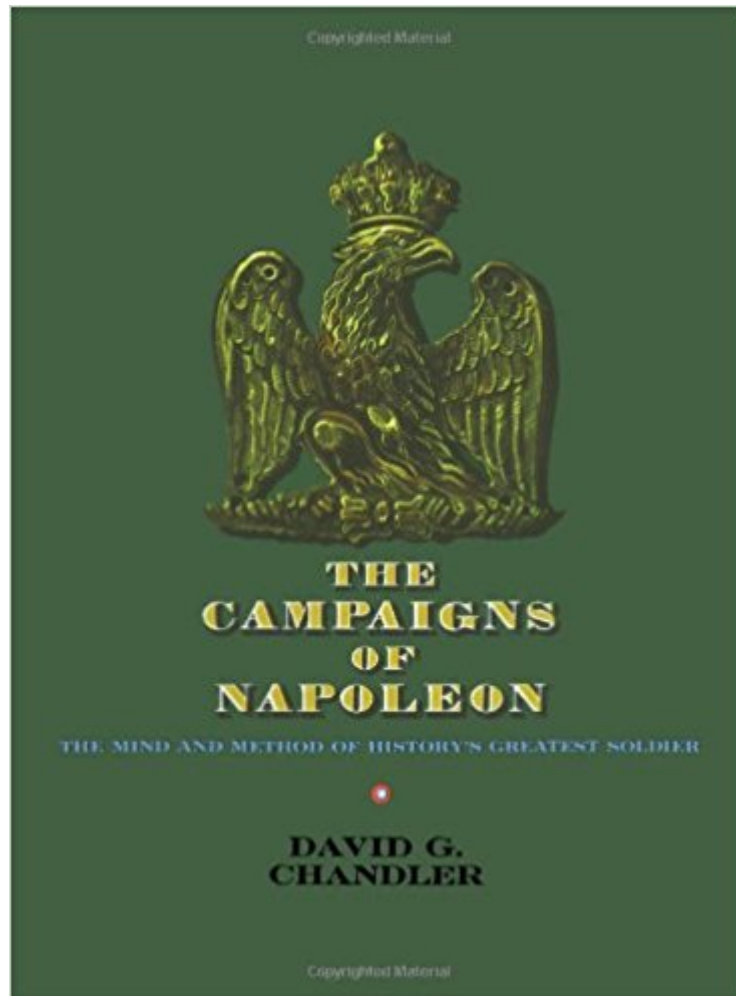




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The Campaigns Of Napoleon



Synopsis

Napoleonic war was nothing if not complex – an ever-shifting kaleidoscope of moves and intentions, which by themselves went a long way towards baffling and dazing his conventionally-minded opponents into that state of disconcerting moral disequilibrium which so often resulted in their catastrophic defeat. The Campaigns of Napoleon is an exhaustive analysis and critique of Napoleon's art of war as he himself developed and perfected it in the major military campaigns of his career. Napoleon disavowed any suggestion that he worked from formula ("Je n'ai jamais eu un plan d'opérations"), but military historian David Chandler demonstrates this was at best only a half-truth. To be sure, every operation Napoleon conducted contained unique improvisatory features. But there were from the first to the last certain basic principles of strategic maneuver and battlefield planning that he almost invariably put into practice. To clarify these underlying methods, as well as the style of Napoleon's fabulous intellect, Mr. Chandler examines in detail each campaign mounted and personally conducted by Napoleon, analyzing the strategies employed, revealing wherever possible the probable sources of his subject's military ideas. The book opens with a brief account of Bonaparte's early years, his military education and formative experiences, and his meteoric rise to the rank of general in the army of the Directory. Introducing the elements of Napoleonic "grand tactics" as they developed in his Italian, Egyptian, and Syrian campaigns, Mr. Chandler shows how these principles were clearly conceived as early as the Battle of Castiglione, when Napoleon was only twenty-six. Several campaigns later, he was Emperor of France, busily constructing the Grande Armée. This great war machine is described in considerable detail: the composition of the armies and the élite Guard; the staff system and the methods of command; the kind of artillery and firearms used; and the daily life of the Grande Armée and the all-seeing and all-commanding virtuoso who presided over every aspect of its operation in the field. As the great machine sweeps into action in the campaigns along the Rhine and the Danube, in East Prussia and Poland, and in Portugal and Spain, David Chandler follows closely every move that vindicates – or challenges – the legend of Napoleon's military genius. As the major battles take their gory courses – Austerlitz, Jena, Fried-land – we see Napoleon's star reaching its zenith. Then, in the Wagram Campaign of 1809 against the Austrians – his last real success – the great man commits more errors of judgment than in all his previous wars and battles put together. As the campaigns rage on, his declining powers seem to justify his own statement: "One has but a short time for war." Then the horrors of the Russian campaign forever shatter the image of Napoleonic invincibility. It is thereafter a short, though heroic and sanguinary, road to Waterloo and

