, skirmishers appeared to pull back in certain sectors, French troops gained limited entry into the village, and a number of prisoners were captured. Seizing the moment Napoleon committed everything against the counterattack. French morale surged, cries of *"Vive la République!"* echoed across the field, and Masséna's men moved directly into the threatened sector. The Austrian counterattack was smashed, struck in the flank and driven back.


51st noted that 'their artillery in Albaredo had just fallen silent, and their skirmishers stopped troubling us. We conjectured that they were evacuating. Indeed, part of our troops went there, and only had the time to take a few prisoners.'[55]

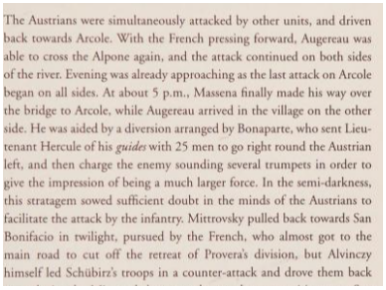
Arcole, however, was being reinforced, and towards midday, a


'We met Bonaparte at the fork in the road to the bridge [over the Adige],' recalled Roguet. 'The soldiers greeted him with cries of "*Vive la République!*" – "Thirty-Second, I am pleased to see you," the General-in-Chief replied.'[61] It was not a sentiment shared by the Croats whom they ran into shortly afterwards. Taken by surprise, they mostly surrendered or fled towards Arcole, but, Roguet continued:

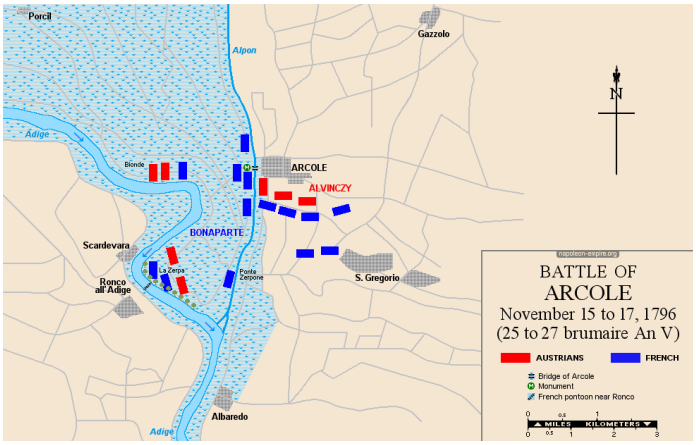
With the Austrian counterattack defeated, the French resumed their advance on all fronts. Augereau regained momentum at Arcole, Masséna pressed forward, and coordinated attacks converged across the battlefield. The Austrians were forced back not only from the bridge linking the Alpone to Arcole, which they had defended so stubbornly, but also from the rear of the village under Augereau's pressure. Their position was now on the verge of collapse.

Sensing this, Napoleon delivered one final trick; **psychological warfare.**

As daylight faded, he dispatched twenty-five cavalrymen to ride around the Austrian flank, sounding trumpets at several points. The Austrians, believing a large force was moving to cut off their retreat, fell into confusion. Morale broke.


The Austrians were simultaneously attacked by other units, and driven back towards Arcole. With the French pressing forward, Augereau was able to cross the Alpone again, and the attack continued on both sides of the river. Evening was already approaching as the last attack on Arcole began on all sides. At about 5 p.m., Massena finally made his way over the bridge to Arcole, while Augereau arrived in the village on the other side. He was aided by a diversion arranged by Bonaparte, who sent Lieutenant Hercule of his *guides* with 25 men to go right round the Austrian left, and then charge the enemy sounding several trumpets in order to give the impression of being a much larger force. In the semi-darkness, this stratagem sowed sufficient doubt in the minds of the Austrians to facilitate the attack by the infantry. Mittrovsky pulled back towards San Bonifacio in twilight, pursued by the French, who almost got to the main road to cut off the retreat of Provera's division, but Alvinczy himself led Schübirz's troops in a counter-attack and drove them back

Arcole finally fell. Masséna crossed the bridge into the village as Augereau entered from the opposite side. Austrian resistance collapsed, the enemy retreated, and French forces pressed the pursuit. Napoleon had won the Battle of Arcole through masterful coordination, concentration, and deception.



(Observation, Adaptability, Bluffing, Psychological-Warfare: Demoralization)

After his victory at Arcole on 18 November, Napoleon did not immediately pursue Alvinczy. While he was always attentive to the tactical situation, he also had to weigh broader operational and strategic variables. He therefore shifted his focus to what he correctly judged to be the more serious threat: Davidovich's Tyrol Corps. As noted earlier, this force endangered Vaubois at Rivoli and, despite earlier delays, had succeeded in pushing him back.

Leaving a screen of observation cavalry to monitor Alvinczy (Coverage).

Napoleon advanced with Masséna through Ronco toward Villafranca, seeking to reestablish contact with Vaubois, who had withdrawn toward Peschiera. This movement was designed to

prevent Davidovich from threatening Mantua or cutting French lines of communication. Simultaneously, Napoleon sent Augereau north through the Val Pantena toward Dolcè, with orders to move against Davidovich's line of retreat.



leaving some cavalry to observe Alvinczy. Bonaparte himself went with Massena's division via Ronco to Villafranca to attempt to link with Vaubois, who had decided to retire to Peschiera. At the same time as Massena's division was marching to prevent Davidovich from nearing Mantua, Augereau's division was sent north to go through Val Pantena towards Dolcè, to try to cut Davidovich's line of retreat.

