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### Visionaries in opposition: Napoleon, Talleyrand, and the future of France

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**Visionaries in opposition: Napoleon, Talleyrand,  
and the Future of France**

**Seth Browner  
History Senior Thesis  
Professor Kathleen Kete  
Spring, 2017**

### **Introduction: *Two men and France in the balance***

It was January 28, 1809. Napoleon Bonaparte, crowned Emperor of the French in 1804, returned to Paris. Napoleon spent most of his time as emperor away, fighting various wars. But, frightful words had reached his ears that impelled him to return to France. He was told that Joseph Fouché, the Minister of Police, and Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, had held a meeting behind his back. The fact alone that Fouché and Talleyrand were meeting was curious. They loathed each other. Fouché and Talleyrand had launched public attacks against each other for years. When Napoleon heard these two were trying to reach a reconciliation, he greeted it with suspicion immediately. He called Fouché and Talleyrand to his office along with three other high-ranking members of the government. Napoleon reminded Fouché and Talleyrand that they swore an oath of allegiance when the coup of 18 Brumaire was staged in 1799. Napoleon did not stop there though. He singled out Talleyrand, ending the tirade against his former Minister of Foreign Affairs with the iconic line, “you are nothing but a shit in a silk stocking.”<sup>1</sup>

Talleyrand maintained a stoic expression throughout the ordeal. His reconciliation with Fouché concerned the most important matters. Napoleon invaded Spain and Portugal in 1807, implicating France in what turned out to be a wasteful and unwinnable war. Talleyrand knew then, as Napoleon was lashing out at him, that he met with Fouché to discuss the line of succession if Napoleon was killed in Spain.<sup>2</sup> Talleyrand was not actively planning to depose Napoleon, but he was, at time of this rebuke, actively trying to undermine Napoleon’s ambition, which he believed would lead France to defeat. Napoleon and Talleyrand were once on better

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<sup>1</sup> Dwyer, Phillip G. *Profiles in Power: Talleyrand*. Edited by Keith Robbins. Profiles in Power. New York, NY: Longman, 2002., 120.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 119.

terms. Talleyrand was Napoleon's ally, helping him to install a new government after it became clear France was in need of stronger leadership. How then did their relationship get to this point?

The topic in question, the relationship between Napoleon and Talleyrand, will be the focus of this study. Napoleon and Talleyrand were two men who seemingly had a lot to gain from each other when Napoleon ascended to power in 1799. The Directory, the government in place before the coup of 18 Brumaire put Napoleon in power, had shown itself to be inept at a time when strong leadership was so necessary. The wounds the French Revolution had ripped open in French society were still bleeding. Among the most contentious issues was the status of the Catholic Church, which was the target of the radical republic despite the central place it occupied in the daily lives of most ordinary French people.<sup>3</sup> But, the status of the Catholic Church was not the only issue the Directory struggled to address. France was bankrupt, meaning that it was unable to maintain the police force and guarantee internal stability. This desire, to see internal stability return to France, brought Napoleon and Talleyrand together in 1799.

Their relationship traversed a wide range of events, but this study will center around three that demonstrate the evolution of their relationship. The coup of 18 Brumaire was the high point of their relationship. Napoleon and Talleyrand became allies, unified in a desire to see France in a more stable condition. Then, they could begin tackling the problems facing the country. The second event is the writing of the Strasbourg memorandum, a series of nineteen letters Talleyrand wrote to Napoleon in 1805. In the Strasbourg memorandum, Talleyrand explained that Napoleon should limit territorial expansion for the sake of France's diplomatic reintegration. This event represented the middle point of their relationship. Disagreements were appearing, but Talleyrand still believed he could navigate them. These disagreements became irreconcilable

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 35.

though on August 10, 1807, when Talleyrand resigned the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs in response to the invasion of Spain and Portugal. It was at this point that Talleyrand realized Napoleon was leading France to defeat, and he was determined to remove himself from the situation before that moment of defeat arrived. These three events show how their relationship changed, and that their relationship was ultimately a troubled one.

At the nexus of this troubled relationship lied a difference of goals for the future of France. For Napoleon, his primary goal was to build a land empire for France. In pursuit of this goal, Napoleon turned the entirety of Europe against France. He found success in building an empire for a time, managing to subdue all his enemies except Britain. But, building an empire was not a goal most people in France shared with Napoleon. For this reason, the wars Napoleon launched after 1802 “were distinctly Napoleon’s.”<sup>4</sup> Talleyrand was one of the people in France who did not share Napoleon’s goal. Talleyrand believed the priority for France should be diplomatic reintegration and the creation of a balance of power. The French Revolution brought France’s previous alliances to an end. Now that a new government was in place, one that subscribed to the Enlightenment’s liberal set of values, France’s place in Europe was due for a reexamination. Building an empire, and fighting the wars that sprung up, brought these two goals, and the two men who believed in these goals, into conflict, and diplomatic reintegration won out in the end. The intricacies of the process by which that occurred is the subject of this study.

The relationship between Napoleon and Talleyrand is a timely topic to study because most of the work historians have done deal with either Napoleon or Talleyrand separately. There is much less that looks at the two together. Looking at Napoleon and Talleyrand together reveals

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 97.

the differences between their goals, and these differences are chiefly responsible for the progressive deterioration of their relationship. Furthermore, this study hopes to challenge some of the prevailing characterizations of Talleyrand and Napoleon. Many historians believe Talleyrand was purely self-interested, serving and then betraying the successive regimes following the French Revolution for his own benefit. This study asks us to reconsider that assertion. As Phillip Dwyer suggests, Talleyrand turned against the Directory and Napoleon so that he could continue acting in the interest of France as part of a future government. If that government happened to “coincide with Talleyrand’s own personal interests is beside the point.”<sup>5</sup> Napoleon is a more complex figure as well. This study disagrees with Paul W. Schroeder that “Napoleon did what he did because he was Napoleon.”<sup>6</sup> This study presents Napoleon in his totality, discussing his childhood and his exile to St. Helena in 1815. While Napoleon was ambitious, there were other factors that drove him to build an empire.

Furthermore, most of the work that historians have done on this time period is limited to military history. The disadvantage of this approach is that many other historical themes and developments are not given adequate attention. There is so much more that characterizes France under Napoleon than military conquest. With this study, I hope to shed light on those too often neglected themes and developments. At the same time, there is an appropriate place for a discussion about warfare. David Bell says France under Napoleon witnessed the emergence of total war. Total war is much greater than its conventional definition, which is that a total war mobilizes the entirety of a country’s resources. Total war means war is a mechanism by which to

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 208.

<sup>6</sup> Dwyer, Phillip G. “Napoleon and the Drive for Glory: Reflections on the Making of French Foreign Policy.” Edited by Phillip G. Dwyer. In *Napoleon and Europe*, 117-134. London: Routledge, 2014., 134.

enforce foreign policy, or other policies for that matter.<sup>7</sup> As Minister of Foreign Affairs, Talleyrand was foremost a diplomat, but, he was part of the political dimension of wars that military history alone fails to fully examine.

It is appropriate to mention the limitations and scope of this study now. This study begins in 1799, when Napoleon led a group of disillusioned collaborators in a coup that overthrew the Directory. This study concludes in 1807, when Talleyrand resigned. However, the scope is not strictly limited to this timeframe. I discuss events before 1799 as well as after 1807. I discuss Talleyrand's childhood and Napoleon's childhood to explain how the similarities in their background brought them together. The conclusion of this study takes us beyond 1807 to the Congress of Vienna and Napoleon's final stand at the Battle of Waterloo on June 18, 1815. The limitations of this study are mainly related to the research. Although I believe this study is well documented, more research could have benefited this study if time permitted it.

Talleyrand wrote a series of memoirs himself that I used in this study. Napoleon dictated his memoirs to his personal secretary, Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne, and a former aristocrat who accompanied him on the exile to St. Helena, Emmanuel de Las Cases. It is believed that details were embellished and facts were misconstrued to paint a positive image of Napoleon in *Mémoires de M. de Bourrienne, ministre d'État ; sur Napoléon, le Directoire, le Consulat, l'Empire et la Restauration* and *Mémorial de Sainte Hélène par le Comte de Las Cases*. These two sources are not as comprehensive as Talleyrand's memoirs. Because Bourrienne was Napoleon's personal secretary, the content is mainly a record of Bourrienne's ministerial meetings. Direct quotations from Talleyrand's memoirs and Fouché's memoirs are

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<sup>7</sup> Bell, David A. *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007., 9.

featured more often than direct quotations from Napoleon's memoirs in the study. Napoleon's dictated memoirs were simply less comprehensive. Because of these limitations with the memoirs, there is a slightly greater focus on Talleyrand. The core topic of this study is the relationship between him and Napoleon though. I acknowledge these limitations in the hope of giving a more complete picture of this study.

Before continuing any further, I wish to express my gratitude to several individuals who made this study possible. I would like to thank my thesis advisor Professor Kathleen Kete who has helped me immensely as I completed this study. I would like to thank my second reader Professor Sara Kippur. I would like to thank Jeffrey Liszka in the library for finding sources for me. I owe a thank you to the secretary of the History Department, Gigi St. Peter, as well as the department chair, Professor Darío Euraque. My semester abroad in Paris, France partly inspired this choice of topic. For that, I thank the director of the Trinity-in-Paris program Francie Plough-Seder and Professor Catherine Healey. For their words of encouragement throughout this process, I would like to extend my thanks to the staff of Zachs Hillel House, Lisa Kassow and Amy Zylberman, as well as my parents Scott and Julie Browner. I would like to send my final thanks to my fellow thesis writers for the spring of 2017.

## Chapter 1: *The coup of 18 Brumaire*

Leading up to the coup of 18 Brumaire in 1799, Talleyrand had been serving as nominal Minister of Foreign Affairs of France since 1789. There was still a strong possibility Talleyrand might not survive in his position much longer. There were ten other foreign ministers who held the post before him since the French Revolution. Like many of compatriots, he too was forced to flee the country. However, France had begun to stabilize after the fall of Robespierre in 1794. Talleyrand, for the sake of the country and his personal security, was anxious to keep moving further in that direction.<sup>8</sup> Once political stability had been achieved, Talleyrand could begin the work of reintegrating France into the system of European powers. The desire for internal stability drew Talleyrand to Napoleon Bonaparte, who also longed to see his country in a more stable condition.

A decade after the National Assembly first convened in 1789, the French people were feeling just as despondent about their government as they did under the grip of the Ancien Régime. The stream of governments following the French Revolution led to the Directory, which proved to be as ineffective as the rest.<sup>9</sup> The Directory was named for its executive structure of five directors, and Paul Barras, a former military officer, headed the Directory as one of those five directors. To say the least, Barras was not a competent leader, and he willingly stepped aside when Napoleon took over the government. Joseph Fouché, the Minister of Police and a chief collaborator during the coup of 18 Brumaire, describes the malaise gripping France's political establishment:

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<sup>8</sup> Dwyer, 65.

<sup>9</sup> Woloch, Isser. *Napoleon and His Collaborators: the Making of a Dictatorship*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2002., 4.

The disaffection with the majority of the Directory soon became general: it has only, one observed, displayed its authority in oppression, injustice, and incapacity: instead of signaling its dictatorship by some brilliant action, since the 18 Fructidor [the coup that installed the Directory] it has abused its immense power; it has ruined our finances, and dug the abyss which now threatens to swallow the republic.<sup>10</sup>

As Fouché notes, the Directory's suppression of political freedoms made it the object of detestation. Opposition was permitted, but the Directory did not hesitate to take bolder steps against the royalists and remaining Jacobins when it felt threatened. Tampering with the results of elections, which were held annually, was another means to keep political adversaries out of power. When an election happened to put royalist or Jacobin sympathizers in the legislature, purges were organized and prevented a viable opposition party from developing. In 1798, the Directory orchestrated a purge of 127 deputies. Censorship was another means by which opposition was silenced. In response to an election in 1797, press outlets favorable to royalist candidates were closed down.<sup>11</sup> The willingness to suppress political freedoms "sapped the legitimacy of the republic itself," and led to the political dysfunction that made governing an impossible task.<sup>12</sup>

Bankruptcy and lackluster economic performance overall were the products of the political dysfunction. The Directory did not have an organized system of tax collection, which meant the military and police force were unmaintained. Even the threats against France were not enough to inspire the country's leaders to reform the financial system. Britain, Austria, and

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<sup>10</sup> Fouché, Joseph. *Memoirs of Joseph Fouché, duke of Otranto, minister of the General police of France*. London: W.W. Gibbings, 1892. November 10, 2009. Accessed December 19, 2016. <https://archive.org/details/cu31924024337895>.

<sup>11</sup> Woloch, 5.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

Russia had declared war on France again. Domestically, highway robbery made traveling France's roadways dangerous. Some rural residents, who tended to support the royalist cause and the Catholic Church, held small protests in the countryside that could become violent. The economic crisis touched every aspect of government. Without the financial means, the Directory was incapable of adequately addressing the internal instability that plagued France.<sup>13</sup>

The status of religion was a particularly divisive issue that turned popular opinion against the Directory. Religion was an issue that caused more division than most others because it occupied a place in the daily lives of most French people. The Directory kept the republican calendar of the French Revolution that purposefully scheduled out times for religious holidays and feast days for saints. Many royalist politicians, who believed in a strong role for the Catholic Church in government, were forcibly removed from office, meaning that there was no voice for supporters of the Catholic Church in the legislature. The Directory did little to stop the harassment of Catholic school teachers, which drove its popularity down even further. The reality contradicted the Directory's assurances that freedom of religion would be protected on its watch. Napoleon, recognizing the importance of religion to internal stability, negotiated the Concordat of 1801 with Pope Pius VII that proclaimed Catholicism the majority religion of France.<sup>14</sup>

The military defeat in Egypt was the major event that struck a crushing blow to the Directory's popularity. There were several arguments given in support of a French intervention in Egypt. The Ottoman Empire controlled Egypt at the time, and it was far less powerful than it was once. The idea was that France would revitalize the Ottoman Empire from within and gain

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 6.

influence in a strategically important region for trade. Many believed an invasion of Egypt would bring the ideals of the Enlightenment to the backward Egyptian people, which was a similar pretext Napoleon would use for the invasion of Spain and Portugal in 1807.<sup>15</sup> Talleyrand, in one of his first acts as Minister of Foreign Affairs, issued two reports in 1798 in which he argued for a more interventionist foreign policy. France had lost most of its colonies in North America after Britain won the Seven Years War, and it was presented with an opportunity to gain Egypt as a colony. Talleyrand was no supporter of Britain, which he believed was an aggressive colonizer, and he wanted to disrupt British commerce with India. Whatever the reasons, the invasion of Britain turned out to be one of Talleyrand's worst policy recommendations.

Napoleon was personally fascinated with Egypt's history, and he was hoping to enhance his own prestige. He accepted the mission to command the French army and landed in Egypt on July 1, 1798. The campaign ended in disaster for France. The British admiral Horatio Nelson destroyed the French fleet at the Battle of Nile on August 3, 1798. When news of the Battle of Nile reached France, the Directory's popularity plunged to new lows. France's enemies viewed the invasion of Egypt as an attempt on the part of France to expand its colonial hegemony, and war erupted again in Europe with the formation of the Second Coalition in 1799. Among the other members of the Directory, the renewal of war sparked only more discord. Fouché says bluntly, "it was the expedition into Egypt, in particular, which re-opened all our wounds."<sup>16</sup> Sensing the Directory's unpopularity, Napoleon abandoned his army in Egypt, which surrendered to Britain, and sailed back to France on August 23, 1799.

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<sup>15</sup> Dwyer, 70.

<sup>16</sup> Fouché, 63.

On the day of the coup of 18 Brumaire, which happened on November 9, 1799 in today's calendar, the legislature was moved outside of Paris to St. Cloud where the region's garrison, which Napoleon was recently placed in command of, was conveniently posted. The Jacobin deputies were uneasy, surrounded by 3,000 of Napoleon's troops. The collaborators called for an interim government to replace the Directory, saying that the current constitution had expired and permitted a temporary government to be formed.<sup>17</sup> Barras resigned before the chamber, and the Jacobins, suddenly realizing they were witnessing a takeover, refused to accept his resignation. The rest of the deputies became rowdy and shouted "outside of the law" as Napoleon and his brother Lucien Bonaparte moved to the front of the chamber with a band of soldiers.<sup>18</sup> Napoleon and his brother declared the Directory was dissolved. The dramatic day ended with a vote approving the appointment of three consuls to lead the country, setting up the Consulate, the next government. After a cascade of regime changes in the previous decade, another regime faded into the night.