St. Helena. Napoleon appears most strikingly in these pages as the brilliant applier of the ideas of others rather than as an original military thinker, his genius proving itself more practical than theoretical. Paradoxically, this was both his chief strength and his main weakness as a general. After bringing the French army a decade of victory, his methods became increasingly stereotyped and, even worse, were widely copied by his foes, who operated against him with increasing effectiveness toward the end of his career. Yet even though his enemies attempted to imitate his techniques, as have others in the last century and a half, no one ever equaled his success. As these meticulous campaign analyses testify, his multifaceted genius was unique. Even as the end approached, as David Chandler points out, his eclipse was "the failure of a giant surrounded by pygmies." "The flight of the eagle was over; the eagle was safely caged at last, and an exhausted Europe settled down once more to attempt a return to former ways of life and government. But the shade of Napoleon lingered on irresistibly for many years after his death in 1821. It lingers yet."

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Customer Reviews

Eliot Fremont-Smith Books of the Times A massive and absorbing -- one is tempted to say definitive -- account and detailed analysis of the military career of Napoleon....The descriptions of the battles -- all the important ones, and all augmented by superb position maps -- have perhaps never been done with greater clarity.The New York Review of Books Chandler can hold up his head with the best of them. His prose is as clear as his intellect....his scholarship is excellent...this is a fine book for the historian, the student, and the intelligent reader.Los Angeles Times Chandler's analysis is so

thorough that there is hardly an area untouched. The New Yorker The book is engrossing, and...amounts to a first-rate general account of Europe in the Napoleonic era....brilliant, unremittingly attentive to detail and sparkling with insights into a man, a nation, and an epoch. The Boston Globe Writing clearly and vividly, [Chandler] turns dozens of persons besides Napoleon from mere wooden soldiers into three-dimensional characters. John Barkham Book Week In every way...a pleasure to read...a remarkable work which comes as close to dissecting the ingredients of Napoleon's military genius as any I have read...[it is] that rare combination -- a book impeccable in its expertise, penetrating in its analysis, and attractive in its presentation. No matter how numerous your books on Napoleon, make room for this one. St. Louis Post-Dispatch Few works equal the scope and scholarship of Chandler's The Campaigns of Napoleon...a masterpiece in the truest sense of what military history ought to be.

David G. Chandler is Head of the Department of War Studies at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, and a Fellow of both the Royal Historical and the Royal Geographical societies. He is President of the British Commission for Military History and a Vice-President of the Commission International d'Histoire Militaire. During his researches for The Campaigns of Napoleon, Mr. Chandler made considerable use of primary sources -- including the thirty-two volumes of Correspondence de l'Empereur Napoleon -- and consulted many contemporary memoirs and military commentaries. (This he did with some caution, for such material is often far from reliable.) He also examined many of the most revealing and interesting studies that have been written by soldiers and scholars over the past 145 years, and he incorporated extracts from recently discovered sources in the hope of illuminating still further the well-trodden paths of Napoleonic studies. The author of a dozen works on early eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century military history, David G. Chandler is a recognized authority in the Marlburian and Napoleonic periods. His other publications include A Dictionary of the Napoleonic Wars, 1979, Waterloo -- The Hundred Days, 1980, An Atlas of Military Strategy, 1980, and Napoleon's Marshals, (editor), 1987. He has also contributed a chapter to Volume VI of the New Cambridge Modern History as well as numerous articles and reviews to magazines and journals. Chandler lives in Yately, Hampshire, England.