Faced with these developments and reports that Alvinczy had been decisively defeated, Davidovich chose to withdraw. Although he briefly considered making a stand at Rivoli, the appearance of French columns convinced him that the situation was deteriorating, and he ordered a general retreat.

Unbeknownst to him, Alvinczy intended to link up with the Tyrol Corps and had promised to do so by the end of November, but this message did not reach Davidovich in time. Believing the campaign to be collapsing, Davidovich disengaged entirely.

When Alvinczy learned on 23 November that Davidovich had withdrawn from the campaign, he likewise decided to retreat. This decision brought the third phase of the siege of Mantua to an end, securing a complete Napoleonic victory.

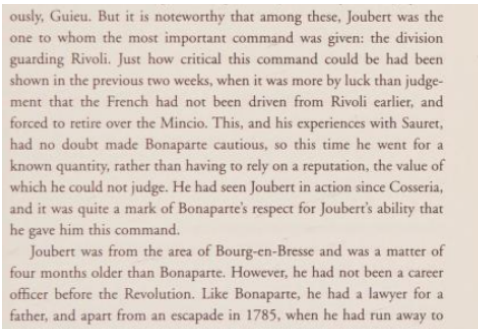
(Planning Coverage, Psychological Warfare: Abusing Insecurities, Strategy Castling)

Siege of Mantua (Final Phase):

After the victory at Arcole, Napoleon's army was exhausted, having suffered heavy losses. This decline in morale was no longer something he could fully control. What Napoleon *could* do, however, was improve the army by optimizing how it was led. If he could not directly command the morale of every soldier, he could at least ensure that the right men were commanding them.

This later explains his decision to replace Vaubois with Joubert. Vaubois had been responsible for holding Rivoli and had failed when Davidovich broke through. Even after the position was recovered, Napoleon refused to entrust **such a critical sector to him again.** He regarded Vaubois as mediocre in character and lacking the ability to command large formations.

Joubert, by contrast, was a commander Napoleon selected for very specific reasons. Napoleon had personally observed him in combat and trusted his own judgment over reputation or hearsay. He knew Joubert's temperament, courage, and endurance firsthand. In many ways, Joubert reflected Napoleon himself. He was not a pre-Revolutionary career officer, had studied law, rose through merit rather than birth.



ously, Guieu. But it is noteworthy that among these, Joubert was the one to whom the most important command was given: the division guarding Rivoli. Just how critical this command could be had been shown in the previous two weeks, when it was more by luck than judgement that the French had not been driven from Rivoli earlier, and forced to retire over the Mincio. This, and his experiences with Sauret, had no doubt made Bonaparte cautious, so this time he went for a known quantity, rather than having to rely on a reputation, the value of which he could not judge. He had seen Joubert in action since Cosseria, and it was quite a mark of Bonaparte's respect for Joubert's ability that he gave him this command.

Joubert was from the area of Bourg-en-Bresse and was a matter of four months older than Bonaparte. However, he had not been a career officer before the Revolution. Like Bonaparte, he had a lawyer for a father, and apart from an escapade in 1785, when he had run away to

These qualities were the ones that probably convinced Napoleon that Joubert was the kind of leader the army needed at that moment.

(Strategy Logistics, Leadership, Emotional Perception & Understanding)

As Napoleon worked to equip, reorganize, and strengthen his fragile army, Wurmser and the garrison trapped inside Mantua were on the brink of collapse, suffering from disease, hunger, and rising deaths. Alvinczi recognized that this was his final chance to rescue Mantua, since any further delay would lead to its fall. Meanwhile, Napoleon faced serious difficulties of his own, especially shortages of equipment and food, forcing his army to survive by plunder, making it an ideal moment for Alvinczi to strike once more.

Alvinczi therefore shaped his strategy around an advance through the Tyrolean mountains to the north. His objective was Rivoli, where the terrain, once broken through, favored the attacker. Although an approach from the east was possible, he had already suffered defeat there, and the flat terrain would have forced him into open-field combat.

However, Alvinczi did not rely on a single line of advance. He devised a complex and carefully coordinated plan to ensure success. While he ruled out a main attack from the east, he still committed troops there, using them to conduct deliberate feints across the plains. These movements were designed to draw French attention away from the true offensive coming from the north through the Tyrol toward Rivoli. Two columns were assigned to this diversionary effort.

1. Provera's column marched from Padua to Legnago, crossed the Adige, and advanced toward Mantua.

2. Bajalich's column moved from Bassano toward Verona, attacking French positions in the area.

In support: Mittrovsky held the Val Sugana, securing communication between the Tyrol and the attacking forces and preventing French interference with the mountain advance.

The purpose of these eastern columns was not to fight a decisive battle but to deceive. Comprising roughly 18,000 men, the diversion was large enough to appear threatening yet insufficient to win the campaign on its own. Meanwhile, the main army, about 28,000 men, advanced from Tyrol toward Rivoli to exploit the advantages of the terrain.

Amid all this, Napoleon's own situation was complex.

He had finally received reinforcements and was attempting to secure the southern flank by applying pressure on the Papal States, which temporarily diverted his attention. Even so, his forces were carefully deployed: troops remained before Mantua, Augereau was stationed at Legnago, Masséna at San Michele, Rey at Brescia, and, as noted earlier, Joubert at Rivoli. This distribution allowed Napoleon to detect and respond to any Austrian advance. It highlights the strength of his Strategy Building, by positioning his generals in this way, he ensured that no avenue of approach was left unguarded, and that he was never exposed to surprise attacks from unknown directions.