Fouché recalls the events leading up to the coup of 18 Brumaire. At a meeting Napoleon had with his fellow collaborators, he says, "the object was to remove the Directory, and to disperse the legislative body, but without violence, and by means, to all appearance legal, but prepared with all the resources of artifice and audacity."<sup>19</sup> That day, Napoleon marched from the Luxembourg Palace towards St. Cloud, cheers from the people of Paris greeting him along way. Once the coup began in earnest, Fouché remembers Napoleon striding across the Salon de Mars, and then, "in a verbose and disjointed speech, he declared there was no longer any government...his only wish was to be the arm commissioned to maintain and execute the orders

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<sup>17</sup> Woloch, 21.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 24.

<sup>19</sup> Fouché, 165.

of the council.”<sup>20</sup> Fouché states in his memoirs, “he [Napoleon] said to me that the destinies of France were in his hands.”<sup>21</sup> After the coup of 18 Brumaire, that could not be denied.

What can be said about the events of November 9, 1799 is that “peaceful times have no need for great men.”<sup>22</sup> Periods of crisis, although fearful and sometimes violent, impel “talented individuals to make use of their capacities and especially their will.”<sup>23</sup> The individual is a powerful actor in shaping history, but a team of individuals, who share a drive to shape history, is equally if not more powerful. Teams provide security, allowing one member’s weaknesses to be compensated for; teams promote creative thinking, focusing several minds together in the pursuit of a goal. Talleyrand and Napoleon demonstrate that an ambitious person placed in the right way to profit from favorable circumstances is a potent combination to shape history. Without people like them, history would have taken another direction.

The coup of 18 Brumaire in 1799 came at an opportune moment in the course of Napoleon’s ascension to power. The Directory “had failed to heal the rifts that had torn French society apart since the beginnings of the Revolution.”<sup>24</sup> The Directory’s failure led to a disaffection of a small group of men, who resolved to install a new regime that would take the steps to solve the country’s problems. Among that crowd of discontents were Talleyrand, who sought France’s diplomatic reintegration, and Fouché. This group understood that a stronger executive would be required if France was to head in a different direction. That key component was missing: a strong leader who could rally the country behind the collaborators as France

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 179.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 155.

<sup>22</sup> Gueniffey, Patrice. *Bonaparte, 1769-1802*. Translated by Steven Rendall. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015., 50.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>24</sup> Dwyer, 75.

underwent another regime change. Napoleon, returning to France from Egypt on October 9, 1799, having abandoned the French army there, was precisely what the collaborators needed.<sup>25</sup>

When Napoleon returned from Egypt in 1799, he could not be characterized as one of the political insiders even though he was exceedingly popular with most ordinary French people. In fact, the young general spent most of the French Revolution outside of France commanding the army in Northern Italy or Egypt. However, Napoleon was politically conscious. He was a frequent guest in Madame Germaine de Staël's famous salon in Paris; she connected him personally to the most respected members of French society. He also possessed an ambition to ascend to greater power in France. As the military campaign in Egypt faced an imminent defeat, Napoleon sensed that "the time had come for him to undertake what he had not dared when he returned from Italy."<sup>26</sup> Capitalizing on the Directory's unpopularity and his own stardom, he joined the ranks of disillusioned collaborators. Once the plan to overthrow the Directory had been fully executed, he would be France's next leader.

Napoleon excelled at identifying talented civilian partners and putting their skills to good use.<sup>27</sup> Even though he often doubted the loyalty of his highest ranking civil servants, he never completely lost confidence in them. For a high-ranking civil servant, serving Napoleon became a practical question to one extent or another. Whether the political security, generous salary, or social prestige was the primary appeal, serving Napoleon was done in self-interest.<sup>28</sup> Even for Cambacérès, who was a close confidant, survival was his priority.<sup>29</sup> The promise of internal stability drew the collaborators to Napoleon. The political elites were weary of each regime's

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 76.

<sup>26</sup> Gueniffey, 521.

<sup>27</sup> Woloch, 155.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 242.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 127.

successive failure to end the discord. If joining Napoleon was the price of internal stability, the collaborators, especially with the comforts of a civil servant, believed that was worth the sacrifice.

Among the collaborators was Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès. He began his political career in the clergy and rose to prominence with the publication of *What is the Third Estate?*, which was the closest thing the French Revolution had to a little red book.<sup>30</sup> Like Napoleon, Sieyès had been outside of France during some of its most turbulent moments, serving as the ambassador to Prussia, and felt the Directory must be toppled. Sieyès was never a fiery supporter of Napoleon. He was suspicious of Napoleon's overwhelming popularity and seemingly limitless ambition. Sieyès had his own ambition to continue forward with liberal reforms of the political system. He wrote about the ideas of legitimacy, representation, checks and balances, and the separation of powers for years and had long waited for an opportunity to implement them.<sup>31</sup>

The liberal reforms that Sieyès pushed for were reversed under the Directory. Sieyès's ideas were ignored most of the time, but the "deadlocks, coups, and purges of the Directory years underscored their abiding relevance."<sup>32</sup> Sieyès was drawn to Napoleon in the hope that a new government would give him a chance to enact his liberal reforms. According to Isser Woloch, he was not really prepared now that a second chance was in sight. His ideas were complex and unpractical, and he had never committed to writing his ideas down in an organized manner. His desire to see the executive's powers layered and dispersed was met with disappointment. He did serve on the commission charged with writing a constitution for the Consulate though.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 28.

Napoleon needed someone to control internal discord, and Joseph Fouché was tasked with that responsibility. Serving as the Minister of Police during the French Revolution, he acquired a reputation as ruthless for helping to put down a royalist revolt in the Vendée region in 1793.<sup>33</sup> When Napoleon became First Consul of France, Fouché had been serving as Minister of Police. Napoleon kept him in that post out of necessity. Fouché was acquainted with regime changes; he had seen them before. In describing the coup of 18 Brumaire, he says, “the act of 18 Brumaire is the work of a few deserters, abandoned by their colleagues, and who, though the deprived of a majority, are not less eager to sanction the usurpation.”<sup>34</sup> Fouché was not a visionary like Talleyrand or Napoleon. He was loyal to France, but he never acquired power hoping to bring about change. He was looking out for his own position. Fouché, content to remain in power, supported Napoleon and offered his services to the new leader.

His services were needed quickly after the coup of 18 Brumaire. On December 24, 1800, there was an attempt on Napoleon’s life, and he was nearly killed. The incident obviously incensed Napoleon, who then ordered Fouché to act. Fouché’s police eventually arrested a domestic servant and a naval officer for the attempted assassination, and they were promptly executed.<sup>35</sup> After the execution, the police continued to keep tabs on many people who were deemed to be possible threats to the government. Special tribunals were created to try suspected plotters. Securing the country from dissenters became a pretext, however, for imprisoning former sans culottes and Jacobins. Napoleon once issued a decree deporting 150 former sans culottes without trial.<sup>36</sup> It was Fouché who said, “the first pledge for the safety of any government

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 120.

<sup>34</sup> Fouché, 189.

<sup>35</sup> Woloch, 71.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 75.

whatever is a vigilant police, under the direction of firm and enlightened leaders.”<sup>37</sup> Fouché’s response to suspected plotters showed that he deeply embraced these words.

Perhaps Napoleon’s most trusted collaborator who helped install the Consulate is also the most unknown: Jean-Jacques-Régis de Cambacérès. Like Talleyrand, his desire for internal stability drew him to Napoleon. For his support during the coup of 18 Brumaire, he was awarded the position of Second Consul. Coming from the former nobility of Montpellier, the Cambacérès family held the post of conseiller for four generations. Cambacérès’s judicial background equipped him to oversee the legislature. He ensured that the legislature was as weak as possible and prevented any serious disagreements erupting among the senators.<sup>38</sup> Cambacérès fulfilled a variety of other functions in government. In one of his roles, he served essentially as a minister of propaganda. Napoleon took care to make sure certain information about the military campaign did not reach the public. It was Cambacérès who filtered out anything that might give a negative image of Napoleon’s wars.

Cambacérès managed to become one of the most powerful politicians in France, acting as Napoleon’s main confidant on domestic affairs. The arguably most important work of his entire political career was writing the French Civil Code of 1804. Despite his disapproval of the invasion of Spain and Portugal in 1807 and the invasion of Russia in 1812, he maintained Napoleon’s trust until the defeat of the empire in 1814. Cambacérès had Napoleon’s ear in a way that the other collaborators, even Talleyrand, did not, making him “an indispensable agent and advisor... who, for all his immersion in the Revolution, remained (like Talleyrand) nostalgic for

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<sup>37</sup> Fouché, 106.

<sup>38</sup> Woloch, 137.

the grace, security, and order of the old regime.”<sup>39</sup> To say the least, he was an indispensable addition to Napoleon’s team of elite civil servants.

Napoleon benefited from these alliances as well. Their allegiance was essential to his grab for power and the formation of a new government. Even though Napoleon became First Consul, the collaborators approached him about taking on the responsibility. They were the first to propose overthrowing the Directory. Before the coup of 18 Brumaire, Napoleon had never held political office. He had been commanding the army outside of France in the years immediately preceding the Directory’s fall. The collaborators eventually went on to occupy government positions, bringing their skills to Napoleon’s service.<sup>40</sup> Fouché, who ran the police during some of the French Revolution’s most tumultuous moments, brought this same competence to Napoleon’s regimes. Cambacérès served in the capacity of a vice president. If there was one word that captured the difference between the Consulate and the Directory, that word would be functional.

As much as the collaborators gained from Napoleon, Napoleon gained as much from them. Napoleon’s partnership with the collaborators legitimized the regime in the eyes of the public. At the suggestion of the collaborators, Napoleon kept the images of the French Revolution, such as the tricolor flag and the national motto of liberty, equality, and fraternity. The association of the collaborators with this revolutionary spirit made the regime more trustworthy.<sup>41</sup> The risk of failing to secure popular approval for a centralized government was real and dangerous. Despite the internal instability of the past decades, the French Revolution’s memory was alive. Now, the French people faced the prospect of another dictatorial regime.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 128.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 240.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 240.

Napoleon's lack of political experience was a possible liability. Although he was a national hero for his military victories, he was a newcomer to politics.

Like Napoleon, Talleyrand was a relative newcomer to politics when he was first appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs under the Directory in 1797. The radical republic targeted him, like many other former aristocrats, and forced into exile in England and then the United States.<sup>42</sup> While living in the United States, he formed a relationship with Alexander Hamilton, referring fondly to him as "my friend."<sup>43</sup> When he returned to France from his exile in 1796, he understood that he no longer possessed the personal connections needed to be a successful politician. For this reason, he sought the help of Madame Germaine de Staël who acquainted him with the Directory's most influential men, including Barras. Madame Germaine de Staël got his name removed from the list of émigrés, and he was allowed to return to France. Talleyrand first contacted Napoleon by letter at this time, who was experiencing tremendous victories over Austria in Northern Italy.

Talleyrand would not meet Napoleon in person until a month before the coup of 18 Brumaire. When Napoleon arrived in Paris after his return from Egypt, Talleyrand took the initiative to visit him personally. The two spent a long time in conversation, which consisted of small talk in large part but still done in confidence.<sup>44</sup> Leading up to the coup, Talleyrand took on the role as an arbiter between the different parties involved. Sieyès and Napoleon had an especially fraught relationship, which put him in a frustrating position. He was granted charge over France's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in exchange for his support. Talleyrand was busy in

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<sup>42</sup> Dwyer, 60.

<sup>43</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, Charles Maurice. *Mémoires du prince de Talleyrand*. 5th ed. Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1891. December 27, 2009. Accessed February 2, 2017. <https://arhice.org/details/mmoiresduprince04broggooog.>, 383.

<sup>44</sup> Dwyer, 76.

the weeks before the coup of 18 Brumaire. He passed his evenings in meetings with Napoleon and the other collaborators, planning for the coup and the government that would follow.

Talleyrand too had strong feelings about the path the Directory was taking France down. He says, “the words of the Republic, liberty, equality, and fraternity, were written on every wall, but what those words expressed was meaningless... everything was violent, and, as a result, nothing could be durable.”<sup>45</sup> However, meeting Napoleon gave Talleyrand hope an alternative future for France was possible. He remembered his first impressions of Napoleon: “I found in this young conqueror, in what he did, said, or wrote, something rather new, strong, and enterprising to attach to his genius great hopes...at first, he seemed to me to possess a charming character.”<sup>46</sup> Talleyrand cared about cultivating a friendly relationship with Napoleon early on. He threw the young general a party to celebrate his victories in Italy and “the beautiful peace he brought.”<sup>47</sup> Talleyrand says, “I neglected nothing to make it brilliant and popular...I ornamented it with as much luxury as possible.”<sup>48</sup>

The question arises why Talleyrand pledged his support to Napoleon, who lacked political experience and displayed a limitless ambition. His decision came from a place of pragmatism. Talleyrand believed he could act independently of Napoleon to pursue the foreign policy he thought France needed the most. Talleyrand’s first goal was to make peace between France and Europe. On the other hand, territorial conquest and defeating Britain drove Napoleon’s foreign policy.<sup>49</sup> At any rate, Talleyrand urged Napoleon to take as much power as possible. Talleyrand figured that this arrangement would give him as much direct access to

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<sup>45</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, 393.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 391.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 405.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 405.

<sup>49</sup> Dwyer, 85.

Napoleon, and Talleyrand would in turn gain more sway over foreign policy. Talleyrand says, “I told the general Bonaparte that the portfolio of foreign affairs, by its nature is secret, cannot be open to another opinion ...from the first day, I would not work with anyone except the First Consul.”<sup>50</sup>

After the coup of 18 Brumaire succeeded, Talleyrand became one of Napoleon’s closest allies. He got the accessibility he wanted. They met three times a week to discuss foreign affairs, and these issues were kept between them. Napoleon gained a mentor in turn, as Talleyrand was fifteen years older and more experienced in politics. Furthermore, Napoleon’s regime gained the legitimacy domestically and abroad that came along with having a former aristocrat’s support.<sup>51</sup> As events unfolded, Talleyrand was shown he was wrong to think he could ever act independently of Napoleon. Napoleon’s interest in foreign affairs grew, even though war was the thrust of his foreign policy, and Talleyrand’s role as Minister of Foreign Affairs severely diminished. Napoleon expected everyone in government to bend to his will. The amount of influence a minister could exert over policy “was inversely proportional to the amount of interest Napoleon took in affairs.”<sup>52</sup>

The main reason Talleyrand supported Napoleon was that Talleyrand believed a strong executive was needed for internal stability. Ending the tumult plaguing France was one of his goals for the country alongside diplomatic reintegration, and Talleyrand ultimately believed Napoleon was the right person to solve these problems.<sup>53</sup> Talleyrand says “all that was needed was security, and the general opinion of France was that Bonaparte gave it.”<sup>54</sup> For Talleyrand,

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<sup>50</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, 417.

<sup>51</sup> Dwyer, 86.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 89.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 85.

<sup>54</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, 428.

nothing could be accomplished abroad if the government at home was in disarray, struggling to control mob violence and religious unrest in the cities and the countryside. Internal stability was the great commonality of all the collaborators, and the Directory's failure to achieve that was the primary criticism it received. The end of the Directory was a worthy sacrifice for internal stability.

Talleyrand sought a partnership with Napoleon to regain his lost popularity after the failed invasion of Egypt. He was the one who recommended that France invade Egypt and believed France could disrupt British trade links by attacking Egypt and pick up a colony along the way. The expedition to Egypt was a costly defeat for France, and the Directory suffered the brunt of the blame. Talleyrand was attacked so viciously in the press that he resigned, though his resignation was not accepted.<sup>55</sup> Supporting Napoleon afforded him the opportunity to distance himself from an unpopular policy decision and resume his post as Minister of Foreign Affairs under a new government. Phillip Dwyer suggests that he did not have much to lose anyway. These attacks gave him an excuse to disassociate himself from a regime that was heading closer to downfall each day.

The coup of 18 Brumaire was a successful gamble for Talleyrand who officially took up the post as Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1800. Britain and Austria were obviously terrified to learn that a military commander now headed the country that inflicted numerous defeats on them. Talleyrand intervened and, in his first act as Napoleon's foreign minister, urged Napoleon to sue for peace. The Peace of Amiens, signed on March 25, 1802, concluded all hostilities with Britain. France, for the first time since 1792, was not at war with any major European power.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Dwyer, 70.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 92.

