The years 1814/15 mark a threefold historical watershed: the downfall of the Napoleonic Empire; the restoration of the dethroned dynasties in France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, several German states, and in the Netherlands as early as 1813; and the emergence of a new European order at the Congress of Vienna. Consequently, a whole set of political problems posed by the French Revolution came back on a European agenda, which can hardly be understood by looking exclusively at individual national cases. Augustin Thierry’s famous phrase, ‘Mais en 1814 se réveilla tout d’un coup la Révolution française’, thus well applies to more than the French context. Similar to the European repercussions of critical moments like the emancipation of the French National Assembly in 1789 and the outbreak of the revolutionary wars in 1792, the turning points of 1814/15 are embedded in circulation processes and transfers of ideas, actors and practices within and beyond Europe. Contemporaries of 1814/15 did not exclusively look backward, be it – like Thierry – to mark the Revolution’s historical watershed once and for all, or be it – like Joseph de Maistre – to realise that the Revolution «aujourd’hui [...] est royale, mais toujours elle va son train». The horizon of expectation also encompassed the vision of the threshold of 1814/15 as the dawn of a new age of liberty – for example in the writings of the German liberal Alexander Lips: «Allenthalben freie Konstitutionen, überall Liberalität, Trennung der Gewalten, eine andere Zeit, eine andere Denkart in allen Dingen.»

1 We wish to thank Axel Dröber, Benjamin Marquart and Jörn Leonhard for their intellectual support in conceptualising this special issue and their stimulating comments on this introduction.


4 A. Lips, *Der Wiener Congreß oder was muß geschehen um Deutschland von seinem Untergang zu retten und das Interesse aller Fürsten und Nationen daselbst zu retten*, St Petersburg, 1814, 320.
Existing scholarship has considered 1814/15 as the beginning of many “eras”. The established narratives often interpret the undisputed dynamics of this phase in the light of two other historical cornerstones. On the one hand, numerous – the majority national – accounts of the early nineteenth century orientate the downfall of Napoleon and the emergence of a new international order towards the revolutionary horizon of 1830 or 1848. “Restoration”, “reaction”, or “Biedermeier” are only some of the concepts that have structured and qualified the first-half of French, German and European nineteenth-century history. On the other hand, scholars took the Revolution of 1789 as a measuring stick to highlight “progressive” or “gradual” political and socio-economical developments towards “modernity” behind the facade of a supposed regression towards an “ancien régime” that was forever lost. A third strand of scholarship, which not only puts a larger emphasis on transnational perspectives but also takes up earlier interpretations, dissolves the threshold of 1814/15 into the broader context of an Age of Revolutions or Sattelzeit, which combines a comparative interest in revolutionary processes in Europe and the Atlantic world with an analysis of larger political, social and cultural transformations.

Looking at the recent historiographical contributions to the bicentenary of 1814/15, it is certainly remarkable that a new peak of scholarship has stood its ground against the overwhelming academic and public interest in the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. The main focus of these works clearly lies in the Congress of Vienna, including global perspectives, in particular on the reshaping of empires and

vereinen, Erlangen 1814, 4; see also J. Leonhard, Liberalismus. Zur historischen Semantik eines europäischen Deutungsmusters, Munich 2001, 192.
the dealings with the post-revolutionary situation in the Atlantic space. To some extent, these global reassessments challenge or nuance the large-scale interpretations by Christopher A. Bayly and Jürgen Osterhammel, who have dismissed global repercussions of the 1814/15 settlement.9

As one consequence of the two anniversaries, the vivid 2014 debates on the origins and the outbreak of the First World War resonate in the historiography of the Congress of Vienna inasmuch as several contributions strongly emphasise the pacifying effects of the 1814/15 settlement for the entire long nineteenth century. Otherwise, they highlight how the Vienna settlement had informed attempts to secure peace one century later.10

To a lesser extent, the bicentenary provided the occasion for revisiting the problems of regime change and political transition related to the older «restoration» or «reaction» paradigms. There are, however, two important exceptions, both coming from France and clearly rooted in the ongoing renewal of early nineteenth century French historiography. They partly contradict Emmanuel de Waresquiel’s complaint about the bicentenary’s «silence assourdissant»11 in the French public and academic spheres. These contributions may serve as cases in point to position this collection of articles thematically and methodically in the current field of research. In a special issue of the Revue d’histoire du XIXe siècle, titled 1814–1815, expériences de la discontinuité, Emmanuel Fureix and Judith Lyon-Caen take the «historiographie très inégalement renouvelée»12 on the period as a starting point for a survey of the historical actors’ experiences from the angle of discontinuity. For them, Napoleon’s downfall and the return of the Bourbons in France did not mark a «restauration», but a form of «instauration»13 with eclectic references to the past, the present and the future. The fragility of such patterns or orientations is best illustrated by the experience of the Cent-Jours and the emerging political figure of the «girouette», both two unsettling and ideologically ambivalent features of the post-Napoleonic quest for political stability.14