(Strategy Building, Planning Coverage)

- **Napoleon discovers Alvinczi's plan**

However, Napoleon was not physically present, which meant Alvinczi's diversions could still mislead him if his generals misread the situation, and initially, they did. When the feints began, confusion spread, and even Napoleon briefly believed the main attack would come from the east. Meanwhile, the true Austrian attack under Lusignan advanced with difficulty through harsh weather but eventually reached Joubert's rear. At first, Alvinczi's plan appeared to be working, until Joubert outmaneuvered Lusignan by lighting false campfires and withdrawing slightly. When Lusignan moved to engage, he discovered the deception too late, Joubert had already fallen back to Rivoli. Observing Austrian attempts to avoid frontal assault, turn his flanks, and cut his retreat, Joubert correctly identified Rivoli as the main attack. He informed Napoleon that this was the main Austrian attack and that the other actions were merely diversions. The report gave Napoleon the confirmation he needed. He reacted at once, redirecting reinforcements to Rivoli, warning of a possible sortie from Mantua, ordering Masséna to support Joubert, and preparing to go there himself. This moment marked the concentration of French forces at the decisive point and validated Napoleon's judgment in replacing Vaubois with Joubert.

(Decision Making)

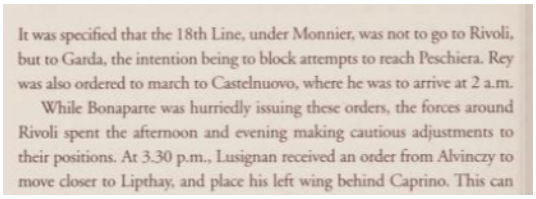
- **Napoleon creates a Strategic Net even before Rivoli**

As Napoleon concentrated his forces at Rivoli, he also positioned them deliberately with an eye beyond the battle itself.

- The 18th Line was sent to Garda, blocking any Austrian movement toward Peschiera and sealing off their escape routes.

- During the night, Rey was dispatched to Castelnuovo to secure the southern edge of the battlefield, ensuring that Rivoli could not be outflanked from the south.

He was not merely reinforcing a single point. He was also tightening a net, shaping the battlefield and controlling Austrian options, so that even after Rivoli was won, the enemy would have no freedom of movement.


It was specified that the 18th Line, under Monnier, was not to go to Rivoli, but to Garda, the intention being to block attempts to reach Peschiera. Rey was also ordered to march to Castelnuovo, where he was to arrive at 2 a.m.

While Bonaparte was hurriedly issuing these orders, the forces around Rivoli spent the afternoon and evening making cautious adjustments to their positions. At 3.30 p.m., Lusignan received an order from Alvinczy to move closer to Lipthay, and place his left wing behind Caprino. This can

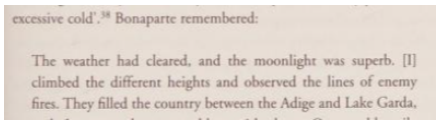
(Strategy Building, Planning Coverage, Anticipation, Field Envisioning)

- **The Battle of Rivoli**

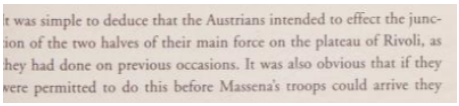
Napoleon reached Rivoli around midnight, between 2 a.m., in extreme cold. The Austrians were already on the field, settling into their battle positions. Rather than acting immediately, Napoleon went to observe. From the pattern of enemy campfires alone, he was able to distinguish five separate Austrian columns.

He noted they stretched **between the Adige and Lake Garda**

And concluded that the Austrians intended to **join on the Rivoli plateau**, as they had done before.


excessive cold'.[38] Bonaparte remembered:

The weather had cleared, and the moonlight was superb. [I] climbed the different heights and observed the lines of enemy fires. They filled the country between the Adige and Lake Garda,


t was simple to deduce that the Austrians intended to effect the junc-ion of the two halves of their main force on the plateau of Rivoli, as hey had done on previous occasions. It was also obvious that if they were permitted to do this before Massena's troops could arrive they

If this concentration were completed, Joubert would likely be crushed. From that moment on, the battle became a race against time.

(Observation, Analytical & Critical Thinking, Inductive Reasoning, Info Gathering)

Napoleon's strategy, therefore, was to prevent the Austrian columns from uniting on the plateau.

From this point onward, the battle became **tactical.**

He aimed to achieve his objective by holding the key terrain that blocked Austrian concentration. The columns he had identified were positioned behind a semicircular ring of hills surrounding the plateau. Napoleon understood that control of these heights meant control of observation, artillery deployment, and the ability to deny the enemy a coordinated advance. His goal was not to launch an immediate offensive, but to seize the hills first and conduct a defensive battle from this dominant ground.



would be sufficiently strong to overwhelm Joubert's division and drive it southwards. The remaining defensive positions in that direction were nowhere near as good as Rivoli, and in any case, trying to gather the troops to defend while being harried by a much larger and victorious force would not be easy. It was therefore crucial to prevent the concentration of the Austrian army for as long as possible, and this could only be done by defending the semi-circle of hills, San Marco and the Pontare.

(Columns on the Center lead by Alvinczi)

Napoleon also dispatched a regiment to the Pontare road to block and defend it against other advancing Austrian columns led by Quasdanovich .