Even though the treaty fell apart on May 18, 1803 when war resumed with Britain, Talleyrand spoke highly of the peaceful period the Peace of Amiens ushered in: “We can say it with the least amount of exaggeration, at the time of the Peace of Amiens, France enjoyed in foreign relations, in power, in glory, and in influence that even the most ambitious spirit could not have desired more for her...”<sup>57</sup>

Talleyrand was pleased with the result of the Peace of Amiens, but he was less pleased with how negotiations went.<sup>58</sup> During the negotiations, Napoleon wanted to strip Britain of its colonies in North America. Talleyrand was more concerned with beginning the relationship between Britain and France, now under a new regime, on cordial terms. If Britain felt punished, diplomatic relations would be bound to deteriorate as time pressed on. The disagreement between Napoleon and Talleyrand worsened to the point that Napoleon sent his brother, Joseph Bonaparte, to sign the preliminary treaty with Britain instead of Talleyrand. Talleyrand did not know a preliminary treaty was signed until he heard the celebratory canon fire that signaled the good news in Paris.<sup>59</sup> Talleyrand was obviously displeased that Napoleon excluded his foreign minister from negotiations. His original thinking, that he could work around Napoleon to achieve his goals, was proving to be more difficult than anticipated.

Their cooperation during the coup of 18 Brumaire and the slight fallout over the Peace of Amiens thereafter showed that the rifts in their relationship began to emerge early on. Importantly, these rifts emerged once Napoleon and Talleyrand assumed power and set to work on solving the problems facing France. Talleyrand favored limited expansion. The expansion he did support was more along the lines of acquiring colonies overseas. He proposed natural borders

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<sup>57</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, 427.

<sup>58</sup> Dwyer, 92.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 92.

for France that included the French-speaking areas of the Rhine Valley, Belgium, and Switzerland.<sup>60</sup> Building a land empire for France in Europe was Napoleon's ultimate ambition. The common ground that led to their partnership, mainly the desire for internal stability, could no longer keep them on positive terms. Napoleon centralized his authority and put an end to political squabbling, which was what Talleyrand hoped he would do. Then, the two were set on pursuing their goals separately. The alliance, which served them so usefully, was fragile and dependent on circumstance.

Napoleon and Talleyrand had different beginnings, and certainly different professional backgrounds, that contributed to these differences of opinion. On August 15, 1769, Napoleon Bonaparte was born in Ajaccio, Corsica. His parents, Letizia and Carlo Buonaparte, were ethnically Italian. Letizia and Carlo maintained a reasonably comfortable lifestyle and were able to provide for their children. When France invaded the island in 1769, Carlo Buonaparte sided with the invaders. He changed his name from Carlo to Charles and took an oath of allegiance to Louis XV. Napoleon grew up detesting France. His childhood hero was Pasquale Paoli, the Corsican nationalist who led the resistance movement to France. After studying law in Italy, Charles took up the position of associate judge in Ajaccio's court. His judgeship afforded him and his family a set of privileges.<sup>61</sup> These privileges included access to educational opportunities for his children. Napoleon left for the mainland to enroll at school first in Autun in 1778 and then the *École Militaire* in Paris.<sup>62</sup>

Napoleon barely spoke French when he left Corsica and was teased at school for his accent and peculiar name. He was also mocked for his heritage, coming from a family of the

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 60.

<sup>61</sup> Gueniffey, 44.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 53.

lesser nobility.<sup>63</sup> Despite these obstacles, he was a diligent student. Napoleon received an education in a breadth of disciplines. He studied Latin, history, grammar, and geography. Math and science, which were useful for his career as an artillery officer, stuck with him most of his life. Napoleon pursued his education beyond his courses, reading works of Enlightenment thinkers and frequenting the salons in Paris. His education gave him a desire to learn more. From a young age, he aspired to greatness and seemed to be working for a cause greater than himself, which, at this young stage of his life, was the liberation of his island home from France.<sup>64</sup>

As he progressed through his schooling, he nurtured his burgeoning ambition. But, he no longer hated France with the same passion. The purpose of the French military school was to produce gentlemen rather than officers.<sup>65</sup> Napoleon had been transformed into a gentleman par excellence. He identified with France more than he did with Corsica and denounced his childhood hero Pasquale Paoli. He was never able to fully shake his Corsican roots though. British pamphleteers exploited his origins to launch diatribes against “the Corsican ape, the Corsican worm, the Corsican tiger, the Corsican locust.”<sup>66</sup> Napoleon cherished his Italian identity though, saying, “I had one foot in Italy, the other in France.”<sup>67</sup> He felt more ashamed of his Corsican identity. His Italian origins connected him with a civilization and history he admired, but he spoke less highly of his Corsican origins.

The event that inspired Napoleon to involve himself with politics came on June 21, 1791. As the French Revolution was taking hold, Louis XVI and his family tried to escape France for the safety of the Austrian Netherlands. The flight to Varennes was an enormous scandal, and

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 57.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 58.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 61.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 127.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 128.

Napoleon this time denounced the leader of his adoptive country. He joined the local chapter of the Jacobin club and offered his services to the French Republic. His first test of battle was against Britain's Royal Navy at Toulon in 1793. The Royal Navy and a band of royalist troops laid siege to the city. The siege was broken, and Napoleon, then an artillery officer, was consequently promoted.<sup>68</sup> After the fall of Robespierre, he was placed under a brief house arrest, but he remained loyal to the French Revolution. He put down a royalist riot in Paris with a "whiff of grapeshot."<sup>69</sup> Amidst the fighting, Napoleon found time to court and marry Josephine de Beauharnais in 1796.

Two days after his marriage, he left for Northern Italy and set out to halt Austrian expansion in the region at France's elbow. For his victories over Austria, Napoleon became popular with the French people, and his name began to circulate in the political establishment. He briefly returned to Paris after the campaign in Northern Italy. It was during this interlude that he met Talleyrand in person and accepted the offer to command the invasion of Egypt. Napoleon did not experience the same success in Egypt. On his way back to France, having abandoned his army in Egypt, he briefly stopped at Corsica. He would never again step foot on his island home after this visit. He returned to France as a national hero, representing the success that eluded the Directory. For many French people, Napoleon was "a symbol, not of freedom that the French no longer cared much about, but rather of victory, peace, and order."<sup>70</sup>

Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord was born on February 2, 1754 on Rue Gracinière in Paris to a respected aristocratic family. Talleyrand grew up estranged from his parents, but he had a close relationship with his grandmother, Madame de Chalais. He says, "she was the first

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 120.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 121.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 532.

person in my family who showed me affection, and the first person who made me taste the happiness of loving.”<sup>71</sup> The most formative moments of his childhood were passed with Madame de Chalais. He says, “I learned everything from Chalais that one would know in the country when you are well bred.”<sup>72</sup> Talleyrand’s father obtained a high rank in the army and hoped his son would follow in this tradition, but Talleyrand suffered from a clubfoot. Because of this infirmity, his father guided him to a career in the clergy, which was considered a prestigious alternative to a career in the military. He enrolled at the seminary of St. Sulpice in Paris and studied in theology at the Sorbonne in tandem. In 1779, he was ordained as a Catholic priest. Louis XVI then appointed him the Bishop of Autun, which was a title that never fully left him. The first time Fouché references Talleyrand in his memoirs, he calls him “the ex-bishop of Autun, a man distinguished for his shrewdness and address.”<sup>73</sup>

Talleyrand never was religious. He disliked his time in the Catholic Church. But, the decision to become a bishop had obvious advantages. He appreciated the education he was afforded. The library at the seminary of St. Sulpice gave him access to the writings of the most prolific intellectuals of the time. He says, “I spent my days at the library of St. Sulpice reading great historians, in particular the lives of statesmen, moralists, and some poets. I devoured adventure stories. A new land, the dangers of a storm, the painting of a disaster...all of this had a lively attraction for me.”<sup>74</sup> Talleyrand was a frequent guest at the salons of Paris and was exposed to the ideas of the Enlightenment. Like Napoleon, his education fed his ambition to

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<sup>71</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, 65.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 74.

<sup>73</sup> Fouché, 67.

<sup>74</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, 84.

achieve greatness: “This education must have some value...An uneasy and vague hope, like all the passions of young age, exalted my spirit: I worried about it without ceasing.”<sup>75</sup>

His career in the clergy was his launching point into politics. In 1789, he was chosen as a representative of the clergy, the First Estate, and was present at the meeting of the Estates General. When the National Assembly replaced that body, Talleyrand aligned himself with the moderate revolutionaries and supported a constitutional monarchy for France.<sup>76</sup> When religion came under attack, Talleyrand was at the forefront of this issue. Even after he became Minister of Foreign Affairs, he received criticism for supporting the absorption of the Catholic Church into the government. The revolutionaries wanted to bring the Catholic Church into a more subordinate position and end the series of privileges granted to the religious establishment, such as an exemption from paying taxes. These clerical privileges as well as religious crimes forbidding witchcraft, heresy, and blasphemy were abolished eventually. However, the Catholic Church was deeply entrenched in the daily lives of most ordinary French people. Any move against Catholicism would have serious repercussions with its many adherents in France and abroad.

Talleyrand, as a representative of the clergy, understood the Catholic Church could not simply be done away with. In response, he proposed a compromise whereby the Catholic Church would be absorbed into the government. The Civil Constitution of the Clergy of 1790 obligated the clergy to take oaths of allegiance to the constitution. The tithe, which was the equivalent of tax to subsidize the Catholic Church, was abolished. Church lands were nationalized and used to back the assignat, the revolutionary currency.<sup>77</sup> Altogether, these reforms deprived the Catholic

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 85.

<sup>76</sup> Dwyer, 28.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 34.

Church of its independent authority, and Talleyrand was directly associated with this move. The papacy in Rome was furious, as were many members of the French clergy accustomed to the clerical privileges. Pope Pius VI excommunicated Talleyrand in 1791. He resigned afterwards, happily leaving his time in the clergy behind him.

The Civil Constitution of the Clergy of 1790 was radical coming from a clergyman.<sup>78</sup> Even though Talleyrand's action made him popular with the revolutionaries, he still fell out favor with them. In 1792, he left the National Assembly as the more radical delegates were overtaking the moderates. Because of Talleyrand's background and affiliations, a political moderate, a clergyman, and a former aristocrat, a warrant for his arrest was issued in 1792. He was classified as an enemy of the revolution and had to flee for his safety. At this time, he says, "My true goal was to leave France, where it seemed to me unhelpful and even dangerous to stay, from where I wanted to leave only with a regular passport, so as to not shut the doors on me forever."<sup>79</sup> He spent the remainder of the French Revolution's violent phase in exile in London and the United States. After the fall of Robespierre, he returned to France with a determination to reenter the political scene. In 1797, Talleyrand was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Directory and began his correspondence with Napoleon.

After examining their biographies, there are some similarities that could explain what brought Talleyrand and Napoleon together. Neither Talleyrand nor Napoleon started their careers in politics. Rather, they entered politics through the institutions of the Ancien Régime. Napoleon was first and foremost a military officer. When the collaborators were planning the coup of 18 Brumaire, Fouché expected Napoleon would take as much power as possible. He says, "he

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid,

<sup>79</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, 350.

should govern either as a sultan or a prophet.”<sup>80</sup> Even after Napoleon assumed power, he ran the government with a top-down structure of the military. Talleyrand was a clergyman before becoming Minister of Foreign Affairs. He used his position as a member of France’s privileged class to acquire political power, first in the Estates General and then the National Assembly.

Furthermore, Talleyrand and Napoleon were both ambitious in their fields. Napoleon displayed this strong drive to achieve greatness from a young age. He had dreams of liberating his island home from the clutches of the French occupiers, and he then dreamed of building an empire for his adoptive country. Talleyrand too shared this desire to be “part of history.” No matter what his official position, as a member of the Estates General for the clergy or even after his resignation as Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1807, he tried to advance his vision for the future of France. His betrayals of the successive regimes following the French Revolution have earned him a reputation as purely self-interested and power-hungry. Phillip Dwyer argues that coming to this conclusion about Talleyrand is problematic. Talleyrand did crave power, but he craved power so that he could continue acting in the interest of his country.<sup>81</sup>

Internal stability was the great commonality of the collaborators. Talleyrand and Napoleon were unified in their desire to bring the internal instability of the French Revolution to an end, and Talleyrand believed Napoleon was the best person for the task. Talleyrand says, “he [Napoleon] put a term to the Revolution.”<sup>82</sup> The two were victims personally of the French Revolution’s senseless paranoia. Napoleon was briefly placed under house arrest; Talleyrand was forced into exile. Along with the thousands of victims, the French Revolution left in its wake a series of inept governments that would surely fail to address the internal instability. In

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<sup>80</sup> Fouché, 67.

<sup>81</sup> Dwyer, 208.

<sup>82</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, 428.

Talleyrand's words, France was in a state of "debasement that the Directory plunged it into."<sup>83</sup> Decisive measures steps were required to preserve what France had gained from the French Revolution and do away with obstacles to that progress.

Talleyrand and Napoleon both studied the works of the Enlightenment. The influence of this intellectual movement can be seen in their policy initiatives. Talleyrand was sympathetic to the revolutionary desire to secularize the government. The conjunction of the political and religious establishments had a created a system that disproportionately benefited a sliver of the population at the expense of so many. He proposed the Civil Constitution of the Clergy of 1790 that ended the clerical privileges, and he contributed to the writing of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen. He participated in the legislature, acting as a representative in the Estates General and the National Assembly. According to Phillip Dwyer, the idea that a government could remain in power so long as it had the support of the people was one the principles that guided Talleyrand's decision-making.<sup>84</sup>

Despite Napoleon's dictatorial tendencies, he embraced the Enlightenment movement. Napoleon read the works of Enlightenment authors voraciously.<sup>85</sup> He tried his own hand at writing. In 1795, he wrote a romantic novel, *Clisson and Eugenia*, about a French soldier in love, which drew from the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. His support of the Enlightenment came across in his ideals for taking power in the coup of 18 Brumaire. Patrice Gueniffey says Napoleon's goal "was to liberate the political will in the service of reforms that, instead of being realized by the people, would be realized from above, with better chances of success and at a

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 427.

<sup>84</sup> Dwyer, 207.

<sup>85</sup> Geuniffey, 67.

lower cost.”<sup>86</sup> Napoleon instituted the French Civil Code of 1804, reforming the legal system to reflect the ideas of the French Revolution. Witchcraft, heresy, and blasphemy were no longer criminal offenses. In 1802, he created the Legion of Honor to award military and civilian contributions to the betterment of France, creating a system of social rank based on merit rather than birth.<sup>87</sup>

Talleyrand’s desire to see internal stability drew him to Napoleon Bonaparte, who promised to deliver it. He put “his faith in the regime he believed was the guarantee of the social order... The overriding principle that governed his behavior was always the same: the public good.”<sup>88</sup> Now that a strong government was in place, Talleyrand could get to work on reintegrating France into the system of European powers. His goal, however, seemed to put him in conflict with Napoleon, who had his own goal of building a land empire for France. Talleyrand embraced the Peace of Amiens, finally bringing an end to war with Britain. It brought France stability abroad just as the coup of 18 Brumaire brought France stability at home. But, the Peace of Amiens represented something else. It was an indication that Napoleon was not going to be as easy to work around as Talleyrand expected.

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 687.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 790.

<sup>88</sup> Dwyer, 208.

## Chapter 2: *The Strasbourg memorandum*

Changes outside of France accompanied these changes within France. By the time Talleyrand issued the Strasbourg memorandum, the subject of this chapter, in October of 1805, Napoleon had reorganized the French government into an empire with himself at its head. The proclamation of the empire in 1804 confirmed the suspicions of France's enemies that Napoleon sought to continue the expansionism that had already characterized France's foreign policy. Talleyrand, who was still wanted to move France in the direction of diplomatic reintegration, was starting to share the same suspicions as his British and Austrian enemies. It was becoming clear that Napoleon's desire to build an empire was his goal for France, which was a vision in conflict with Talleyrand's goal of reintegrating France into the system of European powers. However, his opposition to territorial expansion did not yet compel him to quit his post. Talleyrand instead focused his energies on trying to temper his emperor's ambition and wrote a series of letters called the Strasbourg memorandum, a document of unsung importance, to outline his own vision of peace.

