

Response Page

The following responses were posted on the H-France discussion list in response to Charles J. Esdaile's review of Frederick Schneid, *Napoleon's Conquest of Europe: the War of the Third Coalition*.

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The original review may be found on the H-France web page at:

<http://h-france.net/vol7reviews/esdaile.html>

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Being neither a diplomatic or military historian nor a specialist of the Napoleonic era, I hesitate to write here, but since I doubt there will be a rejoinder forthcoming from Professor Esdaile, I cannot help myself from asking, how can any historian seriously write without "moral judgment" that "[Napoleon's] foreign policy between 1800 and 1805 was a success; he achieved his objectives" when this was precisely the moment at which the emperor was forced to abandon most of what remained of France's New World empire in response to his ill-fated effort to restore colonial rule and the slave system in one of the most coveted sugar-producing colonies, Saint-Domingue?

Whatever success the emperor had at the time was clearly short-lived and overwhelmingly undercut by the enormous foreign-policy disaster that was the Leclerc expedition to suppress the Haitian Revolution. Without this precious Caribbean colony, maintaining the Louisiana territories proved equally impossible for the Napoleonic state. The road to whatever Pyrrhic victories Napoleon would subsequently win in Europe was paved as much with the hard lessons of humiliating defeat as with the "evidence" of "successful diplomatic maneuvering," but in order to find that evidence a much broader perspective would need to be taken, well beyond the narrow confines of so-called Great-Power politics.