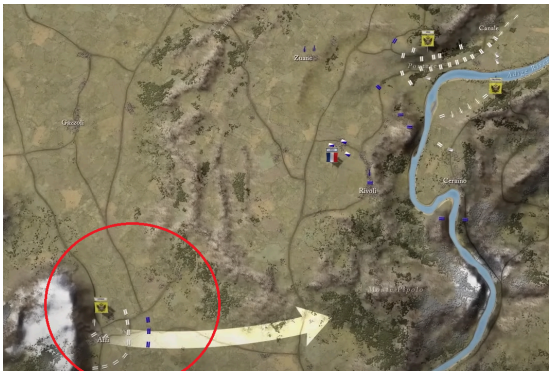


(Columns on the East in Pontare lead by Quasdanovich)

In addition to all this, Napoleon had Masséna, who was still on the way with reinforcements, so another of Napoleon's objectives was to delay the enemy and buy time until they arrived.

The battle opened early and quickly became a brutal, close-run fight, with both armies attacking aggressively. Napoleon's right wing was pinned, and even after Masséna arrived the French situation remained precarious. His arrival only brought a brief stabilization before events turned

sharply against them. The Austrian columns advancing through the Adige Valley led by Quasdanovich **broke through at Pontare,** while enemy forces in the **center pushed Napoleon back, with some units reaching the plateau.** Napoleon was now under pressure from all directions. To make matters worse, a column sent by Alvinczi under Lusignan, which had been maneuvering around the battlefield, **suddenly appeared in Napoleon's rear,** cutting off his line of retreat and placing him in grave danger of encirclement.



Everything appeared on the verge of collapse, and all attention turned to Napoleon. It was at this moment that he delivered his famous quote:

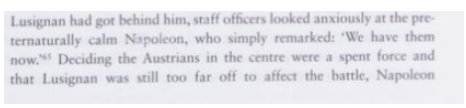
"They are ours."

But why could Napoleon say this when defeat seemed imminent?

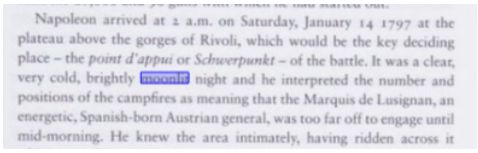
Because, beneath the apparent chaos, he clearly understood the true situation unlike anyone else did.

Napoleon's Insight:

1. First, regarding his rear: Napoleon recognized that Lusignan's column **was not the decisive threat it appeared to be.** The force was isolated, late, still too far away, and poorly supported by artillery. Crucially, it lacked the strength to exploit the temporary cutting of Napoleon's line of retreat. Napoleon understood a fundamental principle of war: a force that blocks your retreat but cannot act on it becomes a target rather than a danger.



Lusignan had got behind him, staff officers looked anxiously at the pre-
ternaturally calm Napoleon, who simply remarked: 'We have them
now.'[61] Deciding the Austrians in the centre were a spent force and
that Lusignan was still too far off to affect the battle, Napoleon

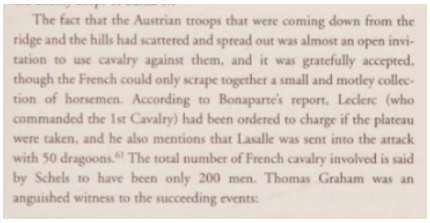


Napoleon arrived at 2 a.m. on Saturday, January 14 1797 at the
plateau above the gorges of Rivoli, which would be the key deciding
place – the *point d'appui* or *Schwerpunkt* – of the battle. It was a clear,
very cold, brightly moonlit night and he interpreted the number and
positions of the campfires as meaning that the Marquis de Lusignan, an
energetic, Spanish-born Austrian general, was too far off to engage until
mid-morning. He knew the area intimately, having ridden across it

Note: It is also important to note that Napoleon knew Lusignan would arrive late before this confirmation. When he reconnoitred the battlefield before the battle began when he was

identifying the Austrian columns, he had also been interpreting the pattern and distance of the enemy, inferred their positions and pace of movement. From this, he concluded that Lusignan would be late.

2. Second, in the center, where the main fighting against Alvinczi took place, Napoleon had spent the entire battle holding a defensive position along the ring of hills surrounding the plateau rather than attacking. As a result, it was the Austrians who became exhausted. They were conducting repeated offensive assaults uphill while trying to coordinate several advances at the same time. This is why Napoleon had stated before battle that whoever **controlled these heights would control the fight.** Consequently, even when Austrian units managed to break through and push the French back, they did so in a state of fatigue and disorder, spreading out as their momentum faded.



The fact that the Austrian troops that were coming down from the ridge and the hills had scattered and spread out was almost an open invitation to use cavalry against them, and it was gratefully accepted, though the French could only scrape together a small and motley collection of horsemen. According to Bonaparte's report, Leclerc (who commanded the 1st Cavalry) had been ordered to charge if the plateau were taken, and he also mentions that Lasalle was sent into the attack with 50 dragoons.[61] The total number of French cavalry involved is said by Schels to have been only 200 men. Thomas Graham was an anguished witness to the succeeding events:

3. Third, Napoleon identified the only truly immediate threat: Quasdanovich's column advancing from Pontare. The Austrians there had broken through and were close to reaching the plateau.

Note: Napoleon probably also had realized he did not need to defeat every Austrian column simultaneously. If he could destroy one, he could then turn his full attention to the others in sequence.