I won't add much to the many reviews of the text of this excellent book, but wanted to mention a few things about the Kindle version, because few of the reviews mention it: 1) reading this book on any kind of Kindle device is probably not a good idea if you want to be able to read the maps, but I have been pleasantly surprised by the maps when reading this book with the Kindle app on my iPad--the

campaign maps are quite clear, and the battle maps are very nice, in three colors (black, white, and red), and all the maps can be enlarged for better viewing. All in all, very legible and nice maps.²) A previous reviewer mentioned that there was no table of contents in the Kindle version (!), but this has been fixed as well, with links to all of the chapters, subchapters, maps, illustrations, etc. Especially with the search feature, the kindle version is very easy to navigate around. All in all, an excellent read and a great reference to carry around on your iPad.

Bought the Kindle edition so now I have the book in paper and electronic forms. The book is an awesome achievement, a tremendous wealth of information presented in a most satisfying package. The hardcover edition gets five stars, hands down. I have looked through the Kindle edition and discover/confirm the complaint of other admirers, that the maps are virtually useless. There's no way to scale them up on the computer screen so they are little better than postcard illustrations. That weakness cost the publication one star for the Kindle edition

I wanted to thoroughly understand the military history of the Napoleonic period and couldn't find anything close to Chandler's epic work. It took me three attempts to get through it. It is work to get through this massive book. Chandler goes into excruciating tactical detail. He does not provide enough maps and expects the reader to understand obscure geographic references during the numerous battle narratives. Still, the work to get through the book is rewarding if you truly care about military history. Chandler's analysis of Napoleon's system of fighting, personal genius, and ultimate failure is brilliant and complete. Reading this is like getting an advanced degree in Napoleonic warfare. Five stars well earned.

The life of Napoleon is now universal knowledge, The fascinating period of the French revolution had an impact on modern history and profoundly shaped the man that probably made it survive defending the liberal conception of the constitutions of most countries. Having said that the book is superb focusing on the art of war showing the master strategies and genius of a supreme commander. The book is fundamental to understand the man and the legend.

David Chandler is the premier British historian on the military history of Napoleon (1769-1821). Napoleon was a Corsican who was perhaps the greatest field general in the long and sanguinary history of warfare. Chandler's book is expensive to purchase, exhaustive to read and it quite simply the sine qua non on where to begin your serious study of Napoleon. What a man the Emperor of

France was! A military genius who could be very cruel and merciful. A tireless workaholic whose military genius burns brightly in the annals of history. Chandler's work is replete with maps and illustrations from the Napoleonic era. His writing is clear and easy to follow. The chapter on Napoleon's strategical genius is outstanding. All of the 60 major battles are covered. As a longtime Civil War buff jaded from reading my umpteenth account of Gettysburg I found much of interest in Chandler's work. This work will be worth your well earned money! It is essential to add to your Napoleonic bookshelf!

A most excellent read, it flows from campaign to campaign very well and does a decent job at including the effect of political and social events on Napoleonic events. While a very good chronicle it is definitely not a completely comprehensive analysis of every campaign. Due to its scope it does miss out on some tactical details that are of relevance to military historians and buffs alike but it does a very good job of capturing the strategic elements and mindset of the Emperor and his Marshals. Fluid and easy to read I definitely recommend this book.

Exhaustive, complete, authoritative. There is no one volume military history of Napoleonic campaigns that can even compare to this. No politics, this is war, and military reforms that affect war. Nothing else. You want to learn about Josephine or the Code Napoleone, you won't find a single word in these 1000 pages about that. Understanding the military angle, is of prime importance. The fields of Austerlitz are the only reason those other details even MATTER.

This may have been written in the sixties, but it is still the best one volume book on Napoleon's military campaigns out there. Grand in scale and in scope, the author has a wonderful and compelling prose style to match. Its like listening to a marvelously magnetic storyteller tell an incredible saga of a soldier who was much larger than life. While the book is generally favorable to Napoleon, it also unhesitatingly shows his warts, both personal and professional. The massacre at Jaffa and the failure at Acre are black marks on his career, but they are covered here in detail. This book is the gold standard for the field.

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