

# Examine Napoleon's Continental System as Strategic and economic policy during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

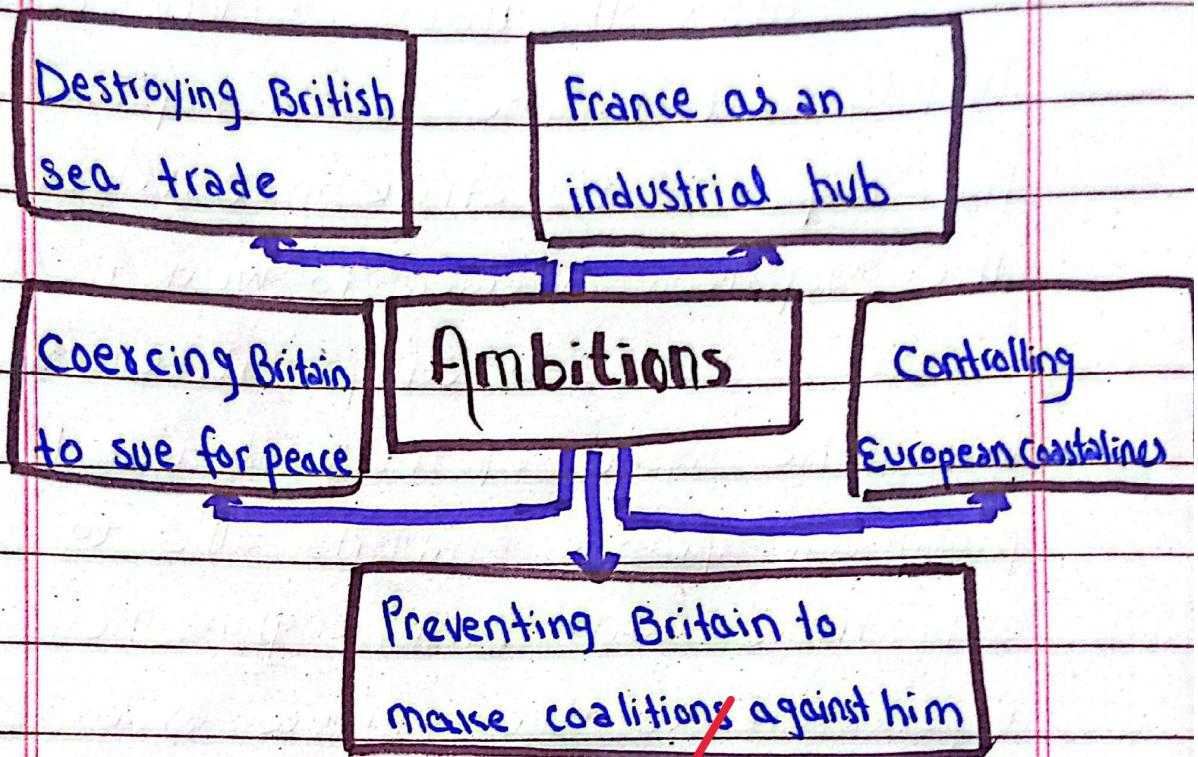
## Introduction:

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After the Britain's victory of Trafalgar, it became almost impossible for Napoleon to attack on Britain. So, the Napoleon decided to weak its overseas trade to collapse its economy. With the issue of Berlin decree, it prohibited France and its allies to cut trade with the England. The aims were to make France as an industrial hub, weaken Britain through economic collapse and control all the European coastlines. The impacts were disastrous for Europe resulting into trade decline, unemployment, inflation, economic crisis and ultimately results into downfall of Napoleon.

# Napoleon's economic and strategic ambitions behind Continental System:

The strategic and economic ambitions of Napoleon's were:



## i) Destroying British sea trade:

After the war of Trafalgar, it was difficult for Napoleon to invade Britain directly due to naval superiority of the Britain. So, the Napoleon decided

to weaken Britain by destroying its trade with the Europe and the other world. Napoleon issued Berlin Decree in 1806 prohibiting France and its allies to do trade with Britain.

### ii) France as an industrial hub:

Britain's economy and the industrial capacity was much higher than the France in those days. So, one of the economic ambition of Napoleon was to banned the British goods in the Europe and encourage the France industries. In response to the Berlin decree, Britains issued order in council in 1807, seizing trade with the countries which were following the Napoleon's continental system.

### iii) Coercing Britain to sue for peace:

The Britain was significant danger for Napoleon. Through the implementation of continental system, he wanted to create economic crisis, unemployment and inflation in the Britain. These crisis in the Britain will push it to sue for peace with the France.

### iv) Controlling European Coastlines:

One of the strategic ambition of Napoleon behind the continental system was to gain full control of the European coastlines. This will make France as hub of maritime trade with controlling all the trade within the

Europe and with the other world. This will also impact the trade of Europe with the Britain, declining Britain's trade opportunities with Europe.

### v) Preventing Britain to make alliances against Napoleon:

Britain was strong industrial hub and had trade relations all over the world. This threatens the Napoleon to make alliances against him. So, in order to prevent Britain from making alliances with the other countries he further added Milan decree to strengthen its continental system. Britain also responded with order in council, worsening the trade and economic conditions.

## Impacts of Continental System on European trade and economies:

The impacts of continental system were disastrous for European trade and economies.

Decreased trade

Inflation

Smuggling

War and  
unrest

Impacts

unemployment

opposition against

Napoleon

### i) Decreased trade ratio of Europe and Britain:

The impacts of continental system were more severe for Europe rather than Britain as

Britain diversified its trade with the west, Middle East and the Asia. On the other hand, the Europe could not diversify its trade resulting into poor economic growth and GDP.

### iii) Massive inflation due to shortages of British goods:

Continental system banned imports of British goods in Europe which resulted into shortages of British goods especially in countries like Netherlands and Portugal. This resulted into increased prices of goods, effecting the poor and middle class of Europe.

### iii) Smuggling of goods due

## iv) France Weak Naval force:

France Navy was not capable to compete with the British Navy. This lack of supervision by the France Navy at some weakly controlled ports resulted into smuggling of British goods into Europe. This also impact the continental system of Napoleon.

## iv) Widespread Unrest and War situations:

Due to the economic crisis and trade decline, there was widespread unrest in Europe which resulted into Peninsula War as Portugal and Spain refused to follow Napoleon's continental system.

## v) Unemployment in Europe:

Due to the poor economic conditions of Europe, there was unemployment which made situation more worsened. This unemployment persuade people of Europe to turned against the policies of Napoleon and protest against it.

## vi) Increased opposition resulted into downfall of Napoleon:

There was increased resentment against Napoleon's continental system in Europe and Russia also dropped this system in 1810 which resulted into Moscow Disastrous campaign. All the major powers made alliance against him and defeated him at the Waterloo.

## Conclusion:

The continental system was strategic and economic policy of Napoleon to weak the Britain's trade but ultimately it lead towards the end of Napoleonic Wars.

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