Now with these insights explained, Napoleon's next actions make sense.

1. He turned first against the Austrians advancing from Pontare. Napoleon identified a narrow gorge that Quasdanovich's troops had to pass through in order to reach the plateau and decided to set a trap there.

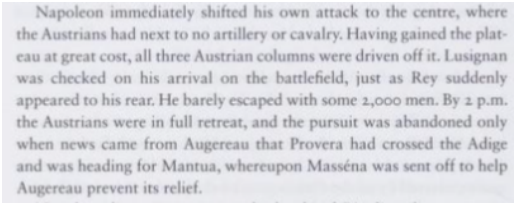


concentrated on Quasdanovich in the east as the main threat. He thinned out Joubert's line and sent every man he could spare to San Marco. When the dense Austrian columns, covered by artillery, assailed the gorge and reached the plateau, they were struck by French artillery firing canister shot into their close ranks from all sides, then bayonet-charged by an infantry column, and then attacked by all the French cavalry available. As they recoiled into the gorge, a lucky shot hit an ammunition wagon – all the more devastating in the narrow space – whereupon Quasdanovich ordered the attack aborted.

To do so, he stripped away only the minimum number of troops from the center (where the main fight against Alvinczi was still underway) , a risky move that demanded speed and precision. Napoleon then allowed Quasdanovich to continue advancing, as the Austrian commander believed he was on the verge of victory. When the Austrian columns emerged from the gorge onto the plateau, the trap was sprung. French artillery poured canisters into their dense formations, infantry surged forward with bayonets, and cavalry struck from the flanks and rear. The terrain transformed the position into a deadly kill zone: narrow approaches, tightly packed enemy troops, and overwhelming short-range firepower. As the Austrians attempted to withdraw back into the gorge, a lucky artillery hit detonated an ammunition wagon, triggering panic and disorder. Quasdanovich was forced to abandon the attack altogether.

Napoleon did not wait after defeating Quasdanovich.

2. The moment Quasdanovich collapsed, he shifted his forces back toward the Austrian center. That center, already weakened, had little cavalry, limited artillery, and was exhausted from prolonged uphill fighting. The result was decisive: all Austrian units that had reached the plateau from the center were driven off. Napoleon had known this outcome was inevitable. Even when the Austrians broke through, their position was unstable and close to collapse.



Napoleon immediately shifted his own attack to the centre, where the Austrians had next to no artillery or cavalry. Having gained the plateau at great cost, all three Austrian columns were driven off it. Lusignan was checked on his arrival on the battlefield, just as Rey suddenly appeared to his rear. He barely escaped with some 2,000 men. By 2 p.m. the Austrians were in full retreat, and the pursuit was abandoned only when news came from Augereau that Provera had crossed the Adige and was heading for Mantua, whereupon Masséna was sent off to help Augereau prevent its relief.

While many of his troops doubted the situation, Napoleon trusted his insight, which is why he committed fully to destroying Quasdanovich first and then returned to annihilate the center.

3. As for Lusignan in Napoleon's rear, events proved Napoleon correct. Lusignan was simply too late. By the time he approached, both Quasdanovich's column and Alvinczi's central forces had already been defeated. When Lusignan realized what had happened, he halted, only to find Rey's division appearing behind him. Cut off and threatened with encirclement, Lusignan escaped with only about 2,000 men.

Napoleon had won Rivoli in a battle that, to observers, looked moments away from disaster, a masterpiece of perception, timing, and battlefield judgment.



They are ours.

(Tactics, Tactical Response, Observation, Deductive Reasoning, Analytical Thinking, Critical Thinking, Insight, Trap Setting, Anticipation, Prediction, Planning Flexibility, Risk Assessments, Adaptability, Convergent Thinking)

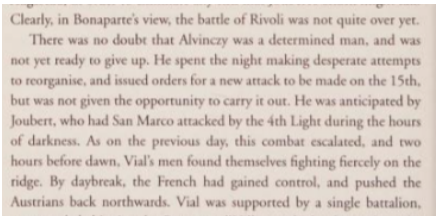
After the main battle of Rivoli, Napoleon knew the fighting wasn't fully over. Two threats remained:

1. **Alvinczy**: though defeated, he still had troops north of Rivoli and could regroup for another attack.
2. **Provera**: advancing toward Mantua in the south, aiming to relieve the fortress.

To handle both simultaneously, Napoleon **split his forces strategically**:

- **Joubert** was left in charge at Rivoli with **Rey's division added**, giving him enough strength to launch a decisive attack against Alvinczy.
- **Massena and Napoleon himself** moved south to confront Provera directly and stop him from breaking into Mantua.

During the night, Joubert attacked the Austrians at San Marco before Alvinczy could reorganize. By morning, the French controlled the heights. Once Rey arrived, Joubert launched a coordinated attack and outflanked the Austrians, forcing them into a chaotic retreat. Meanwhile, Provera was nearly close to Mantua, but a vigilant French sergeant spotted his disguised troops just in time. Then Napoleon arrived, and outnumbered by his concentrated forces, Provera tried to seize La Favorita as a desperate move, but was completely defeated and encircled, surrendering his division afterwards.



Clearly, in Bonaparte's view, the battle of Rivoli was not quite over yet.

