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978-0-521-45360-8 - The Impact of Napoleon: Prussian High Politics, Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Executive, 1797-1806

Brendan Simms

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This book examines Prussia's response to Napoleon and Napoleonic expansionism in the years before the crushing defeats of Auerstedt and Jena, a period of German history as untypical as it was dramatic.

Between the years 1797 and 1806 Prussia shocked Europe not by her assertiveness but by her acquiescence, not by her contempt for international norms but by her trust in such norms long after they had been abandoned by her neighbours. Throughout this period the main fear of Prussian statesmen was French power, rather than revolution from below. This threat spawned a foreign-policy debate characterised by geopolitical thinking: the belief that Prussian policy was conditioned by her unique geographic situation at the heart of Europe. Similar thinking underlay a parallel debate on the organisation of the executive: Prussian politicians felt that a swifter and more balanced process of decision-making was needed.

The book breaks new ground both methodologically and empirically. By combining high-political and geopolitical analysis, it is able to present a more comprehensive and nuanced picture than earlier interpretations. The book also draws on a very wide range of sources – official and unofficial – many previously unused.

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*Prussian high politics, foreign policy and
the crisis of the executive, 1797–1806*

Brendan Simms

Peterhouse, Cambridge



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limits of politics under absolutism. Needless to say, the responsibility for this book is mine alone.

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Abbreviations

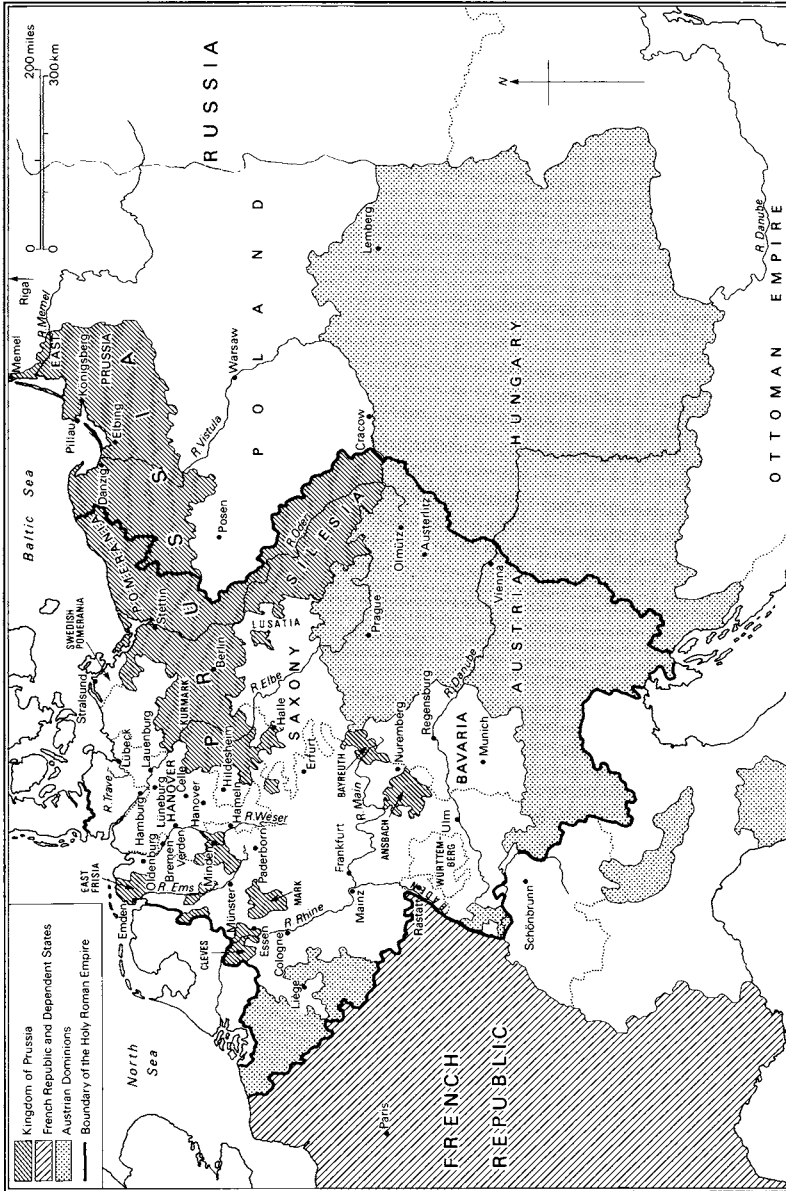
<i>ADB</i>	<i>Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie</i>
<i>BL</i>	British Library
<i>CEH</i>	<i>Central European History</i>
<i>FBPG</i>	<i>Forschungen zur brandenburgisch-preussischen Geschichte</i>
<i>FO</i>	Foreign Office
<i>GG</i>	<i>Geschichte und Gesellschaft</i>
<i>GSStA</i>	Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin-Dahlem.
<i>GWU</i>	<i>Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht</i>
<i>HJ</i>	<i>Historical Journal</i>
<i>HZ</i>	<i>Historische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>IHR</i>	<i>International History Review</i>
<i>NDB</i>	<i>Neue Deutsche Biographie</i>
<i>NjBLG</i>	<i>Niedersächsisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte</i>
<i>Pj</i>	<i>Preussische Jahrbücher</i>
<i>P&P</i>	<i>Past and Present</i>
<i>PROL</i>	Public Record Office London
<i>RHD</i>	<i>Revue d'Histoire Diplomatique</i>
<i>StaH</i>	Niedersächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Hannover
<i>TRHS</i>	Transactions of the Royal Historical Society
<i>VSWG</i>	<i>Vierteljahrshefte für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte</i>
<i>ZfG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft</i>
<i>ZfHF</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung</i>