While Fureix’s and Lyon-Caen’s panorama remains by and large centred on France, Jean-Claude Caron and Jean-Philippe Luis have edited a volume on post-Napoleonic Europe that deserves attention for two reasons. First, their focus is less on

11 E. de Waresquiel, C’est la Révolution qui continue! La Restauration, 1814–1830, Paris 2015.
13 Ibid., 11.
14 On the «girouette» as a recurrent problem in French (post-)revolutionary politics, see also P. Serna, La république des girouettes. (1789–1815 ... et au-delà): une anomalie politique; la France de l’extrême centre, Seyssel 2005.
the openness and the innovative and reconciliatory potential of the transition period of 1814/15, instead, the title *Rien appris, rien oublié*? is evocative because of their interest in the conflictive impact of the revolutionary and Napoleonic heritage on European societies. Secondly, Caron and Luis call for the understanding of the post-Napoleonic period in different timeframes from 1814/15 up to the revolutionary movements of the 1820s and 1830s as a «temps des Restaurations», which appears as «un assemblage plus ou moins jointif d’ancien et de nouveau».

Connecting with these two thought-provoking publications, this special issue assumes a more neutral and, in a certain sense, also a more radical starting point. Rather than privileging a perspective on discontinuity or the lessons learnt (or not) from the Revolution, which would thereby suggest another subjacent narrative, we place the focus instead on the historical ambivalences themselves. The contributions that are presented here will analyse a diverse range of historical actors, political practices and discourses about temporalities as well as self-perceptions tied together by the methodological premises of a cultural history of politics («Kulturgeschichte des Politischen»). The contemporaries’ experiences, which are shaped by a complex interplay among rapidly changing and conflicting political discourses, socio-political practices and social structures, therefore become the focal point for an inductive approach. Our interest lies in a historical constellation marked by a temporary openness of multiple and conflicting historical options, and the various ways in which the actors tried to convert these options into stable political orders in the following years.

As an interpretive framework, we propose in this special issue the concept of a post-revolutionary experience that includes the dimensions of continuity and discontinuity concerning the post-1789 space of experience. On the one hand, our understanding of 1814/15 as a threshold of post-revolutionary experience is indebted to Emmanuel de Waresquiel’s reconceptualisation of early nineteenth-century French history as «mise en perspective de la Restauration avec la Révolution». On the other hand, our approach to «post-revolutionary» in terms of ambivalence owes itself to Chris Bongie’s attempt to apply an epistemology, which is rooted in postcolonial stud-

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ies, to the political legacy of the Atlantic Revolutions that was itself closely entangled with the French regime changes. Bongie uses the category of «post|revolutionary» to make sense of the observation that the Haitian Revolution was the most radical and violent form of emancipation in the Age of Revolutions and that it had led to a postcolonial order that soon became a monarchy. Conceptualising the authoritarian regimes of Emperor Jean-Jacques Dessalines (1804–1806) and King Henry Christophe (1807/11–1820) as «post|revolutionary», Bongie expresses his scepticism towards historians’ tendency to reproduce, in analysing the aftermath of revolution, the «transformative expectations» of the revolutionaries. Instead, he identifies the «inconclusive condition» as a characteristic feature of a «post|revolutionary» situation.

Building on these inspirations from French and postcolonial historiography, understanding 1814/15 as a threshold of post-revolutionary experience allows for a three-fold re-evaluation of older historiographical approaches to the period.

(1) The framework of a post-revolutionary constellation helps us to consider both the continuities and the discontinuities with the revolutionary and Napoleonic legacies, especially the experience of revolutionary warfare and the mass mobilisation of societies. Contemporaries significantly perceived the revolutionary period in terms of rupture and acceleration, even though these perceptions depended on political viewpoints as much as on the societal mobilisation against revolutionary and Napoleonic France. We therefore understand the years after 1814 not only in terms of pacification, but also in terms of resynchronising the diverging spaces of the revolutionary experience without returning to the status quo ante revolutionem. This constellation leads us to look at how the «bundles of possibility» of 1814/15 subsequently transformed into a «future past» of more reduced political options in the years to come without assuming a teleological viewpoint of an a priori collapse or failure of the political elites. We thus understand 1814/15 as a largely open political constellation, which emphasises its post-revolutionary roots and deliberately focuses on shorter temporal horizons, rather than look ahead immediately towards the later nineteenth century.

(2) The concept of post-revolutionary experience allows for thinking about temporality also in connection with its spatial dimension. The impact and consequences of revolution, war and empire varied considerably not only from political viewpoints, but also from different regions and territories in Europe and even beyond. Whereas

24 As a methodological approach, Jörn Leonhard proposes a «historic of the uncontemporary», see Leonhard, «Historik der Ungleichzeitigkeit».
the threshold of 1814/15 primarily applies to Western Europe, the cases of Finland and Spain, which are included in this collection, point to the shifted periodisations of «national» liberations or political mobilisations that subsequently impacted no less on the political conditions of 1814/15. Extending this panorama to post-colonial Haiti’s relations with Europe not only reminds us to consider the agency of the extra-European actors, but also confronts us with the observation that the first lasting victor over Napoleon was a former colony of rebellious slaves.

(3) The post-revolutionary framework serves to address the problem of the latent Franco-centrism and the problem of an addition of national histories that is still prevalent in many contributions to the 1814/15 bicentenary. While acknowledging France as a pivotal reference point for her European contemporaries, we argue that the complexity and entanglements of post-revolutionary experiences in the early nineteenth century need an analytical setting beyond the national frame. This holds true especially because the circulation of political ideas and models, which were known from the eighteenth century and the French Revolution, not only continued but also accelerated in the years following the threshold of 1814/15. These transfers included constitutional models such as the British Constitution and the Charte constitutionnelle, as well as the question of military reforms and the emergence of the concept of «contemporary history», as a means of coping with the revolutionary past. The following contributions therefore make productive use of the methodological «trinity» of comparison, studies of transfers and entangled history/histoire croisée.

Thematically, the articles of this special issue apply these conceptual observations about post-revolutionary Europe to three intertwined political fields: international rule-setting and post-revolutionary politics, constitutions and political negotiations as well as debates in the public sphere. First, one of the greatest challenges to the political actors aiming at a reconstruction of stable political rule was the complex interplay between the international attempts at European rule-setting and the new imperatives of post-revolutionary national politics. The multipolar structure and the openness of the international order, which emerged in the wake of the revolutionary wars and was stabilised by the Vienna system of great power cooperation, became a decisive factor for the post-revolutionary regimes in all their different forms throughout Europe. This especially holds true for the first years of great power politics after 1814 when Great Britain, and to a lesser degree France, were opposed to foreign interventions in

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domestic political affairs. This policy of non-interference widened the margins of manoeuvre for the actors at the European and global «peripheries». Especially the French stance was, however, short-lived and already gave way in the early 1820s when the revolutionary uprisings in Spain and Italy led to an interventionist turn in great power politics.28

In his reinterpretation of the Spanish Restoration, Juan Luis Simal demonstrates how the early timing of the Spanish Bourbons’ return to power shaped the interplay between international and national politics in a distinct way: It was namely the absence of international examples of «successful» restorations that made it easier for Ferdinand VII to pursue an uncompromising and repressive political course in spite of the initial British protests against the abandonment of his promises for a «moderate» monarchy. Even if Ferdinand had strategically exploited the political uncertainty following Napoleon's defeat to increase his domestic margins of manoeuvre, the domestic repression proved to be detrimental to Spain’s status in the international order in the long term. The Spanish experience of violence and coercion also offers a perspective on the regime change in Europe that importantly nuances the emphasis placed by scholars such as Volker Sellin on the more liberal character of the Restoration, as highlighted by the days of the Senate Revolution in Paris.29

Analysing the struggles of post-colonial Haiti for obtaining recognition of its independence from France, Friedemann Pestel brings to the fore how European politics, which attempted to secure peace on an international level, had ramifications that went far beyond a solely European context. The downfall of the French Empire opened up possibilities for the extra-European actors to claim their participation in building the post-Napoleonic order. The effectiveness of Haitian propaganda for its national independence not least stemmed from its potential to capitalise on the disputes between the European great powers on the legitimacy of the slave trade, and on the explicit and implicit rules of coping with the revolutionary and Napoleonic heritage at the peripheries of Europe.

Secondly, rarely in European history were constitutions as central in political discourse as they were in the years following the threshold of 1814/15. Many contemporaries saw constitutions as a decisive means of securing a political rule that was open to evolutionary development and immune to further revolutionary change. Constitutional discourse in post-revolutionary Europe, however, was far from homogenous. The different stages of the French Revolution, the (unwritten) English constitution and the national traditions served as models and examples that could be used by contemporaries to cope with an oftentimes confusing political present by giving it a new constitutional «sense».

28 On the Vienna System as a change of paradigm in international politics, see Schroeder, The Transformation of European Politics; Schulz, Normen und Praxis.
Jussi Kurunmäki explores the European dimension of constitutionalism through the lens of the Finish case where the reception of foreign constitutional models even became a surrogate for the lack of a local parliamentary life, following Finland’s incorporation into the Russian Empire in 1809. To a certain degree, these transfers of political ideas started to take place even before the Western European «constitutional fever» of 1814/15. The persisting contacts between the Swedish and the Finish elites also explain why the separation of Finland and Sweden can be seen as a «long good-bye» rather than an abrupt separation of two intertwined Scandinavian political cultures.

In his comparison of France, Great Britain and the German states, Fabian Rausch focuses on the possibility of a lasting constitutional integration in post-revolutionary Europe. As a main challenge to integration, Rausch identifies the historical actors’ persistent problem with accepting constitutional party politics. The different degrees of this problem and its transformation throughout the 1820s also account for the different constitutional paths taken by Germany, Great Britain and France from the 1830s onwards.

Thirdly, a feature common to all case studies in this collection is the close relation between political negotiations and debates in an extended public sphere. This did not only hold true within the national context; the public sphere, which the political actors in post-revolutionary Europe had to cope with, was also increasingly international. Activists and pressure groups such as liberal networks and associations or abolitionist circles, and even staunch royalists, all relied on a relatively far-ranging liberty of the press to promote their controversial positions. All of them linked up their agendas from different political sectors such as electoral rights, the role of the church, slavery and free trade. Bicameral parliamentary debates, correspondence networks and a press sector flourishing in the 1810s provided the fora for the different parties to articulate their loyalty and opposition, and to promote new interpretations of political concepts. Consequently, cooperation and solidarity existed not solely at the level of the Holy Alliance and the Congress system. They also existed in the wider political and social groups, which used various media strategies to actively participate in the circulation and the transfer of concepts, discourses and practices – especially as the post-Napoleonic pacification facilitated travelling and transportation throughout Europe and the Atlantic space.

In his study, Kurunmäki demonstrates how Åbo Allmänna Tidning, the official – and only – newspaper in early nineteenth-century Finland, took a constitutive role for the transfer and appropriation of political concepts amongst Sweden, Finland, Poland and Russia in a phase of shifting power relations and political affiliations. On his turn, Simal shows that the relative isolation that Spain faced at the Congress of Vienna was also due to an international press campaign against the «despotic» monarchy of Ferdinand VII, one that was not the least fuelled by the Spanish exiles in France and Great Britain. For Haiti, disclosing the Arcanum of French ministerial colonial politics provided an instrument to scandalise the alleged reactionary character of the French Restoration to a European audience. It also served to demonstrate Haiti’s belonging to an Atlantic space of «civilisation» that was also understood in terms of practices of mediatisation. Rausch’s analysis of European constitutional culture also brings to the fore the connections between the national and the European public spheres: The claims to «national» constitutional development in post-revolutionary Europe were highly dependent on the presence of the foreign constitutional models in political discourse.

These political fields, as well as the geographical areas covered in this special issue, are by no means exhaustive for an analysis of post-revolutionary Europe. Rather, from different transnational starting points, they mark possible fields of connection for future studies. For example, it would be promising to confront these contributions that privilege a political history informed by the cultural turn with comparative examinations of the socio-economic results of war and occupation. Our selection capitalises on the widened geographical perspective on post-revolutionary Europe by incorporating «peripheries» in the north of the continent31 – including Russia – and the former French colonial empire, therefore other regions such as the Netherlands, the Italian states or Switzerland had to be left aside. The ongoing transnational renewal of the historiographies of these countries, however, points to the dynamics in research on a period that has for far too long been neglected as a mere attempt to return to an «impossible past».

In conclusion, we argue for understanding the dynamics of post-revolutionary societies from the angle of inconclusiveness towards the revolutionary as well as the pre-revolutionary past. Similarly, we emphasise the openness of contemporaries’ expectations towards the future. The threshold of 1814/15 can therefore also be seen as

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a prominent focal point of «possibilities» in a nineteenth century that is understood as a «siècle des possibles».

As a methodological consequence, we propose an inductive approach with a relatively narrow temporal focus instead of reifying the dominant large-scale historiographical narratives. Such an approach also relies on a permeable spatial framework that allows us to take into account the asymmetric constellations of influence and perception. This leads us not to consider exclusively the cases of the «usual suspects», that is, France, Britain and «Germany» (often equalled with Prussia), but to pay attention to peripheral and liminal regions both in Europe and at the margins of empires as well.

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