There was no doubt that Alvinczy was a determined man, and was not yet ready to give up. He spent the night making desperate attempts to reorganise, and issued orders for a new attack to be made on the 15th, but was not given the opportunity to carry it out. He was anticipated by Joubert, who had San Marco attacked by the 4th Light during the hours of darkness. As on the previous day, this combat escalated, and two hours before dawn, Vial's men found themselves fighting fiercely on the ridge. By daybreak, the French had gained control, and pushed the Austrians back northwards. Vial was supported by a single battalion,

(Strategy Building, Planning Coverage, Risk Assessments, Anticipation)

By 3 February, the situation at Mantua was beyond recovery. The fortress had no hope left; it was collapsing under disease, famine, and death. This was Wurmser's final attempt to hold out, and it failed. After Napoleon defeated Alvinczi and then dispatched Provera with ease, surrender became unavoidable. Napoleon treated Wurmser with respect, praising him as a soldier of "courage and constancy." In the end, 16,000 men laid down their arms, the last remnants of an army that had once numbered 30,000. The siege of Mantua was complete and successful.

The news causes a public spectacle, announced with trumpets, proclaimed publicly to massive crowds, celebrated as a national triumph. Napoleon was no longer just a successful general, he was becoming a symbol of French glory, his reputation now rivaled the politicians of the Directory.

(Influence Building)

The Invasion of Austria:

Napoleon did not remain to enjoy his victory but immediately shifted his attention to the Papal States. Although the Pope had formally signed an armistice with France, Rome was quietly allying with Austria. Napoleon recognized this and on January 22, he ordered the French envoy Cacault to leave Rome within six hours, a calculated act designed to intimidate the Vatican.

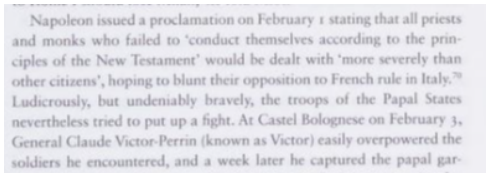
(Ordering an envoy to leave was a powerful diplomatic signal. In the 18th century, the presence of an envoy meant that relations were still intact and negotiations were possible; recalling him showed that trust had broken down. By removing his representative, Napoleon was in this context warning the Vatican that France was close to treating Rome as an enemy.)

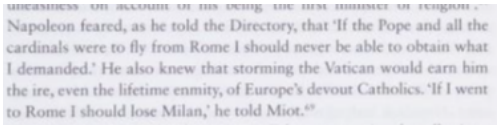
At the same time, he confronted Cardinal Alessandro Mattei, demanding an end to Austrian and Neapolitan influence. However, he deliberately softened the message by assuring him that the Pope would remain safe and that his religious authority would be respected.

Napoleon deliberately chose not to invade Rome.

He reasoned that if the Pope fled the city, French leverage would disappear, and if the Vatican were attacked directly, it would provoke outrage among millions of Catholics across Europe.

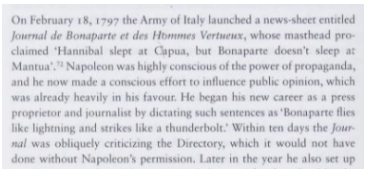
Instead of attacking the Church directly, Napoleon sought to control it from within. On February 1, he issued a proclamation stating that priests and monks who resisted French authority would be punished more severely than ordinary citizens. He framed this policy in Christian language, invoking the principles of the New Testament, with the aim of weakening clerical opposition, dividing compliant clergy from rebellious ones, and reducing popular uprisings inspired by religion. This amounted to psychological warfare against the Church rather than open persecution. Despite the imbalance of power, Papal forces attempted to resist. On February 3, they were defeated at Castel Bolognese, where General Victor easily crushed them, and Ancona soon fell without losses. The Papal troops, though brave, were poorly trained and equipped and stood no chance against experienced French veterans, making their resistance courageous but ultimately futile. By February 17, the Pope capitulated, and the Treaty of Tolentino formalized total Papal submission.


Napoleon issued a proclamation on February 1 stating that all priests and monks who failed to 'conduct themselves according to the principles of the New Testament' would be dealt with 'more severely than other citizens', hoping to blunt their opposition to French rule in Italy.[70] Ludicrously, but undeniably bravely, the troops of the Papal States nevertheless tried to put up a fight. At Castel Bolognese on February 3, General Claude Victor-Perrin (known as Victor) easily overpowered the soldiers he encountered, and a week later he captured the papal gar-


Napoleon feared, as he told the Directory, that 'If the Pope and all the cardinals were to fly from Rome I should never be able to obtain what I demanded.' He also knew that storming the Vatican would earn him the ire, even the lifetime enmity, of Europe's devout Catholics. 'If I went to Rome I should lose Milan,' he told Miot.[69]

(Logical, Direct & Emotional Manipulation, Strategy Building, Psychological Warfare: Abusing Insecurities, Abductive Reasoning, Emotional Understanding)

Napoleon created a propaganda machine during the Italian campaign. In February 1797, he founded the *Journal de Bonaparte et des Hommes Vertueux*, an army-run newspaper designed not to report events, but to shape how they were understood. Its famous slogan, *"Hannibal slept at Capua, but Bonaparte doesn't sleep at Mantua"*, explicitly compared him to Hannibal while implying he surpassed him. Napoleon grasped a modern truth: public opinion was a battlefield, and he would not leave its interpretation to Parisian journalists. Napoleon personally dictated articles, describing himself in epic, third-person language *"Bonaparte flies like lightning and strikes like a thunderbolt"* echoing Caesar and Homer. This exaggeration was intentional branding. Within days, the paper even criticized the Directory indirectly, something possible only because Napoleon allowed it and because the government already feared his popularity. The balance of power was beginning to tilt.


