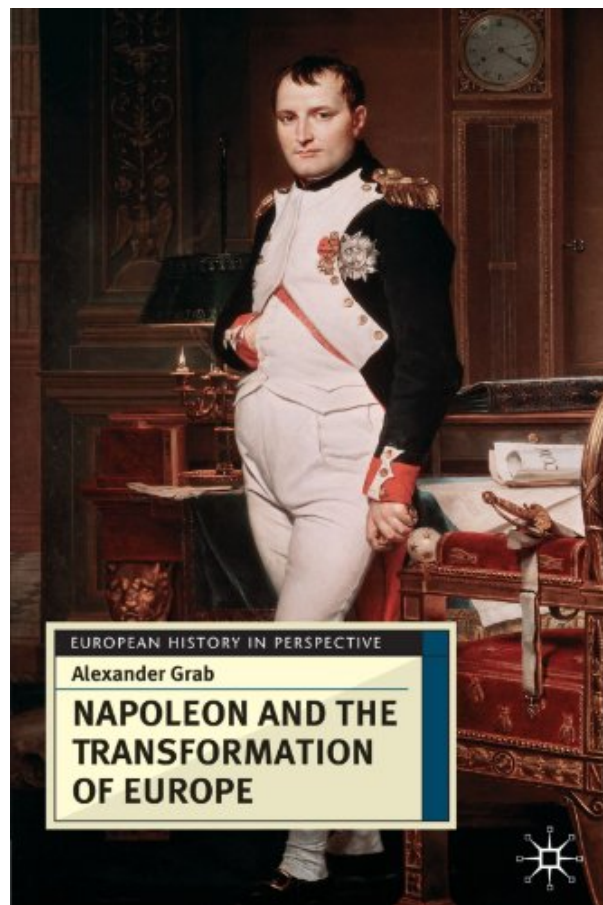
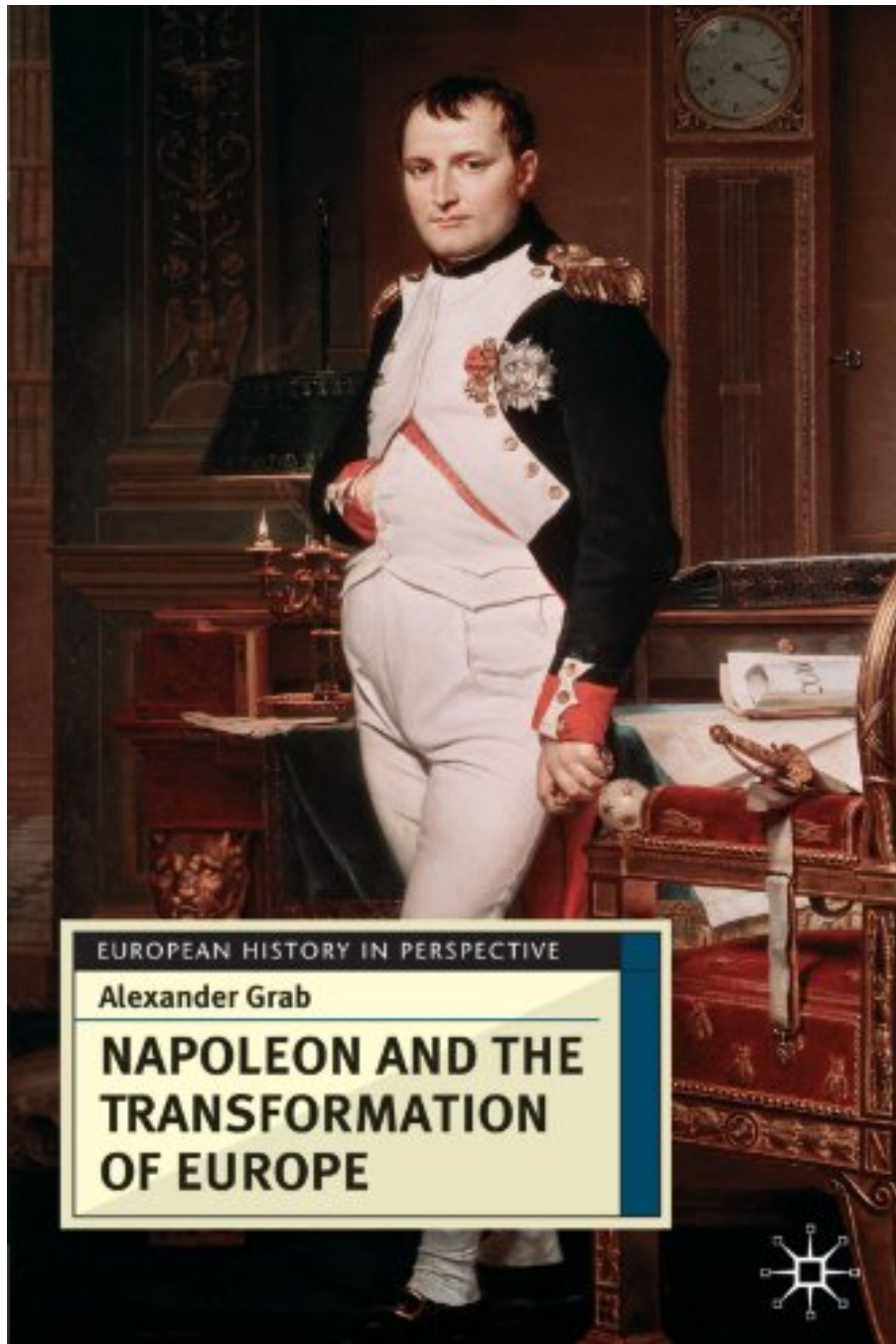