Napoleon was busy himself in 1805. The Peace of Amiens of 1802, negotiated with little input from Talleyrand, deteriorated a mere year after it was first signed, ending the only period when France was not at war with any other European power since 1792. Whenever Napoleon was off waging war, Talleyrand was busy with the diplomatic footwork that inevitably ensued. He was in the difficult position of acting as Napoleon's agent as he was beginning to disagree with him more strongly. As early as 1803, Talleyrand started openly voicing his disapproval of Napoleon's bellicose directives. He spoke up against a proposed invasion of Britain, which would have been disastrous due to British naval supremacy.<sup>89</sup> He soon realized that Napoleon

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 93.

had no other foreign policy goals aside from territorial expansion and the defeat of Britain by some means. When the task of governing came before them is when the two began to experience some rifts.

Talleyrand's support of Napoleon was a betrayal of his Enlightenment views. He supported the idea that government derives the right to rule from its citizens, which is area where he and Napoleon clashed. Napoleon's regimes did not reflect these values. As more lands came under his grip, Napoleon put his brothers on the throne of former republics in Italian and German speaking areas.<sup>90</sup> Talleyrand believed that a stronger government in France would be functional enough to bring about peace with its enemies, especially if that meant he could continue to act as Minister of Foreign Affairs. He misjudged, and a new series of wars were launched after 1802 "that were distinctly Napoleon's."<sup>91</sup> Despite these troubling signs, Talleyrand felt he could pressure Napoleon into ending expansion with the defeat of Austria, sue for peace with Britain, and then initiate the process of reintegrating France into the continental balance of power.

The event that sharply turned Austria and Russia against France after war resumed with Britain was the execution of the Duke of Enghien. In February 1804, Fouché discovered a British sponsored spy network in France with the goal of assassinating Napoleon, and the Duke of Enghien, a Bourbon prince, was suspected to be among the chief conspirators. He was the only son of Louis Henri, the Prince of Condé, whose ancestral territory of Chantilly was located on the northern outskirts of Paris. The Prince of Condé and his son were not direct relatives of the Bourbon monarchs, as they were distantly descended from Louis XIV, but this slightest relation was grounds alone to suspect him of conspiring with the British to restore the monarchy. Even

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<sup>90</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, 446.

<sup>91</sup> Dwyer, 97.

though there was no evidence to prove his complicity, a small force of cavalry was dispatched to kidnap him from the neutral territory of Baden.<sup>92</sup> He was secretly tried and executed at the grounds of the Chateau of Vincennes in Paris on March 21, 1804.

Little documentary evidence of the event survived. Talleyrand destroyed most of the records of the abduction and the execution, so it is difficult to ascertain his exact role. Fouché had some commentary on the incident though, saying “it is more than a crime... It is a political fault.”<sup>93</sup> The incident incensed the Austrian and Russian aristocracy, and it had a frightening similarity to the execution of nobles during the Reign of Terror. In fact, Napoleon, and his ministers who recommended the execution, wanted to send a warning to the remaining émigrés abroad, former members of the nobility who fled during the French Revolution, that plotting against the regime would be met with reprisal. He considered an intact Bourbon family, even distant members, to be a threat to the longevity of his own regime. Domestically, Napoleon’s popularity took a blow, and Talleyrand received some of the blame as well. France was at war once again with Austria, but Napoleon was determined to see that Austria, whose meddling in Northern Italy and the German speaking lands caused much irritation, was defeated. Britain and Russia joined the fray soon after, marking the start of the Ulm Campaign that would eventually draw Prussia, the final major European power, into war in 1806.

The scandal of the Duke of Enghien’s death was not the main reason war erupted again in 1805. What sparked the war in 1805 was Napoleon’s continuous territorial expansion. France had been propping up satellite states in Italy, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. On September 13, 1805, Austria, still at peace with France, issued a formal diplomatic complaint.<sup>94</sup> Talleyrand

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 94.

<sup>93</sup> Fouché, 379.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 407.

was frustrated with Napoleon's territorial incursions, feeling the emperor put at risk the chance to reinstate a balance of power. According to Talleyrand, Napoleon's priority was to secure a foothold in central Europe so that preparation could be made for an eventual invasion of Britain.<sup>95</sup> To affect his strategy, Napoleon began the Ulm Campaign after Austria invaded the Electorate of Bavaria on September 21, 1805.<sup>96</sup>

The Ulm Campaign consisted of a series of skirmishes between Austria and France that culminated in the Battle of Ulm. For the two months, the Austrian army managed to evade Napoleon, but he was finally able to trap the Austrian army on October 15, 1805. Vienna was captured three weeks later, and Austria's defeat was nearly secured. Napoleon encountered a setback though on October 21, 1805, when the British admiral Horatio Nelson inflicted a crushing defeat on the French fleet at the Battle of Trafalgar. The defeat at the Battle of Trafalgar preserved Britain's edge over France at sea and forced Napoleon to abandon direct conflict with Britain in favor of economic warfare. Napoleon needed to plan his next step and summoned Talleyrand to Strasbourg to discuss the conditions of surrender he wished to impose on Austria. Talleyrand outlined what he thought that next step should be in the Strasbourg memorandum. Concerned with the rapidity of Napoleon's expansion and a naval defeat that left France vulnerable, he seized the opportunity to stress the necessity for peace in the Strasbourg memorandum.

The Strasbourg memorandum was a series of letters Talleyrand wrote to Napoleon from Strasbourg, France in October of 1805. Of the nineteen letters that comprise the Strasbourg memorandum, most do not deserve much attention because they tell us little about Talleyrand's

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<sup>95</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, 435.

<sup>96</sup> Fouché, 407.

foreign policy views. Talleyrand mainly gave logistical updates, such as troop movements, and messages from other French diplomats serving somewhere in the empire. In the second letter in the series, Letter CV sent on October 9, 1805, he says, “because you, your majesty, are so far away, I believe it’s necessary to address you in a simple letter from which you can take away the basic meanings.”<sup>97</sup> In Letter CVII and Letter CXI, written October 11, 1805 and October 17, 1805 respectively, Talleyrand made two key arguments. Military conquest was secondary to keeping Napoleon in a power, and unchecked territorial expansion would isolate the country from its neighbors diplomatically.

The tide of international opinion had already turned against France in 1805. Talleyrand recommended that Napoleon pursue a course of action that reintegrated France back into the system of European powers. On a different note, this document was not widely circulated. Most of Napoleon’s other imperial ministers were probably unaware it was ever written.<sup>98</sup> Even today, there is not a large historiography of the Strasbourg memorandum, but this one document arguably provides the most complete portrait of Talleyrand’s foreign policy views. For these reasons, Philip Dwyer says the Strasbourg memorandum “is one of the rare instances of a French high political personality putting forward a program outlining France’s place in Europe.”<sup>99</sup>

The common thread of the Strasbourg memorandum was restoring France’s place in the balance of powers. On October 11, 1805, Talleyrand sent Letter CVII from Strasbourg, taking a

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<sup>97</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, Charles Maurice. “Letter CV.” In *Lettres inédites de Talleyrand à Napoléon, 1800-1809*, 146-148. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 1. Paris: Archives des Affaires étrangères, 1889. October 11, 2012. Accessed January 29, 2017. [http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k63097553/f198.image.r=lettres%20inedites%20de%20Talleyrand%20a%20Napoleon.](http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k63097553/f198.image.r=lettres%20inedites%20de%20Talleyrand%20a%20Napoleon.,), 146.

<sup>98</sup> Dwyer, 98.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, 98.

desperate tone: “I plead to your majesty to read this piece, for there are certain reservations that I am to communicate, which are often for me, the objects of the gravest worries... The preservation of your majesty is a thousand times more precious for France than the conquest of Germany and the world.”<sup>100</sup> Napoleon’s military escapades were unsustainable in Talleyrand’s eyes. These wars endangered the possibility of diplomatic reintegration, pitting France against the countries it would need to reestablish ties with. The French Revolution had already strained France’s relationship with its former allies, such as Austria, and aggravated hostilities with its historic enemies, such as Britain. France was vulnerable if it was diplomatically isolated from the rest of Europe, even with its military strength.

Talleyrand believed Napoleon’s reign could be endangered too though. The solution to internal stability, after so many years of political turmoil, was a strong leader for the country, who could consolidate enough power to make its government functional again. In Letter CVII of the Strasbourg memorandum, it seems that Talleyrand was predicting expansion could lead to Napoleon’s downfall. If Napoleon fell, a new regime would be put in place, and the process of creating a balance of power in Europe would have to begin all over again. The Strasbourg memorandum revealed the differences between the two. Napoleon believed territorial expansion strengthened France, whereas Talleyrand believed France had other priorities to pursue. War should not form the cornerstone of France’s diplomatic relations in Talleyrand’s view.

However, Talleyrand’s recommendation to Napoleon about the future of France could not be completed at this point. The Battle of Ulm started four days after this letter was written,

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<sup>100</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, Charles Maurice. “Letter CVII.” In *Lettres inédites de Talleyrand à Napoléon, 1800-1809*, 149-151. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 1. Paris: Archives des Affaires étrangères, 1889. October 11, 2012. Accessed January 29, 2017. <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k63097553/f201.image.r=lettres%20inedites%20de%20Talleyrand%20a%20Napoleon., 149>.

meaning the outcome of the battle determined what Talleyrand would write next. Talleyrand was writing the memorandum on the assumption that Napoleon would achieve victory over Austria. He was right, and, frightfully enough for him, he was tasked with forming an agenda for peace with Napoleon who displayed every intention of continuing the war. When the Letter CXI of the Strasbourg memorandum, the longer of the two, was written on October 17, 1805, Napoleon was on the verge of victory at the Battle of Ulm, which was, in Talleyrand's words, "the only thing that soothed my regrets. It was the certitude that France would march to victory."<sup>101</sup>

Austria was the most immediate threat to France's security on land while Britain was the most immediate threat to France's security at sea. Now that Austria's defeat was assured, Talleyrand advised Napoleon to step back from military affairs and reflect on the power dynamics of Europe. Talleyrand believed Europe was comprised of four great powers: Austria, Britain, Russia, and France. He relegated Prussia to a second rang because it was weak economically.<sup>102</sup> He conceded that Prussia had a formidable military, which King Frederick II deserved credit for reforming. King Frederick II also pursued some economic reforms, but Prussia still trailed its neighbors. Its lack of industry and capital, land with little economic value, relatively small population of 10 million, and broken up territory meant that Prussia would not be a useful ally. At the head of the power dynamics was France. France had a capable military, able to fend off threats from the other powers, and a prosperous economy, which Napoleon's

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<sup>101</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, Charles Maurice. "Letter CXI." In *Lettres inédites de Talleyrand à Napoléon, 1800-1809*, 156-174. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 1. Paris: Archives des Affaires étrangères, 1889. October 11, 2012. Accessed January 29, 2017.<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k63097553/f226.image.r=lettres%20inedites%20de%20Talleyrand%20a%20Napoleon.>, 157.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, 158.

ministers managed competently. That left Britain and Austria, which are allied by necessity to counter French expansion. For this reason, Talleyrand called them “France’s natural enemies.”<sup>103</sup>

The true threat to all these powers was Russia.<sup>104</sup> Russia’s expansionist tendencies would naturally put it into conflict with neighboring Austria and Prussia. The Ottoman Empire, albeit much weaker in 1805 than it had been before, was also a fierce enemy of Russia. Russia would start wars of expansion with enemies in Eastern Europe and the Balkan Peninsula, and the existence of a buffer zone could keep it in check there. In sum, Talleyrand argued that a system of power relations existed in Europe, and each country had its own set of interests. What was less evident was the role of post-revolutionary France in this system, and how to achieve a durable peace between countries that have hitherto managed to keep peace temporarily at best.<sup>105</sup> In this respect, Talleyrand was concerned with constructing an alternative future for Europe in addition to one for France. France had to be included, and Napoleon needed to curb his own expansionist tendencies to make that alternative future possible.

The first step to building that future was forging an alliance with Austria. Talleyrand argued that Russia was the true enemy, and it could be kept at bay between the combined force of Austria and France. Just as Austria was the first-line of defense from the Ottoman Empire, it continued to serve as a buffer from Russia. To accomplish this realignment, Talleyrand proposed treating Austria in its defeat with leniency. He said, “it’s against the Russians that we must fortify Austria today. Thus, politics demands that not only the sacrifices Austria makes for this project be compensated, but compensated in a manner that leaves it with no regret.”<sup>106</sup> He

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 158.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 159.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 160.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 161.

suggested Napoleon relinquish Venice and Tyrol to serve as a buffer between the two countries and ease Austria's distrust of France. The Emperor of Austria would retain the title King of Italy. In exchange, he recommended Austria be given swathes of land in Eastern Europe, such as Wallachia, Bessarabia, Moldavia, and Bulgaria, which were under Ottoman control though. The goal of this recommendation was to deter Russian expansion in these areas, and Austria could more easily be brought into an alliance.

Talleyrand proposed a version of a peace treaty that would achieve the objectives he set forth. In the Strasbourg Memorandum, this hypothetical treaty had fourteen articles, most of which dealt with territorial changes.<sup>107</sup> Article 9 gave Austria the right to occupy the lands of Bulgaria and Moldavia. Article 3 gave the Emperor of Austria the title King of Italy. Talleyrand was clearly intending to forge a longstanding peace agreement. Article 4 stated that both emperors would renounce for themselves and their heirs the intention to acquire territories outside the limits of the treaty. The other parts of Talleyrand's treaty addressed the issues of trust between France and Austria, such as Article 13 and Article 14, which contained a promise from Talleyrand that France would abide by these terms.

Explaining the advantages of his peace plan, Talleyrand finished the Strasbourg memorandum. Not only would it put an end to hostilities, but Talleyrand believed it would definitively alter the diplomatic order for the long-term. The alliance between Austria and France would serve as the lynchpin of the durable peace, and the military threats of Russia and Austria would be eliminated. Russia would be less likely to invade its neighbors in the face of the alliance between France and Austria, and Austria itself would be allied to France. Lastly, Britain would find itself without allies on the continent. Britain's key military strength was its navy, and,

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 165.

despite Napoleon's hopes, any attempt to instigate a maritime war was not a risk worth taking for France. Talleyrand reckoned diplomacy was the best method to clip Britain's wings. The historians Phillip Dwyer has pointed out that, Talleyrand's plan was not very realistic.<sup>108</sup> These calls for European-wide political cooperation, especially one that put France at the center of power, would have encountered difficulty gaining support. Nonetheless, Talleyrand felt Napoleon was not offering anything similar of his own.

The Strasbourg memorandum revealed some crucial differences between the two. The rifts between Talleyrand and Napoleon emerged after the task of governing began. During the preparations for the coup of 18 Brumaire, the common cause that rallied the two together was a desire for internal stability. Then, the government would be functional enough to start tackling the country's problems. When the time came to begin governing, the two took starkly different positions. Talleyrand was attempting to reintegrate France, and indeed Austria, into the system of European powers. In fact, an alliance between France and Austria existed before the French Revolution and was meant to be cemented by the marriage of Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI. Talleyrand was thinking back to diplomatic structures of the Ancien Régime, while Napoleon was acting in a radically new way. The essential difference in the two's views was the stance of unlimited expansion to build a land empire, or the stance of consolidating expansion in the interest of diplomatic integration.

In respect to these differences, the two held different views on the role of war. For Napoleon, war the primary method of bringing enemies to the negotiation table. Furthermore, his primary goal for France, building an empire, necessitated war if it was to be achieved. Building an empire for France in Europe was the principal driver of his foreign policy, and empires are

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<sup>108</sup> Dwyer, 99.

impossible to build and maintain without a strong military.<sup>109</sup> For Talleyrand, war was to be used after diplomatic negotiations failed, whereas peace was a last resort for Napoleon. He considered France's entanglement in wars as one of the reasons for the internal instability under the Directory. He sided with Napoleon in the hope that he would take the critical measures to put an end to the internal instability, but it seemed his gamble was working out less smoothly than desired.

There were other statesmen in France, even before Talleyrand took office as Minister of Foreign Affairs, who renounced war as a means of pursuing the national interest. Maximilien Robespierre, who basically ran France during the most violent stages of the French Revolution, proposed that the power to declare war, which was solely vested in the monarch, should be transferred away from Louis XVI to the National Assembly. On May 16, 1790, Pierre Marc Gaston de Lévis, a former aristocrat and deputy, put forward an amendment that would curtail Louis XVI's power to declare war and form military alliances.<sup>110</sup> The pacifist movement found its true champion in the Count of Mirabeau though, the leader of the National Assembly's moderate faction, who drafted his own amendment on the matter. Mirabeau's amendment passed, preserving Louis XVI's power to conduct diplomacy and declare war while giving the National Assembly considerable oversight.<sup>111</sup> When Talleyrand argued war should be used after diplomatic negotiations failed, he was acting on some precedent. Disposing with war as a means of pursuing the national interest, which was rooted in Enlightenment thinking, was gaining ground. When Napoleon consolidated his power to take the country to war, he did not do that out

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 93.