On February 18, 1797 the Army of Italy launched a news-sheet entitled *Journal de Bonaparte et des Hommes Vertueux*, whose masthead proclaimed 'Hannibal slept at Capua, but Bonaparte doesn't sleep at Mantua'.[72] Napoleon was highly conscious of the power of propaganda, and he now made a conscious effort to influence public opinion, which was already heavily in his favour. He began his new career as a press proprietor and journalist by dictating such sentences as 'Bonaparte flies like lightning and strikes like a thunderbolt.' Within ten days the *Journal* was obliquely criticizing the Directory, which it would not have done without Napoleon's permission. Later in the year he also set up

In Paris, his victories sparked a wave of celebrity culture: dances, cantatas, banquets, and public celebrations. Even hostile newspapers could not ignore him because he sold papers.

(Mass Manipulation, Indirect Manipulation, Influence Building, Emotional Understanding)

The war, however, was not yet over. Although Napoleon had finally taken Mantua, giving him now immense leverage, the Habsburgs chose to continue the fight rather than seek peace. This decision brought about a change in leadership, with Austria appointing the young military prodigy, **Archduke Charles.**

But now Napoleon enjoyed having the advantage over the Austrians, unlike at any earlier point in the campaign. He controlled strategic positions, most importantly Mantua, which gave him wide operational freedom. In addition, his army now outnumbered Austria's. Could Archduke Charles still turn the tide of the war?

- **Napoleon's Strategy to Invade Austria:**

Recognizing his clear advantage and aware that the Austrians were preparing a new offensive, Napoleon chose to strike first by carrying the war onto Austrian territory before they could act. **This pre-emptive attack will thus be his strategy.**

To execute it, he devised a plan based on two separate lines of advance.

1. **Napoleon** himself with Massena would lead the main army through Venetian territory, aiming to cross the Tagliamento River (coincidentally moving toward the area where Archduke Charles was positioned), then Capture Osoppo (a fortress controlling mountain routes), force the Pontebba passes, march into the Drave Valley.
2. At the same time, **Joubert** would advance through the Tyrolean mountains toward Carinthia, a move intended both to secure Napoleon's flank and to threaten Austria from a second direction. Then he would advance towards Brixen, push Austrians back beyond the mountain chain, and descend down toward the Drave Valley



His Plans Delay would admit of reinforcements reaching the Austrian army; he resolved on an early resumption of the campaign. He decided to advance broadly on two lines. His main army would move through Venetian territory and force the passage of Tagliamento, behind which the Archduke Charles was assembling his forces. At the same time Joubert, operating through the Tyrol, would move towards Carinthia, and the two forces would unite in the valley of the Drave, the main army having advanced north-east across the Carnic Alps. The French army would them be in a position to march on Vienna.

Although the two columns had different immediate objectives, they were ultimately meant to converge in the Drava Valley, opening a direct route toward Vienna.

(Strategy Castling, Strategy Foresight, Strategy Flexibility, Planning Coverage & Process)

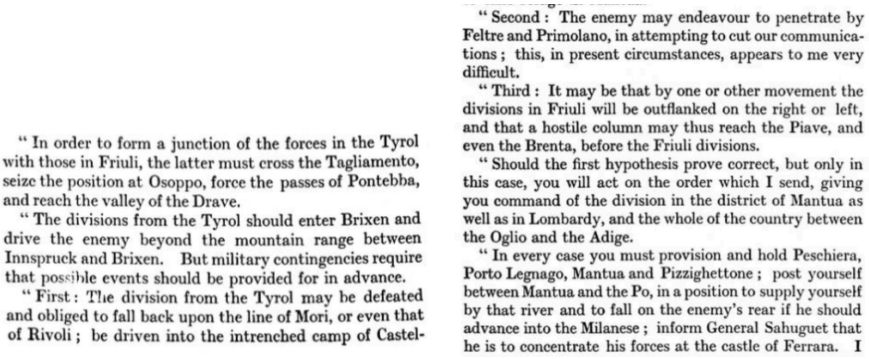
- **Napoleon's Contingency for Joubert:**

On reflection, Napoleon's plan was good in theory, yet one element clearly unsettled him. Half of his plan depended heavily on Joubert's advance through the Tyrol and on his ability to defeat the Austrian forces there. Napoleon considered the risk: what if Joubert were beaten?

Although Napoleon gave him detailed guidance on mountain warfare, advising him, for example, to attack Botzen from the most favorable direction while taking snow, weather, and pass conditions into account, defeat was still possible. In Napoleon's worst-case scenario, Joubert could be driven back step by step, potentially as far as Mantua.

To prepare for this, Napoleon drafted an extensive contingency plan that anticipated multiple outcomes.

He authorized Joubert, if defeated, to assume both military and political command over all of northern Italy, granting him supreme authority. Joubert's mission would then be to hold Lombardy, secure Mantua, and prevent Austrian forces from re-entering Italy. He was to position himself between Mantua and the Po River, use the river as his main supply line, and strike Austrian columns as they advanced.



" In order to form a junction of the forces in the Tyrol with those in Friuli, the latter must cross the Tagliamento, seize the position at Osoppo, force the passes of Pontebba, and reach the valley of the Drave.

