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The causes and effects of the wars between Revolutionary France and Rest of Europe (1792-1802)

Questions to ponder

1. Account for the increasing hostility between France and the rest of Europe between 1793 and 1802.
2. Why was the revolutionary France at War with her neighbors between 1793 and 1802?
3. Examine the causes and consequences of wars between France and the rest of Europe (1793-1802)
4. Discuss the causes of war between revolutionary France and her neighbors between 1793 and 1802.

The French revolutionary wars of 1792 - 1802

The French Revolutionary Wars (French: Guerres de la Révolution française) were a series of sweeping military conflicts resulting from the French Revolution that lasted from 1792 until 1802. They pitted France against Great Britain, Austria, Prussia, Russia, and several other countries.

Causes of the wars between French revolutionary and its neighbors (1792 – 1802)

1. **Defense of the Revolution:** Revolutionary France faced immediate threats from neighboring monarchies that feared the spread of revolutionary ideas and sought to restore the old order. This led to conflicts with countries like Austria, Prussia, and Great Britain.
2. **Foreign Intervention:** Monarchs of Europe, particularly those of Austria and Prussia, formed coalitions to intervene in France and suppress the revolution. This external pressure forced France to defend its revolutionary gains.
3. **Expansionist Policies:** As the revolution progressed, France adopted more aggressive policies, including the annexation of territories and the establishment of sister republics. This expansionism provoked further conflicts with other European powers.
4. **Internal Political Struggles:** The revolution's internal political turmoil, including the radicalization of the revolution and the rise of factions like the Jacobins, contributed to the outbreak of wars as different groups vied for control and influence.

5. **Economic and Social Pressures:** The economic hardships and social unrest within France also played a role in the decision to go to war, as the revolutionary government sought to secure resources and stabilize the country.
6. **The rise of Emperor Francis II to the throne of the Holy Empire (Austria) in 1792.** Francis II opened war against France to revenge the death of her aunt Marie Antoinette who was killed by the French revolutionists. He also refused to send back France emigrants as demanded by the Legislative Assembly decree of 1791.
7. **The confiscation of property of the clergy, noble and wealthy foreigners.** The confiscation of property without compensation flared up hostility between France and its neighbors.
8. **Violation of commercial treaties between France and its neighbors.** The France violated several international treaties including the 1648 Peace of Westphalia and 1786 Eden Treaty (Anglo-French Trade Agreement). This angered its neighbors leading to outbreak of wars between France and its neighbors.
9. **The issuing of the Edict of Fraternity in November 1792 by the National convention.** The Edict of Fraternity declared assistance to people that wish to free themselves from oppressive government. This threatened its neighbors who waged deterrent wars against France.
10. **The execution of King Louis XVI and the Queen Marie Antoinette on Sunday 21, 1793.** This act was considered barbaric and led to hostility between France and its neighbors. It compelled Britain, Prussian and Austria to oppose the French revolutionary government.
11. **Attempts of the France neighbors to restore the French monarchy.** For instance, the joint declaration on August 27, 1791 by the Holy Roman (Austrian) Emperor Leopold II and King Frederick Williams II of Prussia, urging European powers to unite and restore King Louis XVI made the war between France and its neighbors inevitable.
12. **The war mood and radicalism.** The ascent of the peasants to power gave them a mood of conquerors and believed in ability and obligation to liberate their neighbors.

Negative effects of the wars between French revolutionary and its neighbors (1792 – 1802)

The **French Revolutionary Wars** (1792-1802) had several negative effects on France and its neighbors:

1. **Economic Strain:** The wars placed a heavy financial burden on France, exacerbating the economic difficulties that had already contributed to the revolution. The cost of maintaining large armies and supporting military campaigns strained the national treasury.
2. **Loss of Life:** The wars resulted in significant loss of life, with many soldiers and civilians dying in battle, from disease, or as a result of wartime atrocities.
3. **Social Disruption:** The constant state of war disrupted daily life, leading to displacement of populations, destruction of property, and general social upheaval.
4. **Political Instability:** The wars contributed to political instability within France, as different factions vied for power and control. This internal conflict often hindered effective governance and decision-making.

5. **International Tensions:** The revolutionary wars created lasting enmities between France and other European powers, leading to a series of conflicts that would continue for years, including the Napoleonic Wars.
6. **Human Rights Violations:** The wars were marked by numerous human rights violations, including the use of terror and repression both within France and in occupied territories.
7. **Destruction of property:** the wars between France and the Rest of Europe caused massive destruction of property.
8. **Destruction of infrastructure:** these led to destruction of infrastructures such as roads, schools and churches in France and its neighbours.
9. **The wars led to discrediting of the Girondins and execution of their leaders.** In 1793 the Jacobins arrested and executed the Girondins principal leaders that included Vergniaud, Modom Roland, Brissot and others.
10. **The European monarchies became more conservative and guarded due to fear from Revolutionary France propaganda.** For instance, the Prussian, Austrians and other European monarchies became strongly conservative.
11. **Europe became militaristic.** All able men and women between 18 and 25 years were required to offer military service in France and its neighbors.

Positive effects of the wars between French revolutionary and its neighbors (1792 – 1802)

The **French Revolutionary Wars** (1792-1802) had several positive effects:

1. **Spread of Revolutionary Ideals:** The wars helped to spread the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity beyond France, inspiring revolutionary movements in other parts of Europe and the world.
2. **Nationalism:** The wars fostered a sense of national identity and patriotism in France, as the country united against external threats.
3. **Military Reforms:** The wars led to significant military reforms, including the introduction of conscription and the development of a more professional and effective army.
4. **Economic Changes:** The wars prompted economic changes, such as the nationalization of industries and the introduction of new economic policies to support the war effort.
5. **Legal Reforms:** The revolutionary government implemented legal reforms, including the codification of laws and the establishment of a more uniform legal system.
6. **Revolutionary wars resulted in the overthrow of despotic monarchies and formation of republic governments.** For instance, King Williams of Holland (Netherlands) was disposed in 1795 and Holland became the Republic of Batavia.
7. **The wars contributed to the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte to power,** November 9, 1799. The wars enabled Napoleon Bonaparte to display his military skills and political charisma that promoted him to power.

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