<sup>110</sup> Bell, 98.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 107.

of contempt for the Enlightenment. He did that because it was necessary to accomplish his goal of building an empire for France.<sup>112</sup>

The chief difference the Strasbourg memorandum revealed was the two's foreign policy priorities. Expansion was the thrust of Napoleon's foreign policy. After his success in Northern Italy in 1796, combined with his background as a military commander, Napoleon's ambition became building an empire for France. Joseph Fouché said Napoleon was "intoxicated with glory upon his return from Italy."<sup>113</sup> Talleyrand had similar observations. He said Napoleon was never satisfied. If being Emperor of the French was not enough, he had to give himself the title King of Italy.<sup>114</sup> It is not unreasonable to claim that Napoleon was intent on conquering Europe as soon as he was in power. Talleyrand believed expansion should be limited for the sake of France's political reintegration. As foreign minister, he believed his primary goal was to find a place for France in the system of European powers. The French Revolution had turned most of France's former allies, including Austria, against it. In Talleyrand's eyes, Napoleon's wars created new roadblocks to viable diplomatic partnerships with both historic friends and enemies.

The differences between the two's professional backgrounds contributed to these disagreements. Napoleon was a military commander to his core. The near entirety of his education was done in military school, where he first kindled his ambition to achieve greatness. Napoleon had never known a career outside of the military. Politics and military affairs were inseparable. There are fewer words than those of Patrice Gueniffey that better summarize the way Napoleon ran the country: "he governed as he made war."<sup>115</sup> Talleyrand came from a

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 107.

<sup>113</sup> Fouché, 66.

<sup>114</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, 435.

<sup>115</sup> Gueniffey, 685.

leading aristocratic family with roots in the western region of Périgord. Because of a childhood deformity, he could not enter the military, though several members of his family were high-ranking officers. Unable to enter the military, which was the most respectable career for member of the aristocracy, he became a clergyman instead, and this career, one he never really aspired to, was his avenue into politics. He represented the clergy at the Estates General and the National Assembly. By the time of the coup of 18 Brumaire, he had already been serving as Minister of Foreign Affairs in some capacity. Talleyrand was never as preoccupied with building an empire. He was a career politician. Indeed, Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourienne, Napoleon's personal secretary, talked of Talleyrand as an outsider in the inner circle of Napoleon's highest ranking officials.<sup>116</sup> If Napoleon was bent on going to war, Talleyrand felt that at least an opportunity to construct a balance of power presented itself.

As Talleyrand finished writing the Strasbourg memorandum, the wider military conflict raged on. The Battle of Ulm was the first step to Austria's demise, which then provided Napoleon with a clear path to its capital Vienna. The city fell two weeks later. Total victory was not possible while the Russian army, sent in defense of Austria, was encamped, north of the Austrian capital, in the village of Austerlitz. Austria could not be compelled to negotiate so long as there was some chance of achieving a military victory over France. The Austrians, and the nervous Prussian onlookers, rightfully knew that a defeat would result in immense losses of Austrian lands and embolden further French aggression. On December 12, 1805, Napoleon defeated the combined armies of Austria and Russia. At the Battle of Austerlitz, Napoleon

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<sup>116</sup> Bourienne, Louis Antoine Fauvelet de. *Mémoires de M. de Bourienne, ministre d'État ; sur Napoléon, le Directoire, le Consulat, l'Empire et la Restauration*. 1st ed. Vol. 10. Paris: Chez Ladvocat, Libraire, 1829. May 6, 2016. Accessed February 12, 2017. [https://archive.org/details/bub\\_gb\\_R6KwbObwyDoC./](https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_R6KwbObwyDoC./), 480.

destroyed, “by a single blow...the concerted plans of the continental powers.”<sup>117</sup> The loss severely weakened the coalition of powers against Napoleon, as Austria was the most immediate check on French expansion.

In the wake of these wars, Talleyrand was charged with crafting treaties as carefully as possible, wording them with the purpose of avoiding future conflict. Fourteen days after the Battle of Austerlitz, the Treaty of Pressburg was signed and set the stage for Prussia’s entry into the war. Austria was barred from forming an alliance with Russia, thus bringing an end to the Third Coalition against France.<sup>118</sup> Talleyrand took issue with the most was the territorial concessions. Austria was obliged to recognize previous territorial gains in the Treaty of Campo Formio of 1797 and the Treaty of Lunéville of 1801, giving up its claim to the lion’s share of lands in central Europe. Venice, which Talleyrand recommended be handed over to Austria in the Strasbourg memorandum, was given to the Kingdom of Italy, a French puppet state. The most dramatic condition of the Austrian surrender was the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire. In its place, Napoleon established the Confederation of the Rhine, a collection of French puppet states in central Europe, in 1806, meaning that Emperor Francis I of Austria lost one of his most prestigious titles, a title which had been conferred to Austrian monarchs since 1452.

Talleyrand was a moderating voice at the negotiations. In his memoirs, Talleyrand said he tried to prevent the Germanic princedoms from losing their independence but failed.<sup>119</sup> He felt Napoleon was not considering the political ramifications that French expansion in the German-speaking lands would have on relations with Britain and Prussia in particular. Napoleon profited to push for harsh terms when his enemy was in a state of distress. Talleyrand believed that

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<sup>117</sup> Fouché, 410.

<sup>118</sup> Bell, 236.

<sup>119</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, 448.

imposing these terms on Austria so soon after its defeat was unfair.<sup>120</sup> Even those outside of foreign affairs had commentary on Napoleon's actions. Joseph Fouché, the Minister of Police, said, "The peace of Pressburg rendered Bonaparte master of the whole of Germany and Italy, and he soon seized the kingdom of Naples...commenced to harass the pope, who had so lately traversed the Alps to give him the holy unction."<sup>121</sup>

While the Treaty of Pressburg put a temporary end to war with Austria, a new war with Prussia began just as Talleyrand predicted. The main issue that angered Prussia was the creation of the Confederation of the Rhine, which Prussia viewed as an affront to its status as central Europe's foremost military power. When the status of Hannover was contested, Prussian cavalrymen sharpened their swords on the steps of the French embassy in Berlin.<sup>122</sup> Prussia delivered a warning to Napoleon, ordering that he withdraw beyond the Rhine by October 2, 1806. When Napoleon refused, Prussia joined the ranks of France's enemies. The Battle of Jena-Auerstädt, October 14, 1806, was a devastating loss for Prussia, and Napoleon occupied Berlin three weeks later. Talleyrand accompanied Napoleon to Berlin for peace negotiations, and he found that Napoleon was even less interested in his advice than before.

Like Talleyrand, the Prussian aide-de-camp at the Battle of Jena-Auerstädt, Carl von Clausewitz, had some of the most cogent observations of Prussia's loss. Despite his young age of twenty-six, Clausewitz had already made significant progress up the Prussian army's chain of command. His observations from his time fighting Napoleon contributed to the writing of *On War*, one of the most authoritative studies of military strategy.<sup>123</sup> David Bell says what made *On*

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid, 446.

<sup>121</sup> Fouché, 413.

<sup>122</sup> Dwyer, 102.

<sup>123</sup> Bell, 241.

*War* such an important contribution to the field of military strategy was its discussion of the Napoleon's wars as a total war. The sheer scale of Napoleon's wars grounds for considering them to be a total war, as France would eventually come into conflict with every major European power. Total war was something emerging for the first time because never had war required "the commitment of every possible resource and all possible violence, the sort that France had inflicted on his [Clausewitz] fatherland."<sup>124</sup> In this vein, a total war is one fought to advance a political agenda, implicating political affairs with military affairs. Clausewitz was remarking on this dimension of total war, but Talleyrand was the one navigating this entanglement of political and military affairs in the aftermath of this total war.

Prussia was gripped with fear immediately after the loss. Talleyrand said, "the Battle of Jena put the Prussia monarchy completely at the mercy of the conqueror, and what's more is that they were afraid and they knew it."<sup>125</sup> The reigning family, the House of Hohenzollern, was allowed to remain on the throne. At the same time, Prussia was stripped of territories that were reorganized into the Kingdom of Westphalia and given to Napoleon's brother, Jérôme Bonaparte. Napoleon set up the Duchy of Warsaw as a puppet state and a buffer from Russia. After being partitioned out of existence, Poland was back, carved out of Prussian lands. The Treaty of Tilsit, signed on July 7, 1807, officially ended the war with Prussia, recognized the land transfers, and had direct implications for the invasion of Spain and Portugal. In the end, Prussia lost half of its population and tax revenue and was shackled with war indemnity to France.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid, 241.

<sup>125</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, 453.

<sup>126</sup> Dwyer, 103.

Talleyrand's proposals for an alternative peace plan fell on deaf ears. Writing in hindsight, Talleyrand said, "I was enraged by everything I saw and heard, but I was obliged to hide my indignation."<sup>127</sup> He wrote of a specific memory that best represented the Prussian reaction to the defeat. Napoleon curtly demanded of Queen Louise of Prussia, "How you dared make war against me, Madame, with the weak means that you had to do so."<sup>128</sup> Queen Louis supplicated Napoleon to be merciful on the defeated Prussia, but her efforts were in vain. She wept to Talleyrand, who personally comforted her, and cultivated a positive image for himself among the political elites of Europe. He showed that not everybody in France blindly supported the emperor. Meanwhile, Napoleon was celebrating a momentous achievement in the war. Fouché said, "The delirium caused by the wonderful results of the Prussia campaign completed the intoxication of France...Napoleon believed himself the son of Destiny, called to break every scepter."<sup>129</sup>

Britain stood alone, and its defeat became Napoleon's next priority. Talleyrand was no supporter of Britain. In the Strasbourg memorandum, he felt the key for a better future for France was to ally with Austria. Britain's naval strength meant that France could not realistically hope to defeat it in a direct conflict. Napoleon adopted the Continental System on November 21, 1806. He forbade any French satellite state from trading with Britain. The attempt to isolate Britain economically proved ineffective, but Talleyrand backed the embargo anyway. He held the belief that Britain would be problematic to achieving the political order he outlined in the Strasbourg memorandum. Britain was as an aggressive colonizer. He believed it was a belligerent power that would sacrifice diplomacy if it could achieve more by way of war. He approved of continuing

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<sup>127</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, 463.

<sup>128</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, 463.

<sup>129</sup> Fouché, 426.

the war against Britain so long as France did not confront Britain directly at sea.<sup>130</sup> If Napoleon halted his expansion after the war with Prussia, the chance remained for Talleyrand to achieve his goals of reintegrating France into Europe.

There were troubling signs on the horizon for Talleyrand though. After the victory over Prussia, it seemed nothing could moderate Napoleon's ambition. Britain was his next target: "the idea of destroying the power of England, the sole obstacle to universal monarchy, now became his fixed resolve."<sup>131</sup> Talleyrand was rightfully afraid that another war would begin now that Prussia was defeated. In 1806, while Talleyrand was in Berlin with Napoleon, negotiating Prussia's terms of surrender, he received a note from Manuel Godoy, the Prime Minister of Spain, that Spain would join France's enemies. Godoy's move was rash and premature, but that did not stop Napoleon from reacting in a manner equally rash and premature. It was at this moment that Talleyrand decided on his next bold step. As Napoleon's wars drew on, his opposition became more open and determined.

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<sup>130</sup> Dwyer, 104.

<sup>131</sup> Fouché, 426.

### Chapter 3: *The Invasion of Spain and Portugal*

1807 was an inflection point in the relationship between Napoleon and Talleyrand. By this time, Britain was the sole enemy of France that survived Napoleon's wars. Austria had been defeated and stripped of its territory. Prussia had met the same fate after the loss at the Battle of Jena-Auerstädt. When it seemed like Napoleon's quest to build a European empire could go no further, the decision to go to war with Spain and Portugal showed otherwise. Talleyrand finally realized that Napoleon's ambitions had no limits. He was at loss and saw fit to resign the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs on August 10, 1807. Talleyrand genuinely believed he had upheld his responsibility to France and its emperor, saying "for all the time I was charged with the direction of external affairs, I served Napoleon with fidelity and zeal."<sup>132</sup> The events of 1807 proved to Talleyrand that this responsibility was something he could no longer hold.

For one thing, the falling-out developed progressively. Talleyrand was critical of Napoleon's bellicose diplomacy and harsh treatment of his enemies since 1804, as the Strasbourg memorandum showed, but he was not compelled to resign until later. He remained in his post to continue having an influence over the direction of France's foreign policy, hoping to lessen the damage Napoleon's wars created. The Peninsular War principally showed that the two's differing visions for France in Europe could not be reconciled. Nothing could convince Napoleon to stop building an empire. By resigning, Talleyrand was protecting himself as well. There is reason to believe he foresaw Napoleon's downfall, understanding his actions were unsustainable. Talleyrand said, "in 1807, Napoleon had already been removed for a while, I recognized it, from the path I did everything to secure for him."<sup>133</sup> If he could disassociate himself from Napoleon

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<sup>132</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, 466.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, 467.

early enough, he might be able to secure a post in a future government and carry on the work of France's political reintegration. Self-preservation was as strong of a motivator as opposition to Napoleon.<sup>134</sup>

Invading Portugal and Spain was a blow against Britain, which had long been France's enemy. Under the Ancien Régime, Britain stifled French colonial ambitions, and this clash continued after Napoleon's rise to power as well. Trying to overcome Britain's naval supremacy, Napoleon launched a series of attacks on the Electorate of Hannover, the ancestral home of the British monarchs.<sup>135</sup> Unable to fight a land war with Britain directly, Napoleon, as well as previous French military commanders, judged that these strides at "Britain's weak spot" were the most effective method of placing pressure on Britain.<sup>136</sup> The territory changed hands throughout the course of Napoleon's reign, going to Prussia in 1801 and then back to France in 1807. Napoleon's meddling with Hannover accomplished little in the way of psychological warfare with Britain. However, it made Prussia continually suspicious of Napoleon and then openly hostile.

Napoleon had exhausted all other means of defeating Britain except economic warfare. In the wake of Austria and Prussia's capitulation in 1806, Napoleon instituted a blockade called the Continental System and ordered all seaports in conquered territories to close off to Britain in 1806. In his words, he hoped to "conqueror sea by mastery of the land."<sup>137</sup> His plans were not met with success. Protected by its navy, Britain developed new trade partnerships outside of Europe and smuggling meant some British trade with Europe got through. Napoleon kept the

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<sup>134</sup> Dwyer, 118.

<sup>135</sup> Simms, Brendan. "Britain and Napoleon." Edited by Phillip G. Dwyer. In *Napoleon and Europe*, 189-201. London: Routledge, 2014., 192.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid*, 192.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid*, 193.

blockade in place more as an attempt to bring Europe under French hegemony.<sup>138</sup> The British reasoned that Napoleon would never be able to achieve a full victory so long as it had the stronger navy, and keeping that advantage became central to its military strategy. In this effort, Britain acquired more colonies in Europe that were of strategic naval importance, such as Malta in 1813. In 1808, a British army landed in Portugal to fight Napoleon head on, showing that Britain was equally capable on land.

The Continental System was Napoleon's response to Britain. Napoleon still had to negotiate a peace settlement with Russia, whose armies were defeated at the Battle of Austerlitz. The Treaty of Tilsit was signed on July 9, 1807, when Napoleon and Tsar Alexander I met on a raft in the middle of the Neman River. The treaty officially recognized Prussia's land cessions to France.<sup>139</sup> The Free City of Danzig and the Duchy of Warsaw were created from these cessions. Poland was back on the map of Europe for the first time since 1795. The youngest of Napoleon's brothers, Jérôme Bonaparte, was made King of Westphalia, another puppet state composed of lands taken from Prussia. Prussia was slapped with a war indemnity and barred from building up its military. Hostilities were concluded with both countries. Russia agreed to join the Continental System in the continuing war with Britain, and Napoleon promised his support for Russia's own war with the Ottoman Empire.

Talleyrand took issue with an alliance with Russia because he felt an alliance with Austria was better for France's long-term interests. He considered Russia to be an aggressive colonizer in central Europe, like Britain overseas, and that Russia would inevitably be drawn out

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<sup>138</sup> Dwyer, Phillip G. "Napoleon and the Drive for Glory: Reflections on the Making of French Foreign Policy." Edited by Phillip G. Dwyer. In *Napoleon and Europe*, 117-134. London: Routledge, 2014., 124.

<sup>139</sup> Dwyer, 108.

of this alliance in pursuit of land. Talleyrand doubted Napoleon's intention to abide by the treaty from the start. He said Napoleon's promise to keep an open channel of communication with Tsar Alexander I was "a promise he had no desire to keep, unless the state of affairs made it necessary."<sup>140</sup> The end of war with Russia freed Napoleon to execute new wars, which were planned soon after the treaty was negotiated. Talleyrand viewed the Treaty of Tilsit as merely a continuation of the conflict with Britain and then Spain and Portugal. It is likely at that time he decided to resign from his post. Napoleon was not only a reckless political leader, but he was an untrustworthy negotiator.

After the Treaty of Tilsit was signed, Napoleon was quickly drawn to intervene in Spain and Portugal. This move was risky for France, and Talleyrand made no secret of his disdain in his memoirs. In a way, he found Napoleon's thinking to be so nonsensical that one explanation might be, "he like to mislead, he would have liked to mislead for the sole pleasure of doing it, it was a flaw in his policy."<sup>141</sup> Fouché had worries of his own related to the invasion of Spain and Portugal, and knew that this "disagreement of opinion upon the projects relative to Spain was the principal cause" of Talleyrand's decision to resign.<sup>142</sup> Fouché cautioned against the power of nationalism to inspire rebellion. Napoleon dismissed this warning, believing the Spanish people would welcome France liberating them from the deeply unpopular Prime Minister Manuel Godoy. Fouché was worried about the possible opposition to the war domestically. He warned Napoleon the night before the invasion that he might not be able to suppress a backlash of public opinion should the ensuing occupation of the Iberian Peninsula go poorly. The question remains then why Napoleon was compelled to invade Spain and Portugal.

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<sup>140</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, 476.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 463.

<sup>142</sup> Fouché, 440.

Charles Esdaile says the reasons behind Napoleon's invasion of the region are not wholly clear, but he suggested that Napoleon always intended to launch the invasion.<sup>143</sup> Based on Talleyrand's assessment of Napoleon, saying Napoleon liked to mislead for the sake of it, this suggestion could be plausible. Napoleon was certainly ambitious though, and this ambition drove him to make some crucial errors of leadership. Ministers who disagreed with him were sidelined. He assembled a diplomatic corps to advise him on the Peninsular War, in which Talleyrand served in an observer capacity.<sup>144</sup> Napoleon even contemplated profiting from the chaos to then invade Spanish and Portuguese colonies according to Fouché.<sup>145</sup> Pure ambition, however fanciful, seemed likely to motivate the invasion, but it is more likely to have been one of several factors that led to the war in Spain and Portugal.

John Lawrence Tone says underlying causes of the invasion were the economic decline in France in 1807 and the costs associated with maintaining an empire.<sup>146</sup> As the empire grew, state resources were funneled to support the military, causing France's economy to shrink in certain areas. Warfare was overall not conducive to economic growth. Taxes were high, infrastructure was underdeveloped, and the Continental System prevented French merchants from trading with Britain. To keep his empire afloat, Napoleon had to look elsewhere for resources. Territorial expansion was self-propagating, forcing Napoleon to continue expanding if he was to save the

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<sup>143</sup> Esdaile, Charles J. *Napoleon's Wars: An International History, 1803-1815*. New York, NY: Penguin, 2009., 301.

<sup>144</sup> Fouché, 450.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid*, 450.

<sup>146</sup> Tone, John Lawrence. "The Peninsular War." Edited by Phillip G. Dwyer. In *Napoleon and Europe*, 225-243. London: Routledge, 2014., 230.

empire from an inward, economic collapse.<sup>147</sup> Yet, the financial burden of the Peninsular War, combined with the disastrous invasion of Russia in 1812, bankrupted France.

Another reason driving Napoleon's decision to invade Spain and Portugal was his desire to unseat the Bourbon monarchs of Spain and smash the surviving symbols of feudalism. While the French Revolution toppled the Bourbon monarchs of France, the branch family of Spain survived the tumult. In 1807, King Carlos IV was the last member of the Bourbon family in power. Napoleon felt threatened and believed the presence of the Spanish monarchy at his elbow could provoke a royalist insurgency.<sup>148</sup> Fear of a royalist resistance motivated Napoleon to take action in the past, namely the execution of the Duke of Enghien. Even though there was little evidence to show he was plotting against Napoleon, his lineage was reason enough to find him suspect. Furthermore, Napoleon felt obliged to rid Europe of feudal institutions. He was a student of the Enlightenment and sided with the Jacobins before entering politics. Napoleon viewed himself as a continuation of the French Revolution in some ways and viewed the Peninsular War as a war of competing ideologies. However, the brutal reality of the invasion of Spain and Portugal showed Napoleon to be the bringer of devastation.

The most convincing reason to invade was Portugal's refusal to join the Continental System. Britain and Portugal retained diplomatic and military ties, which made it one of the few allies Britain had left against Napoleon, and it allowed Britain's navy to resupply in Lisbon.<sup>149</sup> Taking in 4% of British exports, Portugal's trade with Britain was minimal, but it possessed the lucrative colony of Brazil. Portugal had a weak army, and Napoleon believed that it could be easily defeated. It is worth noting at this time that France and Spain were not yet enemies. In

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 230.

<sup>148</sup> Esdaile, 301.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid, 320.

fact, Napoleon secured Manuel Godoy's pledge to come to France's aid in a war against Portugal. Portugal, however, was in a perilous position. It was under threat from both France and Spain, and it risked losing a trade and diplomatic partner if it broke ties with Britain. Altogether, Portugal's various relations with Britain provided the ideal pretext to instigate a war. Talleyrand said he staunchly opposed Napoleon's treatment of Portugal, going as far as calling it immoral.<sup>150</sup> He knew his words made little difference to his emperor though.

The internal situation in Portugal served as another pretext for the invasion. Napoleon viewed the country as a conservative bastion of monarchy in need of France's liberal hand. This conception was inaccurate, as Portugal had been experiencing a period of economic growth. The chief minister of King José I, the Marquês de Pombal, was a competent reformer, transforming the country into "the very model of enlightened absolutism."<sup>151</sup> The national government and municipal government of Lisbon were reorganized to make them more functional. In this effort, the power to collect taxes and make laws was taken away from the Catholic Church and the nobility. The education system was placed in the hands of the government as opposed to religious authorities as well. Scientists and artists became patrons of the state, considered integral to these reforms. Although its political system and economy were weak compared to Britain's, the Marquês de Pombal's crucial steps had brought the country a higher level of economic growth.

The same, positive report could not be given for Spain's government. Manuel Godoy was serving as the Prime Minister, who achieved his position largely thanks to royal patronage. He had experience dealing with his expansionist neighbor even before Napoleon proclaimed the

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<sup>150</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, 488.

<sup>151</sup> Esdaile, 322.

empire. In 1795, he helped negotiate a peace with France and joined an alliance against Britain a year later.<sup>152</sup> These solutions were temporary. He believed France was only concerned with pursuing its own interests; he knew that Spain would be at war with Napoleon eventually. He was in a perilous position as well. If he pursued an alliance with France, that would be received poorly at home. He also wanted to avoid an open war with Britain, which defeated the Spanish navy at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. Whether he was up against France or Britain, he knew Spain was no match for either.

What made matters worse for Godoy was his inability to guarantee the country's safety made him deeply unpopular. The prospect of war with France was disconcerting for the Spanish people and government alike. The aristocracy saw him as a pawn of the Bourbon monarchy, and rumors of a sexual affair with the Spanish queen made him run afoul of the clergy. Godoy was unpopular with Fernando VII, who was in line to inherit the throne. He was uncomfortable with how close Godoy was to his parents, who were nearing the end of their reign. King Carlos IV was often ill.<sup>153</sup> There were many in the aristocracy who hoped Fernando VII would brazenly demand Godoy to step aside and claim the throne for himself. In short, all branches of Spanish society disliked him, and this disunity made navigating the uncertain relationship with Napoleon even more so.

The Peninsular War began on July 19, 1807 when Napoleon ordered Talleyrand, still serving as his foreign minister, to instruct Portugal to close its ports to British ships. His demands did not stop there. Napoleon further ordered Portugal to arrest all British citizens living in the country, impound their merchandise, and promptly declare war on Britain.<sup>154</sup> Portugal's

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid, 304.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid, 309.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, 321.

immediate reaction was terror. It was given an ultimatum of September 2, 1807 to comply with Napoleon's demands and lose its foremost trade and diplomatic partner. However, Portugal was more inclined to continue supporting Britain. Though Napoleon represented a forbidding threat, Portugal knew that Britain would come to its defense, even if only to defeat France and not out of concern for an ally. Portugal refused Napoleon's demands and sent a note to the British government expressing its loyalty.

Napoleon was conducting his own diplomacy with Spain in preparation for the coming war against Portugal. Napoleon's armies were spread across Europe, preventing him from taking swift action. Godoy suspected the war in Portugal would somehow spill over into Spain, and he made the decision to side with France, which was a deeply unpopular one, before hostilities commenced on the Iberian Peninsula. The Treaty of Fontainebleau, signed on September 25, 1807, laid out the strategy for the war and bound Spain in a military alliance with France. Napoleon took a two-pronged approach, invading across the Pyrenees Mountains and then invading Portugal from central Spain with a Spanish army.<sup>155</sup> Portugal would then be split into three, one part falling under French control and the remainder falling under Spanish control. He promised not to retain any territory France temporarily occupied in Spain during the invasion. Talleyrand had already resigned, but he remained active in politics. He proposed his own plan, hoping to ameliorate the damage Napoleon was inevitably going to do. He suggested that France occupy Catalonia in the northwest corner of Spain until at least a maritime peace could be achieved with Britain. Talleyrand said, "I did not convince him, and he was suspicious of me on this matter."<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, 490.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid, 489.

Talleyrand resigned from his post on August 10, 1807 after taking part in negotiating the Treaty of Tilsit. After Napoleon defeated Prussia, Talleyrand felt there was hope to construct a balance of power in Europe if Napoleon pursued territorial expansion no further. This hope was dashed when Napoleon received, “an imprudent proclamation Manuel Godoy that seemed to announce Spain’s defection. He swore from then to destroy the Spanish branch of the house of Bourbon at any price. And I, I swore to myself to stop, at any price, being his minister as soon as we returned to France.”<sup>157</sup> For one, this dispatch, saying Spain was joining France’s enemies, was given prematurely, as Godoy did not officially declare his allegiance to Britain or other coalition powers. What prompted Talleyrand’s resignation was Napoleon’s equally premature response: the destruction of the Spanish Bourbons. Talleyrand was still in Berlin when he received this note, negotiating the Treaty of Tilsit, which allied France and Russia and thereby ignored his policy recommendations. Talleyrand’s resignation was done with the goal of limiting the damage of Napoleon’s ambition, and this time limiting Napoleon’s ambition meant he was in more direct opposition.

Simply put, Talleyrand realized that Napoleon’s ambition had no bounds. Other members of France’s political elite, including Fouché, worried about the dangers of Napoleon’s ambition. What distinguished Talleyrand from his colleagues in government was his determination to act. He was among the earliest of Napoleon’s ministers to disassociate himself from the regime, revealing his greatest gifts as a politician. It is feasible to say that Talleyrand predicted the fall of the regime. When Talleyrand wrote Letter CVII of the Strasbourg memorandum on October 11, 1805, he argued that unchecked territorial expansion put at stake keeping Napoleon in power, in

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid, 459.

his words, “the preservation of your majesty.”<sup>158</sup> Perhaps, foresight was Talleyrand’s greatest gift as a politician, a gift that allowed him to outlive every regime that followed the French Revolution. Napoleon fell after the invasion of Russia in 1812, but he took the first steps to that point after the invasion of Portugal in 1807. If Talleyrand truly predicted Napoleon’s fall, that will never be known. In the end, he was proven right though.

Talleyrand’s decision to resign was an exercise of his foresight. However, there were obvious, self-interested reasons behind his resignation.<sup>159</sup> The Peninsular War was unpopular from its start, although it became increasingly so once Napoleon turned on Spain in 1808. The French people began to view it as a senseless war to install a member of the Bonaparte family on another European throne. His association with the war could undermine his credibility, and possibly a place for him in a future government. He resigned in part so that he could continue acting in the interest of France if Napoleon should fall. Talleyrand’s was first loyal to France and then to the regime that worked in its best interest. In his eyes, all those regimes only worked in that interest for a brief period. Like Napoleon, he had an ambition of his own that propelled him to power. To say that Talleyrand used his power for sheer personal benefit is seriously flawed. He was power-hungry, but he also had a genuine desire to help the country.

The resignation in 1807 says much about Napoleon and the relationship he had with Talleyrand. This relationship deteriorated progressively. Phillip Dwyer suggested that Talleyrand realized Napoleon’s ambition had no limits overtime.<sup>160</sup> Talleyrand was optimistic a balance of power could still be achieved after Napoleon’s wars, which was how he felt after Prussia surrendered. The two agreed on the necessity of defeating Britain and espoused similar principles

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<sup>158</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, 149.

<sup>159</sup> Dwyer, 115.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid, 109.

of the Enlightenment, such as the need for a written charter of governance. They disagreed on many others though, such as limiting France's borders to French-speaking areas of Europe. For most of his time as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Talleyrand did not believe Napoleon was leading France to ruin, but that changed after the Peninsular War. His goal was not to directly oppose Napoleon; his goal was to moderate his ambition, thus working within the system. Resignation was a last resort for Talleyrand, and he still played a role in foreign affairs even after that.

Talleyrand's resignation revealed an enormous difference in their foreign policy goals. For Napoleon, building an empire was the centerpiece of his foreign policy. He never stopped to consider if building a land empire was what France needed to solve its problems. War was how that foreign policy was pursued, rarely, if never, experimenting with alternative method of pursuing his goals. Talleyrand's goal was reintegrating France into the European political system, which France was knocked out of after the French Revolution. Talleyrand disagreed with pursuing that foreign policy through war as well, believing war to be used when diplomatic negotiations failed. Napoleon's vision for France was mainly building an empire.<sup>161</sup> Like Talleyrand, he wanted to help the country, but he viewed helping the country as building an empire.

Tensions were rising between Talleyrand and Napoleon as tensions were rising in Spain as well. Godoy signed the Treaty of Fontainebleau in the hope that an alliance with France would delay a conflict between the two countries, but it had the opposite effect. The sight of French armies marching freely across Spain turned popular opinion against France and all those who had an association with the invaders. The event that led to Napoleon's declaration of war on Spain was the affair at the El Escorial Palace. The Spanish government, comprised of Godoy and King

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid, 110.

Carlos IV, was internally fractured. The ailing health of King Carlos IV led many to suspect he may not live much longer. His collaboration with Napoleon made him even more disliked, so a strong movement developed to depose him and install Prince Fernando VII. The group leading this movement was called the Fernandinos, made up of political elites and members of the nobility dissatisfied with the state of affairs in Spain.<sup>162</sup>

This group convinced Fernando VII to write a secret letter to Napoleon asking for his protection. Fernando VII asked to marry into the Bonaparte family, figuring that would ensure his place on the throne now that France was clearly the dominant power on the Iberian Peninsula. In the letter, dated October 11, 1807 from the El Escorial Palace, he says, “I would have had, a long time ago, the desire to see the satisfaction of your imperial and royal majesty and to see the growth of the friendship between our two houses, the allegiance of our two nations become firmer by way of my unity in marriage to a princess in the house of your majesty.”<sup>163</sup> Talleyrand blamed Napoleon for this act of subversion, prefacing his description of what was to follow with the words, “I will recount by what odious ruses Napoleon used to lead this whole, unhappy family into his hands.”<sup>164</sup> It was Talleyrand’s thinking that Napoleon supported the movement to install Fernando VII and used the political turmoil to justify turning on Spain completely.

The situation in Spain took another dramatic turn on October 27, 1807 at 10 o’clock in the evening at the El Escorial Palace. Fernando VII was arrested on the charge of conspiring to dethrone and assassinate his father. The decree for the arrest said the information was passed along from an unknown source, and the heir to the Spanish throne would be brought before a tribunal of eleven high-ranking officials. The tribunal unanimously found that Fernando VII and

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<sup>162</sup> Esdaile, 327.

<sup>163</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, 511.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, 491.

the other conspirators were innocent, but they were imprisoned in the El Escorial Palace under the supervision of King Carlos IV. The event certainly convinced Napoleon of the need to intervene directly in Spain. He knew Godoy was incompetent, leading a country in a state of total disunity. Napoleon was most likely the recipient of misinformation as well. Spies and provocateurs, agents dispatched to drum up support for France abroad, reported to him that the Spanish people would most likely accept a member of the Bonaparte family on the throne. What's more, Britain was amassing a force in Gibraltar, its strategic naval post at entrance to the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>165</sup>

The moment that war between Spain and France became imminent was on February 24, 1808. Napoleon issued a memorandum condemning the disorder in Bourbon monarchy, accusing Spain of not upholding its part in the alliance, and announcing he would no longer abide by the Treaty of Fontainebleau.<sup>166</sup> Talleyrand's thinking was proven right. Napoleon was trying to provoke a response that would justify overthrowing Godoy and King Carlos IV. The court relocated to Aranjuez south of Madrid, which was a display of vulnerability. On March 17, 1808, an angry mob approached the Aranjuez Palace. Some of the protestors were armed, and gunshots were heard as they approached the guard of Spanish and Walloon soldiers. There were cries of "Down with Godoy! Long live the Queen! Long live the Prince of Asturias!" Among the protestors cries were demands for King Carlos IV to present himself and address the crowd. On the evening of March 19, 1808, he acquiesced to their demands.<sup>167</sup>

King Carlos IV abdicated in favor of Fernando VII that night, succumbing to popular demand. Godoy fled to France in exile, where he died in 1851. Although Fernando VII was now

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<sup>165</sup> Esdaile, 328.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid, 338.

<sup>167</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, 534.

on the throne, his time there would be short. The abdication paved the way for the installation of Joseph Bonaparte as King of Spain, assuming the title on June 6, 1808. Napoleon summoned Fernando VII and his father to Bayonne, a small city on border with Spain, for a meeting, and it was agreed that the Bourbon monarchy would relinquish its power. In exchange, Napoleon offered the royal family protection for the duration of the Peninsular War and a promise to respect Spain's territorial and religious integrity. King Carlos IV and his entourage were given shelter at Talleyrand's chateau in Valençay. Talleyrand remembers the day of their arrival: "I had been there for several days when the princes arrived... They were the first Bourbons that I had seen after so many years of tempests and disasters. It was not they who experienced the discomfort. It was I, and I am pleased to say it."<sup>168</sup>

In 1808, Spain was officially under French rule, and what can be said is that "it was the product not of a rational consideration but of the emperor's constant need to demonstrate his prowess, impose his stamp upon affairs, and emphasize his contempt for diplomacy."<sup>169</sup> The French occupation coincided with a series of atrocities that inspired Spanish resistance. Conscription was the source of much of the antipathy to France. Because volunteers came forward in small numbers as the war dragged on, and mercenaries were too expensive to buy, conscription became unavoidable. Napoleon drew conscripts from across the empire, including Spain, to even out its impacts, but casualty rates were very high. Of the 52,000 soldiers from Westphalia who served Napoleon, around 18,000 of that group survived.<sup>170</sup> Conscription offered a limited window of economic opportunity, which meant soldiers, if they survived, returned

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid, 568.

<sup>169</sup> Esdaile, 344.

<sup>170</sup> Esdaile, Charles J. "Popular Resistance to the Napoleonic Empire." Edited by Phillip G. Dwyer. In *Napoleon and Europe*, 136-150. London: Routledge, 2014., 137.

home with few earnings. Additionally, conscription was viewed as absurdly cruel. Forcibly removing young men from their families to fight for a foreign emperor was a hard sell for Napoleon indeed.

Conscription therefore was an impoverishing force that Napoleon brought to Spain. The war decimated the economy of Spain, very much at the local level. Subjecting Spain to the Continental System brought activity in Spanish ports, as well as industries dependent on maritime trade, to a grinding halt. Taxes were raised to continue funding the war effort, which meant people had less money of their own. Ironically, the abolition of feudalism had negative impacts for the peasantry. The French occupiers exercised more direct control over the poorest Spaniards without the intermediary authority of a local lord. Low-ranking civil servants were suddenly stripped of their positions and livelihoods. Monasteries were closed, removing “much of such infrastructure as had existed for the relief of poverty.”<sup>171</sup> While Napoleon claimed to be bringing the liberal force of the Enlightenment to conservative Spain, the reality of the invasion showed, foremost to the Spanish people, he was bringing anything but.

As is far too common in war, atrocities were committed against the Spanish people during the invasion. The French soldiers behaved in a manner that was at times obnoxious and at other times brutish. Soldiers were drunken and disruptive in public, displaying an image that contradicted prevailing French attitudes of superiority to the uncivilized Spanish people. Between soldiers, and sometimes between soldiers and male civilians, duels and fights broke out. There were far more heinous incidents that occurred though. Soldiers turned to looting when their supplies were short. Female civilians were the victims of rape and sexual slavery. Some soldiers, even conscripts from other parts of the empire, were promised wives in return for

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid, 139.

service, meaning that forced marriage was another odious hallmark of the invasion. But, Napoleon's biggest blunder had to do with the Catholic Church.<sup>172</sup> Napoleon cracked down on the Catholic Church, which held a central role in the lives of most Spanish people. It provided charitable services and consolation in times of hardship; it was a source of pride for local communities, with each having its own patron saint and feast day.<sup>173</sup> When Napoleon deprived it of its special status, he was reaching into peoples' daily lives.

These grievances came to a boil on May 2, 1808 in Madrid. As the last member of the Bourbon family was about to leave the Palacio Real de Madrid, a protest erupted chanting "death to the French!" The mob killed a French soldier on patrol and became more boisterous until a garrison of French troops put it down violently. Spanish patriots portrayed the incident known as the Dos de Mayo uprising as a nationalist struggle and mobilized bands of fighters to wage a new kind of war against France. The name of the fighting force that waged this new kind of war was the guerillas in Spain and the ordenanças in Portugal.<sup>174</sup> The guerillas were comprised of deserters, conscripts, and people driven from their homes. These groups had no central command, but they put up a formidable resistance effort nonetheless, causing an estimated 180,000 French casualties. Their tactics included seizing mail convoys and sabotaging army outposts instead of directly engaging Napoleon's armies.<sup>175</sup> Napoleon had never faced this kind of warfare before, and had no effective response to their raids and ambushes.

Like guerilla warfare, nationalism was another force that Napoleon failed to take into consideration. The social and economic disruption the Peninsular War brought to Spain was the

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<sup>172</sup> Bell, 287.

<sup>173</sup> Esdaile, 140.

<sup>174</sup> Tone, 235.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid, 235.

main driver of popular resistance. Most guerillas were not fighting to advance a political agenda. But, some leaders of the guerilla forces and Spain's political elites viewed the conflict as a nationalist struggle and spread this discourse in intellectual circles.<sup>176</sup> David Bell draws a fascinating parallel between the situation in Spain in 1807 and Iraq in 2003. The American led invasion was done in the belief that democracy would spread across the region, and some Iraqi people, who were part of the nominal government, joined the effort. The resistance continued, however, because the invasion put at risk the personal safety of most Iraqi people.<sup>177</sup> Talleyrand discusses nationalism more generally, referring to it as public opinion and identifying it as a gross oversight on Napoleon's part: "he should have accounted for the power of public opinion. By declaring war, he provoked Spain into resistance; a thousand unforeseen circumstances could have occurred."<sup>178</sup> Talleyrand believed displays of military might, or indeed possessing greater military strength, could not alone ensure the successful occupation or governance of a country. Any government that relies on military strength as its legitimacy is bound to experience a disconnect with the people. For Talleyrand, popular sovereignty was the best method for a government to ingratiate itself with its citizens.

It is appropriate now to explain the concept of total war more as David Bell applies it to the invasion of Spain and Portugal. The most common definition is something along the lines of the complete engagement of a country's resources to win a war, meaning the adversary's civilian and military personnel are both targets. In Spain, the imposition of high taxes, confiscation of church land, and pillaging of homes brought ordinary Spanish people into the line of fire. The disruption wrought upon established livelihoods provoked these people into resistance. Total war

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid, 242.

<sup>177</sup> Bell, 284.

<sup>178</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, 465.

has no restraints and has the dangerous potential to escalate out of control; in doing anything that it takes to win, it becomes difficult to transition back out of a state of total war. Napoleon did attempt to punish looting and theft, but French soldiers nonetheless “saw the campaigns as a literal chance to make their fortunes.”<sup>179</sup>

Napoleon created the perception that he was determined to wage of “war of extermination” on both the part of France and its enemies.<sup>180</sup> French soldiers saw enemy soldiers and civilians as both deserving of brutal treatment. The guerilla fighters in Spain and Portugal adopted this attitude, committing atrocities, such as attacks on suspected colluders with Napoleon, of their own. However, a more comprehensive definition of total war includes the interaction of political and cultural factors with the decision to go to war. War then becomes a method to enforce foreign policy, or even economic policy as was the case with the invasion of Portugal in particular. Enforcing foreign policy this way drove Napoleon into fighting wars without clear end goals. Napoleon was trapped. He made military victory inseparable from successful foreign policy. The survival of his empire, and his own political survival, depended on it.<sup>181</sup>

Ideology and nationalism are hugely important to waging a total war. At the heart of David Bell’s argument is “the intellectual transformations of the Enlightenment, followed by the political fermentation of 1789-1792, produced new understandings of war that made possible the cataclysmic intensification of the fighting over the next twenty-three years.”<sup>182</sup> Ideology became a justification for war, suggesting that war was intrinsically rooted in a conflict between two

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<sup>179</sup> Bell, 215.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid, 233.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid, 9.

competing belief systems. In this case, Napoleon believed he was waging a conflict with feudalism. The ensuing occupation of Spain undermined this justification for war, proving to many Spanish people, even intellectual leaders, that his own regime could not be called enlightened. Nationalism came into play because the countries entangled in these conflicts were developing a sense of nationhood.<sup>183</sup> In Spain, the leaders of the guerilla fighters believed the invasion was a chance to give a voice to the Spanish people, just as the French Revolution claimed to give a voice to the wider swathes of French people. Clausewitz remarked too that “it is not [now] the king who wages war on the king... but a people against another people.”<sup>184</sup> And, when the whole population rises up, even “the worst tyranny could not prevail against it.”<sup>185</sup>

The full effect of the guerilla war on Napoleon had not yet been felt in 1808. There were some troubling developments though, and Britain was chief among these troubles. The British general Arthur Wellesley, known as the Duke of Wellington, landed in Portugal to assist the floundering Spanish and Portuguese armies in the fight against Napoleon.<sup>186</sup> At first, the Duke of Wellington’s defense concentrated on Portugal, but he eventually pushed the French northward past the Pyrenees Mountains. The Peninsular War made Latin American elites rethink their allegiance to Spain, and charismatic leaders, such as Simón Bolívar, led several countries, including his birth country of Venezuela, to independence, adding to the crisis besetting the Spanish at this time. Tied down in Spain and Portugal, Napoleon wanted to prevent the outbreak of war with his former enemy Russia that might be inclined to attack.<sup>187</sup> On September 2, 1808, Tsar Alexander I met with Napoleon again to reaffirm the Treaty of Tilsit in Erfurt.

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<sup>183</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid*, 295.

<sup>186</sup> Esdaile, 355.

<sup>187</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, 594.

Talleyrand had resigned by the time Napoleon called the Congress of Erfurt, and Jean-Baptiste de Nompère de Champagny, who was formerly an admiral, replaced him as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Napoleon had a lukewarm view of Talleyrand at this point. He was displeased with Talleyrand's public denunciation of the invasion of Spain and Portugal, but he still asked his former Minister of Foreign Affairs to accompany him to the Congress of Erfurt.<sup>188</sup> Talleyrand had been involved even marginally in all the negotiations of every major treaty up until that time. He had proven himself to be useful, and Napoleon appreciated that despite his personal feelings towards him. Napoleon even sent Talleyrand a draft of the treaty he would propose to Russia ahead of time. Talleyrand says, "the confidence he had in me during our first meeting became a sort of recompense."<sup>189</sup> Napoleon, though, was little aware that Talleyrand was intent on working against him behind the scenes, fully convinced that Napoleon was leading France to destruction.

Russia's diplomatic priority at the Congress of Erfurt was to secure Napoleon's support against the Ottoman Empire, its fierce enemy in the Caucasus region. The Russian diplomatic delegation, which included Tsar Alexander I, was rightfully suspicious of Napoleon. At the same time, Russia felt that it was coming into deliberations with a strong hand. It had already been at peace with France since the Treaty of Tilsit was signed and complied with its wishes to join the Continental System. Tsar Alexander I wanted to arrange a private meeting with Talleyrand. If there was anyone who could provide an honest report of Napoleon's intent at the Congress of Erfurt, it was Talleyrand. As the first day of negotiations came to an end, Talleyrand accompanied Tsar Alexander I back to his carriage, at which time he whispered in Talleyrand's ear, "We will meet with each other."<sup>190</sup> When Talleyrand returned to his quarters that night, he

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid, 596.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid, 596.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid, 623.

was given a note from the sister of Queen Louise of Prussia, saying she had arrived for the negotiations. Talleyrand immediately went to her when, not fifteen minutes in, Tsar Alexander I stepped into the room.<sup>191</sup>

Talleyrand remembers him as someone who was friendly and eager for discussion. Before proceeding to discussing the diplomatic matters at hand, he asked Queen Louise's sister for tea. That evening, Talleyrand supposedly told him, "Why are you here? ... The French people are civilized; their sovereign is not."<sup>192</sup> Talleyrand made a dangerous choice. Here, he was advising an enemy leader to resist Napoleon whom he was supposed to be working for. The distinction between France and Napoleon had to be made clear, for the country's sake foremost. Tsar Alexander I needed to know that he had other diplomatic partners in France besides Napoleon, whose vision for the future of France was not universally shared. For the remainder of the negotiations, Tsar Alexander I should move forward accordingly.

Neither side was really interested in helping the other achieve its goals. Spain was of little interest to Russia nor was the recent buildup of the Austrian military that Archduke Charles, Duke of Teschen, was presiding over.<sup>193</sup> Yet, Napoleon's diplomatic priority was to prevent war breaking out with Austria or Russia again. Tsar Alexander I felt like his interests were secondary to Napoleon's throughout the course of the Congress of Erfurt. The final terms of the treaty were evidently not to Russia's liking. Article X stated that Russia would come to France's aid if war resumed with Austria. Article VIII was anathema to Russia, stating Russia could move against the Ottoman Empire if their own negotiations broke down in 1809. Article III compelled Russia

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid, 624.

<sup>192</sup> Dwyer, 116.

<sup>193</sup> Esdaile, 387.

to sue for peace with Britain.<sup>194</sup> Britain rejected this gesture immediately. Tsar Alexander I left Erfurt displeased with this outcome, an outcome which confirmed his feeling that Napoleon could no longer be trusted.

Trust was nowhere to be found in the French camp either. Talleyrand returned to Paris afterwards and began a reconciliation with his former rival Joseph Fouché.<sup>195</sup> Fouché and Talleyrand had made no secret of their antipathy to one another for years, so Napoleon greeted this reconciliation with suspicion. Napoleon had no male heir, so Talleyrand and Fouché met to discuss the line of succession in France if Napoleon was killed in Spain. Napoleon was still furious when he found out these meetings went on behind his back. On January 23, 1809, he summoned Talleyrand, Fouché, and three other high-ranking civil servants to his office. The meeting became a heated affair, and Napoleon targeted Talleyrand personally, calling him “a shit in a silk stocking.”<sup>196</sup> Talleyrand held his composure, remarking later to someone nearby, “What a pity that such a great man should be so ill bred.”<sup>197</sup>

The reason behind the Austrian military buildup was made clear on April 9, 1809, when Austria invaded the French puppet states of Bavaria and the Kingdom of Italy. The invasion was repulsed at the Battle of Wagram on July 6, 1809, but at no light cost. The victory was very narrow, and France suffered casualties at only a slightly lower rate than Austria. The Battle of Wagram in 1809 had cost over 50,000 soldiers.<sup>198</sup> War was becoming unsustainable, both in terms of loss of life and financial cost. In conclusion, Napoleon was no longer as unassailable as he seemed. His army could be beaten after all, or at least weakened, and was splintered, fighting

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<sup>194</sup> De Talleyrand-Périgord, 671.

<sup>195</sup> Dwyer, 118.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid, 120.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid, 120.