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## Review

"Excellent, up-to-date clear introduction. Broad in perspective and in many ways surpasses existing literature."--Dr Lucy Riall, Birbeck College, University of London

"Alexander Grab has written a survey that will rapidly become the best starting point for students of the period. It combines the rare qualities of succinctness and depth of thought that will both inform and inspire undergraduates for many years to come. A much needed addition to the literature of an historical topic at last coming into its own."--Professor Michael Broers, University of Aberdeen

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Alexander Grab explores the impact of Napoleon's domination throughout his empire and the response of the Europeans to his rule. This important book focuses on the developments and the events in the ten states that comprised the Grand Empire: France itself, Belgium, Germany, The Illyrian Provinces, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland. Grab discusses Napoleon's exploitation of occupied Europe and particularly his reform policies, and assesses their success in transforming Europe.

- Sales Rank: #557068 in Books
- Published on: 2003-10-10
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.50" h x .60" w x 5.50" l, .78 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 264 pages

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## About the Author

Alexander Grab is Professor of History, University of Maine.

## Most helpful customer reviews

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Logical, informative, and very well-written

By AW

Alexander Grab has crafted a marvelous analysis of Europe during the Napoleonic period. This is a well-written and enlightening volume that details the application and effect of French (particularly Napoleonic) hegemony throughout much of the continent between 1792 and 1815. It provides a perfect balance of detail and brevity. It is "low-density" in its presentation, making it easy to read and comprehend. And yet it manages to paint a comprehensive picture and accomplishes its stated aims remarkably well.

Grab begins his work with an excellent introduction that outlines recent scholarship on the Napoleonic period. He emphasizes that his own work is meant as a synthesis of secondary literature intended to provide

an overview of Napoleonic rule in a European context. The organization of the chapters is excellent and lends itself to easy comprehension. It begins with a chapter that provides a chronological narrative of the French Revolutionary era (beginning in 1792) and on through the rise of the French Empire (under Napoleon) to its height in 1810-1812. The second chapter provides an overview of Napoleonic rule in Europe, emphasizing the common threads and themes observed throughout the empire. Ten subsequent chapters function as the core of the book, with each chapter dedicated to a different country that--at one time or another during the period--was incorporated into the French Empire (France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany (as it existed during the era), Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, Italy, the Grand Duchy of Warsaw (Poland), and Illyria). These chapters examine in detail the application of French rule, its effect on the country and its development, and the legacy of Napoleonic dominance. These ten chapters can easily function as standalone essays that can be read independently of each other. Following these essays, Grab provides another chronological chapter that picks up where his first chapter left off, covering the invasion of Russia in 1812 and on through the French defeats in the Wars of the Sixth and Seventh Coalitions. These "flanking" chronological chapters help weave the standalone essays together, providing overall continuity.

The major theme of Grab's work is on the "Janus face" of Napoleonic rule in Europe. Napoleon was a harbinger of change and modernity in Europe, precipitating major reforms and, in some locations, virtually ending the existence of the Ancien Régime--the monarchical and aristocratic social and political system that had dominated Europe for centuries. These efforts created substantial legacies in many countries in the empire, like the establishment of uniform legal systems, improved primary and secondary education, and centralized state apparatuses supported by technical and professional bureaucracies. Despite these progressive reforms and their modernizing effects, Grab emphasizes that French rule was unmistakably characterized by exploitation as well. The transformations in imperial territories were predicated on Napoleon's need for efficient tax collection and conscription systems to feed his inexorable war machine. Napoleon ultimately engineered an empire intended to enrich and elevate France above the rest of Europe. Still, the concluding chapter emphasizes the lasting influence Napoleonic reforms had in many parts of Europe, even after the collapse of the empire and Napoleon's final defeat and exile.

Grab's writing style is clear and easy to follow. He makes great use of topical headings within each of his chapters, separating his narrative into clear and distinct sections. Each of his chapters on the countries in the Napoleonic Empire follows a generally chronological progression of the country through the Napoleonic period and ends with a section on the lasting effects and legacy of Napoleonic rule. This format makes each chapter easy to read and understand.

My only issue with this book is that it lacks an analysis of the countries in Europe that were not under the domination of France, notably the other major rivals to the French Empire: Britain, Russia, Austria, Prussia, and the Ottoman Empire. Having an analysis of each of these major powers (and other minor powers such as Denmark and Sweden) and their relationships to the Napoleonic Empire would have provided a truly comprehensive analysis of Europe during the period. Still, this is outside the stated scope of Grab's work, which was to analyze the effect of Napoleonic reforms in the countries of the empire, and can hardly be called a criticism.

This is a great book and I highly recommend it for any reader interested in the Napoleonic period, particularly if the interest is in a broader European context as opposed to a French-centric analysis.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Thorough Yet Concise And Objective As Well

By Kirk R. Lowry

Napoleon And The Transformation Of Europe, by Alexander Grab, is a volume thorough yet concise. The

author writes a history and an analysis of the political and social policies of Napoleon in France and throughout Europe. Chapters relate the changes attempted and effected in each of the regions to come under the domination of Napoleon.

Well researched and written, the book is particularly appreciated for having a complete lack of bias. It is rare to read a book in which the attitude of the author in respect of Napoleon is not apparent. Grab is consistently objective when writing about the administrations established by Napoleon in Europe noting "The Janus Face of Napoleon's Rule: Reform and Exploitation".

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