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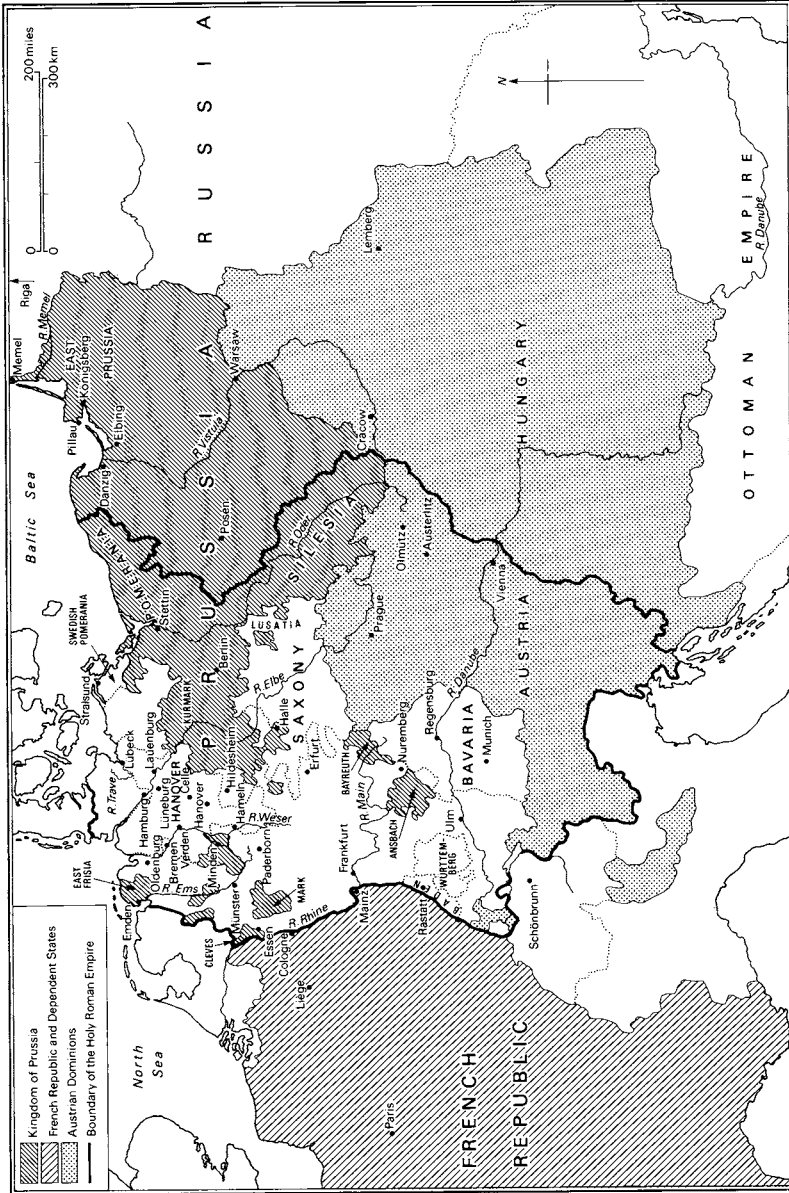
1 Geography and politics: Prussia and her neighbours in 1792. Note the Polish buffer in the east.

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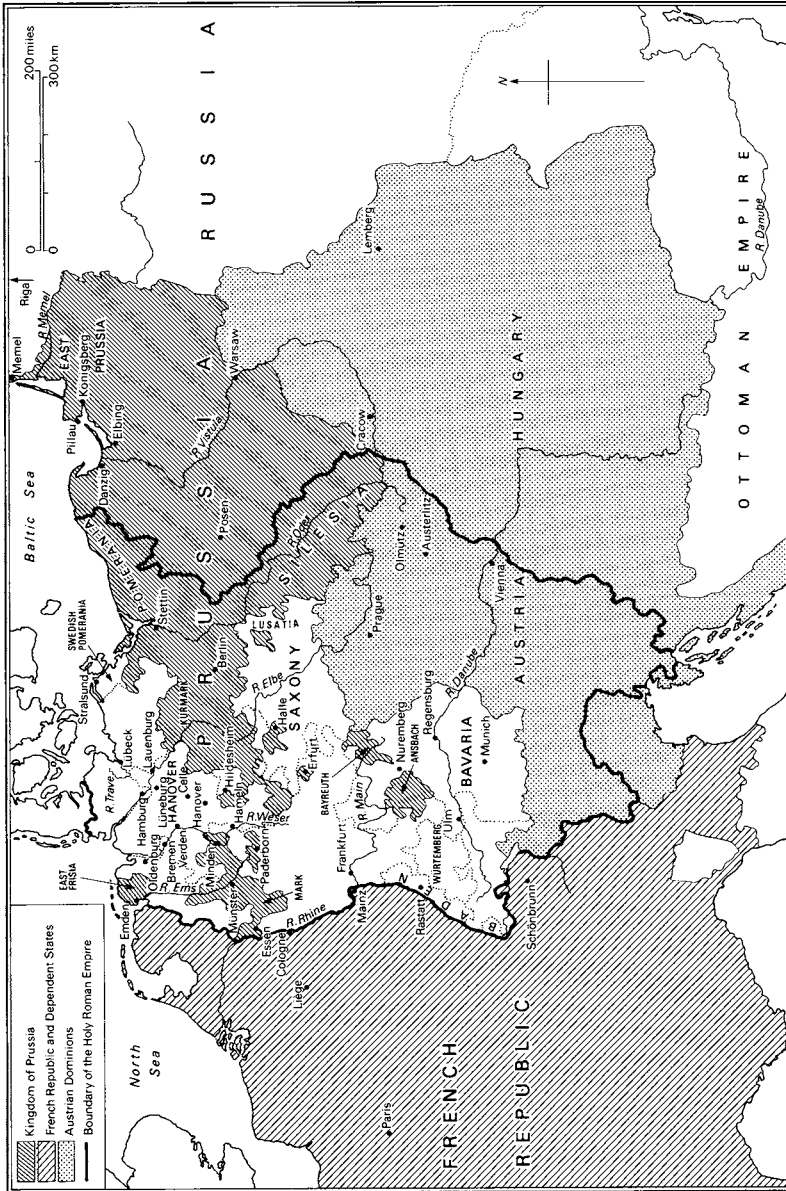
2 Geography and politics: Prussia and her neighbours in 1795. Note the disappearance of the Polish buffer and the encroachment of France.

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3 Geography and politics: Prussia and her neighbours in 1803.