<sup>198</sup> Esdaile, 397.

multiple wars across Europe. His treatment of Russia at the Congress of Erfurt showed his contempt for diplomacy, making war the only means available to confront him. And, the longevity of his empire and internal instability at home were in question without a male heir. As Fouché put it:

His embarrassments became serious from the time of his declaring war against nations. Spain, the gulf in which Napoleon was about to plunge, raised in me many gloomy forebodings; I saw in it a center of resistance, supported by England, and which might offer to our continental enemies favorable opportunities of again assailing our political existence...By continuously encountering new dangers, Napoleon, our founder, might fall either by the ball of bullet, or sink under the knife of the fanatic. It was but too true that all our power centered in a single man, who, without posterity, without certainty as to the future, demanded of Providence at least twenty years, to complete and consolidate his work...This vast and formidable empire, created as if by enchantment, had nothing but a fragile foundation, which might vanish on the wings of death.<sup>199</sup>

The end had not yet come for Napoleon. But, for the first time, it could be foreseen.

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<sup>199</sup> Fouché, 457.

### **Conclusion: *Differing Fates***

By 1815, the differing fates of Napoleon and Talleyrand were settled, and the tumultuous era of political upheaval and destructive war that the French Revolution unleashed had arguably come to a definitive end. Napoleon, after overcoming his humble origins, ascending to power in the coup of 18 Brumaire, and subduing the entirety of Europe, save Britain, spent the last years of his life in exile on the island of St. Helena under the watchful eye of the British governor. On the other hand, Talleyrand, after resigning his position as Minister of Foreign Affairs, went on to serve another regime, the restored monarchy of Louis XVIII this time, and represent France at the Congress of Vienna, taking part in the creation of the post-war order that remained in place for a century. Much has been tackled in this study of the relationship between Napoleon and Talleyrand, but the final question for us to answer is how these two met their differing fates.

After the disastrous invasion of Russia in 1812, Napoleon's armies would never have the same strength again. The decision to invade Russia was made in the same vein as the decision to invade Spain and Portugal in 1807. Napoleon wanted to coerce Russia into ending its diplomatic and trade links with Britain, but he led his army to catastrophe in the process. David Bell says, "Nothing illustrates the implacable logic of total war more than Napoleon's decision to attack Russia... the campaign made little military sense, and Napoleon went to war with largely undefined military goals, just as the French Revolutionaries had done twenty years earlier."<sup>200</sup> When the invaders reached Moscow, the city was abandoned and burnt to a char. Unable to force Russia into a surrender, Napoleon had no choice but to retreat, having accomplished nothing. He marched back as the harsh winter and marauding bands of Russian cavalrymen were picking at the last bit of his army's morale. France's enemies, Austria, Prussia, and Russia, regrouped and,

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<sup>200</sup> Bell, 256.

profiting from Napoleon's weakness, defeated him at the Battle of Leipzig on October 19, 1813. Paris fell four months later, and Napoleon now, for the first time, was being dictated the terms of his surrender.<sup>201</sup>

On April 6, 1814, the Senate and the Legislative Corps voted to depose Napoleon, and a new constitution was drafted that would reinstate the Bourbon monarchy in France. The Treaty of Fontainebleau, a different treaty that aligned France with Spain, served as Napoleon's official act of abdication.<sup>202</sup> He is sent to the island of Elba in permanent exile off the coast of Italy with a pension for him and his family. The First Treaty of Paris, signed May 30, 1814, set out the terms of defeat for France, reducing the country to its size before 1792. His subsequent escape from Elba on February 26, 1815 could hardly come as a surprise for someone with his ambition. His decision to return to France demonstrated "a fatalistic belief in his own star. He had never accepted defeat..."<sup>203</sup>

Napoleon took over the government for a period that came to be known as the Hundred Days, but this gamble was destined to fail from the start. On June 18, 1815, Napoleon lost the Battle of Waterloo to the Duke of Wellington, which was an outcome that had never been in doubt.<sup>204</sup> France was put back in the position it found itself in after the first defeat at the Battle of Leipzig. Napoleon abdicated a second time on June 22, 1815, and a provisional government, which Talleyrand headed, was formed before the Bourbon monarchy was fully reinstated. Napoleon's punishment was what differed this time. Britain, Prussia, Austria, and Russia wanted to forever put an end to the irksome Napoleon and return to the diplomatic proceedings at the

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<sup>201</sup> Dwyer, 140.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid, 140.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid, 157.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid, 159.

Congress of Vienna, which were the prime concerns of France's enemies at this point. Napoleon was sent in exile to the island of St. Helena in the middle of the southern Atlantic Ocean. He died there on May 5, 1821.

The Battle of Waterloo was Napoleon's last, doomed attempt to regain control of France, but Napoleon took his first, true steps to defeat when he crossed the Pyrenees Mountains into Spain. There were signs that the invasion of Spain and Portugal, and the ensuing occupation, could go poorly early on, and Talleyrand was astute enough to recognize that before the invasion took a turn for the worst. Among the reasons why the invasion took a turn for the worst was the disunity of Napoleon's commanding generals in Spain and Portugal. John Lawrence Tone says that most French generals possessed none of their emperor's vision. They did not believe in the cause. Furthermore, the generals in Napoleon's employ detested each other so highly that it was impossible to successfully coordinate the military campaign in Spain and Portugal. They showed themselves to be much better at inspiring resistance than at fighting battles.<sup>205</sup>

The use of conscripts contributed to the failure in Spain and Portugal. Like Napoleon's generals did not believe in the cause of the Peninsular War, most of the conscripts did not believe in the cause either. In fact, most were terrified at the prospect of being sent away to fight. Morale was low, and desertion was high. In one batch of conscripts from the Loire Valley, 250 out of 259 soldiers deserted before crossing into Spain.<sup>206</sup> Many of the German and Italian conscripts were even less motivated to fight than their French counterparts, having no direct attachment to a foreign sovereign. The high rate of casualties only worsened the problem of low morale. By January 1809, France had sustained more losses in Spain and Portugal than in all of its battles

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<sup>205</sup> Tone, 231.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid, 231.

between 1799 and 1808. Word of the carnage spread fast, making Spain and Portugal the most feared assignment for new recruits. What the eastern front was to German soldiers during World War II, the Peninsular War was to French soldiers.

Britain's intervention on the Iberian Peninsula showed that it was equally capable on land and at sea. The crux of Britain's military strategy was maintaining its naval superiority, but it was eager to start taking the fight to Napoleon directly. The invasion of Spain and Portugal was its chance.<sup>207</sup> Britain supplied its allies and its own troops by sea, and Spain permitted British armies to operate freely within its borders. While Spain was more effective at waging a guerilla war against Napoleon, Britain's own Duke of Wellington took France head on. After successfully securing Portugal in 1812, he went on the offensive, pushing France's armies as far north as Toulouse and Bordeaux. Napoleon's forces were admittedly stretched thin in 1812, fighting in Spain and Russia, but Britain's role in hastening the end of the Peninsular War cannot be disregarded.

What else cannot be disregarded is the effectiveness of guerilla warfare in repulsing the invasion of Spain and Portugal. Calls for resistance against France began after the Dos de Mayo uprising, when a group of protestors killed fourteen French soldiers on patrol, and 400 Spanish civilians died in Madrid.<sup>208</sup> Spanish patriots framed the events of the Dos de Mayo uprising as a nationalist cause and set out organizing groups of fighters mainly in the countryside. Napoleon did not foresee the destruction the guerillas would cause. The guerillas waged an indirect war against Napoleon, seizing mail convoys and sabotaging army outposts. Napoleon had never encountered this kind of resistance before, and he was incapable of mustering an adequate

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid, 231.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid, 233.

response. What was more significant than guerilla warfare was the force driving their resistance: nationalism. As said, most of the guerillas were not fighting to advance a political agenda, but public opinion still had a hand in compelling the Spanish people to take up arms.

Both John Lawrence Tone and Phillip Dwyer agree that nationalism was a central factor in contributing to Napoleon's enormous loss in Spain and Portugal. What's more, the same historians note that Napoleon recognized his failure to account for nationalism later on. Emmanuel de Las Cases, a former aristocrat and naval officer, accompanied Napoleon to St. Helena and acted as the former emperor's personal secretary. Napoleon dictated some of his memories to Las Cases, including his memories of the invasion of Spain and Portugal. Las Cases says, "public opinion, he [Napoleon] said at another moment, is an invisible power, to which nothing is more vague and strong, always capricious; however, it is always true, reasonable, and right much more than we think."<sup>209</sup> Napoleon went on to address Spain directly: "nationally, they were Spaniards and we were complete foreigners to them."<sup>210</sup> Napoleon believed the Spanish people would embrace the French for bringing the civilizing reforms of the Enlightenment to their country. Instead, what they cared more about was their liberty, and liberty is at the core of Enlightenment thinking after all.

The power of public opinion was not the only thing Napoleon regrets in hindsight. He goes on to regret the decision to invade Spain and Portugal altogether: "this unhappy war ruined me; it divided my forces, multiplied my efforts, attacked my morality; and, yet, we could not have left the peninsula to the machinations of the English..."<sup>211</sup> He continues to describe the

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<sup>209</sup> De Las Cases, Emmanuel. *Mémorial de Sainte Hélène par le Comte de Las Cases*. 1st ed. Paris. E. Bourdin, 1842. August 8, 2016. Accessed February 2, 2017. [https://archive.org/details/bub\\_gb\\_OJqP\\_BBwiLIC.](https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_OJqP_BBwiLIC.), 642.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid, 642.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid, 1779.

situation with strong language, saying “the combination ruined me: all the circumstances of my disasters came to attach to this fatal knot...The events proved that I made a grand mistake in the choice of my means, for it was a mistake in my means more than a mistake in my principles.”<sup>212</sup> Despite these concessions, Napoleon struggled to grasp the full magnitude of his defeat. He said, “I thus delivered the Spanish from their hideous institutions; I gave them a liberal constitution. I believed it too easily that it was necessary to change their dynasty. I placed one of my brothers at their head, but he was still the sole foreigner in the middle of them...I have nothing to say about that. Nonetheless, they triumphed and they cruelly punished me for it.”<sup>213</sup>

Talleyrand was meeting a differing fate of his own. Five days after the Senate and Legislative Corps voted to depose Napoleon, a new constitution was drafted and decreed Louis XVIII the King of France. After so many years of upheaval, France would end up with a king again. Talleyrand was worried how the French people would receive a restored Bourbon monarchy after the experience of the French Revolution and Napoleon. He was no admirer of Louis XVIII personally. The other issue troubling Talleyrand was the “general feeling of humiliation that existed in France after the military defeat,” and the impression that the new constitution and the restored Bourbon monarchy was a foreign imposition on France at the hands of its enemies.<sup>214</sup> Talleyrand’s goal was to secure a peace agreement for France that was lenient. Fortunately for him, the powers of the coalition against Napoleon desired peace and security above all. They understood that treating France with leniency in its defeat would improve the restored monarchy’s popularity, ease the feeling of humiliation, and reduce the possibility of a future war breaking out.

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid, 1780.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid, 1784.

<sup>214</sup> Dwyer, 140.

Vienna was chosen as the venue for an international congress to construct the post-war order. Between October 1814 and June 1815, delegates from nearly every state in Europe were sent to be part of this gathering, the likes of which had never been before. Talleyrand was dispatched to represent France, and he went into the Congress of Vienna being distrusted immediately. Representing Britain was Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh. Klemens von Metternich represented Austria and chaired the congress. Talleyrand's goal was to mitigate the damage that could be done to France while undoing the worst of Napoleon's exploits.<sup>215</sup> His gamble had paid off. He had secured a position for himself in a future government and was able to continue acting in the interest of France. The Congress of Vienna was his most important diplomatic achievement. Indeed, his goal as Minister of Foreign Affairs, tempering Napoleon's ambition, was not accomplished.

Napoleon's downfall presented the victorious powers with an opportunity to take more land for themselves or increase their diplomatic stature in Europe. It was for this reason the issues on the table at the congress concerned returning territories like Poland back to their previous owners. Because the first Treaty of Paris set France's borders, Talleyrand wanted to ensure that land elsewhere was reapportioned to France's interests. Phillip Dwyer identifies three principles that guided Talleyrand's decision making at the Congress of Vienna. The first was the rule of law, which would provide a universal standard for holding the conduct of every nation to account going forward. He also believed in the principle of legitimacy. For a nation to be accepted into the new system in creation, other nations had to accept it, and the people of that nation had to accept it. Otherwise, Europe was sure to be as turbulent as it was during the French

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<sup>215</sup> Dwyer, 145.

Revolution. The final principle that guided Talleyrand was the principle of the balance of the power. No one nation would consider diplomacy if it could achieve more by way of force.<sup>216</sup>

The most controversial issue at the Congress of Vienna was the status of Poland and Saxony. Austria and Britain emerged on one side of this issue, and Russia and Prussia emerged on the other side. Saxony was promised to Prussia in return for supporting Russia's stake in Poland. Talleyrand sided with Austria and Britain, believing that an enlarged Prussia and Russia would disrupt the balance of power in central Europe. This question became so charged that threats of wars were dished out in 1814. Castlereagh, Metternich, and Talleyrand conceded, granting Tsar Alexander I's claim to Poland. In the process, Russia had alienated itself from the other powers, meaning that further expansion at this congress was out of the question for Russia. As for Prussia, it relinquished its claim to Saxony for more territory in Rhine Valley. Talleyrand considered the result a success. He had come in between the victors of the Napoleonic Wars to prevent any one nation from becoming too powerful.<sup>217</sup>

The other issue at hand was Italy, which had come over France's total control during Napoleon's reign. Joachim Murat, who was Napoleon's brother-in-law, had retained control of the Kingdom of Naples after the fall of the empire. Murat's rule stirred nationalist calls for Italian unification and was an obstacle to restoring Bourbon rule over Italy. Talleyrand took a firm position and successfully convinced Castlereagh to join his side against Murat. When Murat declared war on Austria on March 30, 1815, his fate was sealed. He was promptly defeated and executed. France would be stripped of its last possessions in Italy. Austria emerged as the

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid, 146.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid, 154.

dominant power from the fray, directly controlling states in Northern Italy and then placing members of the Habsburg family on the throne in other Italian states.<sup>218</sup>

The Congress of Vienna brought France back into the European political system. France's support or opposition mattered to the major questions at the congress, allying with Austria as Talleyrand had suggested to Napoleon in the Strasbourg memorandum. The Congress of Vienna not only restored France's place, but it set out the principles that guided European diplomacy for the next century. The preservation of the balance of power became the keystone of European diplomacy, and denouncing nationalist movements was the means to preserve this keystone. Talleyrand left Vienna pleased with his work. His long sought-after goal, France's diplomatic reintegration, had been achieved, and that meant no one power dominated Europe as was the case when Napoleon was in power. The next century was certainly turbulent, as history inevitably proves to be, but a world conflict on the scale of Napoleon's wars would not erupt until one hundred years later.

What can ultimately be said about Napoleon Bonaparte and Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord is that both desired power, but they had a different idea of what to do with that power once it was in their grasp. For Napoleon, his primary goal of building an empire guided his actions once he was in power. What is less certain is to what degree his ambition fueled the desire to build an empire. Perhaps, he was continuing the expansion that begun during the French Revolution, bringing the Enlightenment to every stretch of Europe, and he inherited wars whose causes were beyond his control.<sup>219</sup> Perhaps, a political system that allowed for more opposition would have stopped him. When coming to our final thoughts of Napoleon, it is crucial

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid, 155.

<sup>219</sup> Dwyer, 124.

to not hastily conclude, like Paul W. Schroeder, that “Napoleon did what he did because he was Napoleon.”<sup>220</sup> What remains true is that the wars he fought were uniquely his wars, and he had no long-term goal other than defeating Britain and increasing his own prestige.

For Talleyrand, his primary goal of finding a place for France within the system of European powers guided his actions once he was in power. In his strides to achieve this goal, he developed a murky character. Napoleon believed “Monsieur de Talleyrand was always in a state of treason, but it was complicity with fortune” that helped Talleyrand to survive the dangerous gambles he made in pursuit of his goal.<sup>221</sup> When coming to our final thoughts of Talleyrand, it seems that Talleyrand gave his allegiance to the regime that allowed him to continue acting in the interest, or at least what he considered to be that interest, of France. Paradoxically, his resignation on August 10, 1807 allowed him to preserve his power as much as it was an expression of opposition to the invasion of Spain and Portugal. It is understanding a paradox such as this one that makes this study unceasingly delightful.

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid, 134.

<sup>221</sup> De Las Cases, 1443.

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