" The divisions from the Tyrol should enter Brixen and drive the enemy beyond the mountain range between Innspruck and Brixen. But military contingencies require that possible events should be provided for in advance.

" First: The division from the Tyrol may be defeated and obliged to fall back upon the line of Mori, or even that of Rivoli; be driven into the intrenched camp of Castel-

" Second: The enemy may endeavour to penetrate by Feltre and Primolano, in attempting to cut our communications; this, in present circumstances, appears to me very difficult.

" Third: It may be that by one or other movement the divisions in Friuli will be outflanked on the right or left, and that a hostile column may thus reach the Piave, and even the Brenta, before the Friuli divisions.

" Should the first hypothesis prove correct, but only in this case, you will act on the order which I send, giving you command of the division in the district of Mantua as well as in Lombardy, and the whole of the country between the Oglio and the Adige.

" In every case you must provision and hold Peschiera, Porto Legnago, Mantua and Pizzighettone; post yourself between Mantua and the Po, in a position to supply yourself by that river and to fall on the enemy's rear if he should advance into the Milanese; inform General Sahuguet that he is to concentrate his forces at the castle of Ferrara. I

Coverage: Napoleon further strengthened this defensive framework by ordering Sahuguet to concentrate his forces at Ferrara, an example of deliberate defense-in-depth rather than panic.

In essence, Napoleon's contingency plan provided Joubert with a complete guide on how to hold on after defeat, buying time until Napoleon could return and support him.

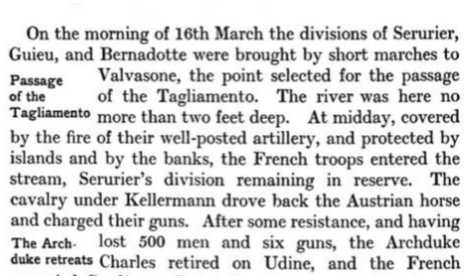
(Planning Contingency, Planning Coverage, Planning Applicability, Overall Foresight)

- **Battle of Valvasone (Archduke Charles and Napoleon's first ever encounter):**

As Napoleon advanced eastward, he did so on a broad front rather than in a single concentrated column, deliberately forcing the Austrians to disperse their forces. When he reached the Tagliamento River, he found Archduke Charles positioned on the opposite bank.

Note: It is important to know that Archduke Charles's objective at this stage was to gain time until the rest of his army could arrive. The Austrians were still in the process of preparing their defenses, while Napoleon had already gone fully on the offensive. As a result, Charles initially adopted a defensive posture.

Napoleon quickly identified a favorable crossing point near **Valvasone**, where the river was shallow and broken by islands that offered cover. His army crossed rapidly and struck the Austrian positions with force. The Austrian line collapsed, and Charles was compelled to retreat, an engagement known as the **Battle of Valvasone,** which ended in a French victory.



On the morning of 16th March the divisions of Serurier, Guieu, and Bernadotte were brought by short marches to Valvasone, the point selected for the passage of the Tagliamento. The river was here no more than two feet deep. At midday, covered by the fire of their well-posted artillery, and protected by islands and by the banks, the French troops entered the stream, Serurier's division remaining in reserve. The cavalry under Kellermann drove back the Austrian horse and charged their guns. After some resistance, and having lost 500 men and six guns, the Archduke Charles retired on Udine, and the French

Passage of the Tagliamento

The Archduke retreats

At the same time, Joubert achieved success in the Tyrol and advanced toward the planned rendezvous, meaning Napoleon had no need to activate his contingency plans.

As Archduke Charles withdrew, Napoleon sent Bernadotte in pursuit while directing Masséna to cut off the Austrian retreat at Tarvis and the defenses there. Despite severe difficulties in the terrain, Masséna reached Tarvis and, through bold and skillful action, destroyed the Austrian forces there. When Charles arrived at Tarvis, he found his troops already in flight. Reduced to fragments of his original army, he fell back to Klagenfurt in an attempt to reorganize. However, with Napoleon and Masséna closing in, he was unable to do so and was forced to retreat again. Napoleon then entered the Drava Valley after repeatedly outmaneuvering and humiliating Charles. Joubert soon arrived as planned, and the two French forces finally united.

(Tactics, Observation)

The Austrians attempted to make a stand in the gorges near Neumarkt, where the terrain strongly favored defense. Despite this, the French broke through the center after hard fighting, forcing the Austrians to retreat until the last major natural barrier before Vienna. Napoleon was now on the direct road to the capital. A final Austrian stand failed, and the French advance reached Leoben.

- **The End of the War Of The First Coalition:**

At Judenberg, Napoleon and the Austrian envoys agreed to a suspension of hostilities, after which Napoleon unilaterally negotiated peace, signing the Preliminaries of Leoben. Following the agreement, Napoleon withdrew his army into Venetian territory

Napoleon had won the WAR OF THE FIRST COALITION.

Militarily, Napoleon had achieved total victory. Strategically, he was nearing the limits of what success could sustain. Politically, he seized the opportunity to dictate terms, acting as a sovereign rather than merely a general.

This moment marks the turning point when Napoleon ceases to be just a brilliant young commander and begins to emerge as a European power in his own right.

By this point, Napoleon had:

Crossed Apennines and the Alps, defeated Sardinia, 6 Austrian armies, inflicted 120,000 casualties, forced peace on, The Pope, Piedmont, Naples and abolished the Duchy of Modena

And yes, before turning 28.



THE EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGN: