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THE PURPOSE AND FALL OF THE NAPOLEONIC EMPIRE  
IN THE LOW COUNTRIES AND ITALY

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The Purpose and Fall of the Napoleonic Empire in the Low Countries and Italy* investigates Napoleon's aims for the Empire and the reasons for its final demise in the Low Countries and Italy. This work will examine these two aspects in Belgium, the Netherlands, Northern Italy, and Naples. First, I scrutinize Stuart's Woolf's thesis that Napoleon attempted to integrate Europe in order to create a single-European state that benefitted the entire continent. I attack his thesis by referring to Paul Schroeder's argument that Napoleon viewed Europe as colonies that were meant to benefit France. Many of those European colonies benefitted from Napoleon's colonization, Belgium, Piedmont, and the Kingdom of Italy, while others suffered under his demands, especially the Netherlands and Naples. The underlying theme was the institutions Napoleon implanted into these areas in order to extract their resources.

The second argument assaults the view that nationalism was the cause of the fall of the Empire. Through analyzing the Low Countries and Italy, I demonstrate that entrenched political factions existed, separated on financial and economic issues, conscription, and religion. If political factions existed, how could nationalism be the mobilizing factor for populations to stand against the Empire? The fall of the Empire occurred due to the lack of support from any faction in each territory for the Empire.

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# INTRODUCTION

## Napoleon's Rise to Power

Napoleon Bonaparte came to power with objectives he wished to achieve in France and several European states.<sup>1</sup> His rise to power was a reaction to the French Revolution and the events following it in the subsequent years. Napoleon and his principles had a broad-based appeal. During the Revolutionary years, France and various European states experienced years of public disorder, financial crises, and governments that were incapable of responding to the rising demands of their respective countries. The Coup of 18 Brumaire was the culmination of the ineffectiveness of the Revolutionary governments in France and the public's demand for a solution to the country's problems. What occurred in France reverberated throughout Europe, especially in future annexed territories and satellite kingdoms. But before discussing Bonaparte and his régimes specifically in the Low Countries and Italy, we have to understand the causes to Bonaparte's seizure of power in France.

The French population hungered for an effective government. Order was non-existent and brigandage was widespread, specifically in the South and West. Howard Brown discussed the shift in the populace's sentiments towards directly taking on brigands and violence. Brown stated that at the foundation of this shift was the belief that people had to

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<sup>1</sup> When discussing Napoleon Bonaparte, many historians refer to him as Bonaparte before becoming Emperor of the French and Napoleon after he becomes Emperor. I kept with the same references.

protect “psychic property.” Psychic property was values such as respect, loyalty, and honor. These values became a part of societal behavior again, represented by people willing to testify against criminals, become vigilant against brigands, and demand security from their government.<sup>2</sup> To the public, Bonaparte embodied their demands and the ability to execute effective government. His military background and history of suppressing revolts and mobs, specifically in Paris, created support for Bonaparte to take control of the government. Security was only one solution Bonaparte embodied for the battered French polity.

The public also clamored for effectiveness and efficiency in government. Bonaparte’s adherence to the principles of effective and efficient government was demonstrated in his meetings following the Coup of Brumaire with Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès, author of *What is the Third Estate?* Sieyès lobbied for the creation of an executive with no authority besides sitting as the symbolic head of the country. Bonaparte seized the opportunity. He took Sieyès’s suggestion in hand, dashed his pen across the paper, and asked Sieyès, “How could you have supposed, Sieyès, that a man of honor, of talent, and of some capacity in affairs, would ever consent to be nothing but a hog fattened up by a few millions in the royal château of Versailles?”<sup>3</sup> Sieyès’s idea of an executive did not address the renewed desires within France for a powerful executive that could effectively and efficiently undertake the issues of the country. Boulay de la Meurthe, originally a Sieyès supporter, proclaimed that “it was evident that the national will had summoned Bonaparte to the head of the affairs and that we had to invest him with sufficient power so that he could...employ his activity and his genius in the service of the fatherland.”<sup>4</sup> Over-democratization and too

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<sup>2</sup> Howard Brown, *Ending the French Revolution* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 331-344.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Knight, trans., *Memoirs of Joseph Fouché* (London: Pall-Mall-East, 1825), 138-139.

<sup>4</sup> Knight, *Memoirs*, 140; Isser Woloch, *Napoleon and His Collaborators* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2001), 31.

much enfranchisement of the masses also became synonymous with the concerns about the Revolutionary governments. Bonaparte's remedy allowed for a certain level of enfranchisement with all areas of society, but he set into place a process consisting of delegates electing other delegates to finally elect what would become the Senate. Through this process of varying levels of notables, individuals, if chosen by local then departmental and finally national notables, could serve as representatives of the country. Those representatives, who would become the Senate, then would choose the other legislative bodies from a list compiled by the various levels of notables.<sup>5</sup> The French government was then placed in the hands of educated and influential men while the masses still had an initial yet limited level of participation. Bonaparte and the majority of the population wished to dilute the influence of mob rule best represented by the sans-culottes. Government was to take a reactionary turn away from over-democratization embodied by endlessly debating legislative bodies that were inept in their abilities to compromise and govern. While initially other French leaders were not accepting of Bonaparte's philosophy of government, they began to shift their beliefs and their alliances to Bonaparte after they noticed his allure and support from the people. So while Bonaparte's sense of government may have been less democratic, it represented a leader who acknowledged, responded, and advocated for the demands of the public. The French Revolution was to be redefined as the acknowledgement and reward of people based upon talent and merit and not because of birth.

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<sup>5</sup> Woloch, *Napoleon and His Collaborators*, 29.

## The Purpose of the Empire

The purpose of the Napoleonic Empire has been intensely debated recently. There are two predominant views that will be discussed here, and then, through analyzing the Empire in the Low Countries and Italy specifically, I will demonstrate Napoleon's underlying purpose for those territories and the Empire. The first question for this thesis is what were Napoleon's goals for Europe and how did he see Europe in relation to France. For years, various European powers had attempted to control as much of the continent as possible, all for the glory and name of the kingdoms and empires. European territory would be added to various empires and those conquering empires subjugated the conquered territories to their rule. The added territories simply expanded the various empires' borders with minimal impact upon the daily lives of the masses. But Napoleon took this policy to a new level to the point where he sought to control Europe. The question addressed in this thesis is the following: was Napoleon's attempt at controlling Europe meant to integrate Europe in order to create a single state with similar institutions that originated from France or was it meant to provide resources and institutionalize French superiority over Europe by means of colonizing Europe?

Stuart Woolf's *Napoleon's Integration of Europe*, published in 1991, attempted to view the Napoleonic Empire through the lens of the rising late-twentieth century European Union. Woolf's argument traced the foundation of the European Union back to the Napoleonic Empire and the institutions that came along with it. The simplest way to understand Woolf's and other historians' views is to analyze how they organize their arguments. Woolf's organization demonstrates his point that Napoleon's Empire was the foundation for the European Union. Woolf organized *Napoleon's Integration of Europe* by

themes of conquest, exploitation, and institutions. Unlike other works such as Owen Connelly's *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms* that is organized by each satellite kingdom, Woolf's work does not lead the reader in compartmentalizing the territories under the Empire. By not allowing the reader to do so, Woolf makes it appear as if what takes place in one territory is thematically the same. In that way, specific national interests and occurrences within the Empire do not exist in any substantial form. The themes are universal, their application is one-in-the same, and their effects widespread. In addition, Woolf also creates a benevolent view of the Empire. While many in the Empire were negatively affected, the nature of Napoleon's rule and grand scheme for the Empire was benevolent, he argued. Woolf states that the Empire's purpose was meant to abolish feudalism and deliver religious tolerance, spread liberal ideals codified in the *Code Napoléon*, and recognize individuals based upon merit and not birth. Woolf's point is that Napoleon's purpose for Europe was to integrate the territories under the Empire into one European state.

Three years later in 1994, Paul Schroeder published the *Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848* which provides a different look at the nature of the Empire. Schroeder argues that Napoleon's attempts at creating a European Empire was a move towards colonizing Europe under the French banner. For Napoleon, Europe was a field of resources that could be extracted for the purpose of fueling the French war effort and economy. Schroeder does highlight that such a policy is not necessarily a detriment to the territories that became a part of the French Empire or its satellite kingdoms. Colonization brought benefits of industrialization, advanced civil services, and the abolition of feudalism. In the case of Belgium, economic development occurred because of Belgium's incorporation into the Empire. Belgium received protection from British trade and open access to the immense

French market.<sup>6</sup> Other territories did not fair as well, and in many ways, were greatly hurt by the Empire. Such territories included the Netherlands and the annexed territories in Italy. Napoleon demanded that the territories provide conscripts for the French army, adhere to the Continental System, and to increase their military expenditures and payments to France, placing an incredible strain on each government's finances. The annexed territories and satellite kingdoms were meant to serve France in a colonial capacity and supply France with whatever necessary for Napoleon to complete his goal of a French dominated Europe.

The following chapters will examine both of these schools of thought by focusing on the French institutions Napoleon placed in the Low Countries and Italy and what his purpose was behind doing so. The initial examination of these regions does lead to some general and fundamental themes. In the territories that are discussed in the following chapters, common institutions existed. It was almost as if Napoleon had a manual he was operating from. Each territory was organized into departments headed by a prefect. An executive administered the national government with strong authority and worked alongside a limited national legislature that operated under the guise of republicanism. The French régime created modern tax systems and abolished feudal privileges. Finally, the executive was commanded to enforce conscription laws and follow the Continental System. But the question is was Napoleon's aim the creation of a single European state? I will analyze the Low Countries and Italy and reveal that Napoleon's aim was not for the creation of such a state. What I will prove is that the institutions Napoleon implanted in these territories were to serve the interests of France, not necessarily that of the country's they were in. At times, the territories benefited while others were negatively affected with some either passively or

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<sup>6</sup> Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 393-395.

actively resisting. Through analyzing the Empire's existence in the Low Countries and Italy, I will demonstrate that Napoleon's intentions of implanting French institutions into these territories primarily served Napoleon's aim of extracting resources for the benefit of France. The institutions acted as tools for this goal. So while they were widespread, they served an ulterior motive to that of Woolf's thesis; Napoleon colonized Europe to serve the benefit of France.

## **The Fall of the Empire**

While the purpose of the Empire has been recently a more contentious issue, how the Empire fell is a long standing debate. For many years, nationalism was said to be the cause of the fall of the Napoleonic Empire. The Empire had angered the masses to fight for their independence, and in that fight, they created a national identity and uprising. The facts and histories of the territories studied here prove the contrary. What caused the fall of the Empire was a myriad of issues, specifically economy and finances crises, conscription, and religion. These three items were connected to the institutions and policies Napoleon created in the territories. The fall of the Empire in the Low Countries and Italy happened because of varying degrees of these three variables. The importance of these three variables lies in that they exacerbated the political factions that existed in each of these territories.

Napoleon's régimes depended upon the support of at least one political faction in each territory, and in return, the favored political faction supplied the French régime with administrators. Nationalism never occurred because political factions always existed and were constantly vigilant against their opponents. When the Empire fell, it was due to the

fact that these three variables inflamed all political factions to stop supporting Napoleon, not because all groups united under nationalism.

The first variable, the economy and finances, angered the populations in two different ways. First, the demands Napoleon placed on the territories for expansion in military expenditures forced the respective governments to reform their tax structures and abolish privileges for the nobility. For the first time, every individual was required to pay their respective government taxes. Different taxes were used such as various combinations of excises taxes, and land was reassessed for the purpose of taxation. But most of these tax structures were set in place to minimize tax collection on favored political factions and substantially increase taxes on those that did not have Napoleon's favor. For example, I will later highlight the policy of tax-discrimination the French régime pursued with the merchant and land-owning classes. The tax structure that Napoleon claimed would be equitable instead never truly existed and only exacerbated the political factions within each country. While both sides would come to welcome the end of Napoleonic rule, they would do so because of different reasons within each territory.

The economics of the fall of the Empire are directly linked to the application of the Continental System. Many industries benefited from the Continental System, specifically those industries that served the demands of the French army and economy, but in total, the Continental System stifled economic growth and in many cases, destroyed industries. The Continental System was instituted on 21 November 1806. The Berlin Decrees stated that the importation of British goods onto the European continent was forbidden along with any form of communication with the British Isles. The Milan Decrees at the end of 1807 were even stricter. Neutral merchants carrying any British goods were also forbidden to trade

with the continent. Geoffrey Ellis in *The Napoleonic Empire* described two aims of the System. First was a destructive aim. The Continent was not to provide Britain with a market to sell its goods so it would crush the British economy. If the British economy was crushed, Britain would not be able to finance Napoleon's enemies on the Continent, and an economic depression caused by the Continental System would undermine any growth in the superior British navy. The second aim was constructive. With the lack of competition from Britain, industries that were endorsed and supported by the Empire could start and one day compete against Britain. But the System would fail as Napoleon could not effectively enforce the System. Smuggling became common, and after the annihilation of the French navy at Trafalgar in 1805, the British could find porous coastlines to find those willing to trade. Also, Napoleon wished to make France the sole rival to Britain and relocate European industries to France.<sup>7</sup> As long as there were winners within the System, resistance was limited. Industries such as cotton, iron ore, silk, and food production flourished due to the large demand from the French market the territories were opened to and the need to supply the French army. The fall of the Empire occurred during an economic downturn when others did not see the benefit in French economic policies. Those who were benefiting from the Continental System no longer were. The beneficiaries did not necessarily resist the Napoleonic régime, but they became indifferent and did not fight to keep the régime in place against the wishes of the other factions that opposed the régime. Their indifference led to the collapse of any foundational support for the Napoleonic régime.

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<sup>7</sup> Geoffrey Ellis, *The Napoleonic Empire* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 111-117.

Conscription and the army, the second variable for the fall, created incredible hardships which contributed to the fall of the Empire. Conscription in most territories was resisted, especially outside of the cities. The respective governments had to squelch revolts and make excuses for not meeting Napoleon's quotas. Beyond the fact that raising and maintaining an army was incredibly expensive, it took a harsh toll on the various populations. After the horrific defeat of Napoleon's army during the Russian campaign, countries saw very few young men return from that campaign. Coupled with Napoleon's major blunder, the environment led to outright resistance to the Napoleonic régime. Napoleon was no longer seen as invincible. He could be defeated, and the populations had a reason to want to see his defeat after seeing their young men die for Napoleon's goals. Conscription was an institution that enraged the masses but never pushed them to outright resistance because of the successes of Napoleon's armies. But when conscription became synonymous with a death sentence, it demonstrated to the masses that the investment of men yielded nothing but graves and a grieving population. This work will demonstrate the strains conscription placed on the various countries and the impact it had on creating resistance and thus the fall of the Empire.

Lastly, religion was a major variable for the fall of the Empire in Belgium and Italy. The French Revolution had waged war on the Catholic Church, but Napoleon had attempted to reconcile those differences with the caveat that the State was superior to the Church. The chapters on Belgium and Italy will examine the Church's initial reactions to Napoleon's rule and how there was potential for a symbiotic relationship. But Napoleon pursued a policy of attempting to subordinate the Church to the State. The Church did not welcome that new hierarchy. The Church and Napoleon became confrontational, and with

that, Napoleon alienated large sections of the respective populations in each country. I will analyze how the Church reacted to Napoleon's policies and how they interacted with the various populations. Even Napoleon's benevolent changes to religion that the Church came to accept enflamed the political factions between Catholics and Protestants and liberals and the conservative clergy. Anticlericalism and historical religious fighting was already prevalent in Belgium and Italy. But Napoleon's war with the Church was not to do away with religion or mock the existence of God and the Church. His concern was subordinating the Church to his rule. Even though that was his intention, many commoners believed that their possibility of salvation was being taken away from them. While religion has been debated as an almost none factor, I will attempt to reevaluate this claim and demonstrate that religion links to closely to many other concerns various factions had with the Empire, most notably conscription.

These variables were the reasons for the downfall of the Empire by enflaming dissent amongst the varying political factions within each country. They did not act in unison but as individual groups that saw the opportunity to remove Napoleon's régime from their country and to embrace the Allies in hopes of gaining their independence and a place in the pantheon of European states. Nationalism was almost non-existent and was instead supported and encouraged by Napoleon to bolster the populations' support for the new taxation and conscription laws, most evident in Northern Italy in the Kingdom of Italy. This work will dispel the myth of nationalism as a weapon that brought the end of the Napoleonic Empire.

In order to tackle both of these questions, I will analyze and explain these interpretations of the purpose and fall of the Empire in Belgium, the Netherlands, Northern

Italy, and Naples. These areas best represent the spectrum of the Empire's effects. Belgium and the Netherlands stand as contrasts to one another while Northern Italy and Naples consists of multiple reactions to the Empire's administration of those territories. This work will answer the following questions. Why did Belgium experience such successes from the Empire? Why did the Netherlands not benefit from the French régime? What were the reasons for certain areas in Italy being successfully incorporated into the Empire while others resisted? Was there a universal variable that provides an explanation to why Belgium and various Italian territories were pacified and more accepting of the Empire compared to the Netherlands and Naples and if so what was that universal variable? How did political participation affect the application of the Empire's aims? Why did Napoleon come to favor some territories and not others? These questions as well as others aid in explaining why the Napoleonic Empire treated Europe as France's colony and why the Empire's fall actually occurred due to the existence of political cleavages and not from the early risings of nationalism.

## CHAPTER I: BELGIUM

Belgium was, as Michael Broers categorized it, within the “inner Empire”. Broers defined the “inner Empire” as the lands Napoleon “re-took by 1800, most of which had already been under direct French rule or which came under the oldest, original ‘sister republics’...those lands [Napoleon] came to control most thoroughly, where French rule was best established and most secure.”<sup>8</sup> Unlike the other European countries, Belgium experienced a relatively strong level of economic prosperity under the Continental System. Belgium gained from the French Empire economically during the birth of the Industrial Revolution. For Belgium, Napoleon’s colonization of Europe gave Belgium the opportunity to industrialize and economically expand beyond its potential if the Empire had never existed in Belgium. Belgium also found refuge from the wars and Revolution under Napoleon’s blanket of security and protection of religious practice. To France, Belgium was a part of the country’s “natural frontiers.” What is important is that Belgium was sought after and controlled at varying degrees by the Revolutionary governments of France prior to finally being annexed to France in October of 1795. From then, Belgium would be “French” for roughly twenty years, most of those twenty years ruled by Napoleon. Within that time span, Napoleon and France were successful in instilling the institutions that became synonymous with the Empire while Belgium benefited from the policies those institutions followed. To understand Napoleon’s impact on Belgium, the preexisting factors

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Broers, “Policing the Empire: Napoleon and the Pacification of Europe,” *Napoleon and Europe*, ed. Philip G. Dwyer (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2001), 182-185.

residing within Belgium, the amount of economic success, and how both affected the populace's view of the Empire will be analyzed and will demonstrate Belgium's pacification and allegiance to the Empire until its fall. The fall of the Empire in Belgium furthers the thesis that the fall occurred due to the political factions that existed prior to the existence of the Empire.

## **Background**

Belgium lacked education and political involvement when compared to other European powers such as the Netherlands. If the Dutch were the example of an enlightened and politically involved populace, Belgians were disenfranchised and disinterested. Roughly half of all Belgian males were illiterate with an even greater percentage of illiteracy among females. The Belgian States General decided on simply sectional affairs and avoided decisions on major issues.<sup>9</sup> After the annexation, political parties could not take root in Belgium due to the lack of interest. Belgians, who experienced the Revolutionary wars firsthand, wished for security and found their wish granted by an individual who used the deliverance of security as a part of his intention. With the French annexation, the Belgians' political involvement did not change. Low- and non-paying administrative positions were filled by Frenchmen. But one should not conclude that that the Belgians' lack of participation equated to some form of passive resistance or demonstration of discontent with their situation. Later during the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Belgians' participation arguably equaled that of the Dutch.<sup>10</sup> But the lack of organized resistance or

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<sup>9</sup> E.H. Kossman, *The Low Countries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 65.

<sup>10</sup> Kossman, *The Low Countries*, 97.

political involvement in the years following the annexation would prove to be beneficial for Belgium and its economy.

With the French economy recovering from its depression from the upheaval of the Revolution, France was an immense market for a European country. But demand was not enough to create economic prosperity in Belgium. The Industrial Revolution had not transformed Europe as it had begun to reshape England. Industrialization was largely brought to Belgium by the Bauwens family like Prometheus's gift of fire to mankind. Lieven Bauwens went to England, obtained "parts of English spinning-machines and steam engines," and left the country with them illegally. In 1801, Bauwens built the first cotton spinning-mill in Ghent.<sup>11</sup> Bauwens's spinning-mill was the first on the continent, and by 1810, the industry would employ 10,000 workmen. Foreshadowing his own ruin, Bauwens pronounced after his return to Belgium that "my wish is to sacrifice my fortune to my country by giving it those machines that made England so great."<sup>12</sup> Despite the success of the first factory in Ghent, annexation initially did not spark an economic "boom" in Belgium. But as the process of assimilation into the Empire continued, Belgium began to benefit from French policies.

## **Pacifying Belgium**

In an article on "Wars, Blockade, and Economic Change in Europe, 1792-1815", François Crouzet described three factors that altered trade relations during the period. In the case of Belgium, these three factors led to the creation and growth of the cotton

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<sup>11</sup> Kossman, *The Low Countries*, 79; Bernard A. Cook, *Belgium: A History* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2002), 52.

<sup>12</sup> Adrien De Meeüs, *History of the Belgians*, trans. G. Gordon (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Inc., 1962), 252.

industry. One of those factors was the “redrafting of Europe’s political map.”<sup>13</sup> France annexation of Belgium was not initially an easy task of incorporating the Belgian population into the Empire. Mentioned earlier, the Belgian resistance was unorganized and ineffective. After the annexation of 1795, the Belgian bourgeoisie and nobility were apprehensive to support the anticlerical, Revolutionary French government. Belgian Catholics held close ties with the clergy and therefore were easily influenced by the clergy’s negative view of the measures France had taken on religious matters during the Revolution. These influential Belgians wished to see a return to Austrian rule which protected them from the radical French policies towards religion, but their dreams were dashed after the Peace of Campo Formio in 1797.

Radical republicanism was on the rise and began to have a large impact on Belgium. Such laws as the Law of 19 Fructidor of 1797 requiring Belgian clergyman to take an oath swearing allegiance to the constitution and against monarchy created instability in Belgium. About 585 priests were deported for not taking the oath and those priests who had taken the oath were ostracized by their congregations.<sup>14</sup> Oaths were not the only anticlerical measures take. The clergy were prohibited to wear robes in public, church bell towers were forced to be silent, and the Revolutionary calendar was to be recognized. Belgians resisted to the point that they would not attend Republican events and even offered shelter and protection to noncompliant priests.<sup>15</sup> Belgium had a history of religious loyalty to Catholicism and had weathered many storms since the rise of Protestantism. Without sufficient European Catholic powers to come to their aid though, many Belgians feared the anticlerical

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<sup>13</sup> François Crouzet, “Wars, Blockade, and Economic Change in Europe, 1792-1815,” *The Journal of Economic History* 24, no. 4 (1964): 568, JSTOR.

<sup>14</sup> J. Roegiers and N.C.F van Sas, “Revolution in the North and South, 1780-1830,” ed. J.C.H. Blom and E. Lamberts, *History of the Low Countries* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999), 292.

<sup>15</sup> Alexander Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 78-79.

sentiments of the French and the impact the sentiments had on Belgian Catholicism. Furthermore, from 1795-1800, hard economic times fell upon the lower classes. Belgium had not yet taken full advantage of the new French market which itself was in economic despair and industry in general was in decline.<sup>16</sup> The climax of Belgium's resistance to French rule came after the conscription law of 5 September 1798 for men aged between twenty and twenty-five. The French anticlerical measure the prior year factored into their uprising but was not the spark. The clergy had successfully been able to rally support against the French régime by speaking directly to their parishioners and outlining the French atrocities of anticlericalism and conscription.<sup>17</sup> Again, without aid from foreign powers, the professional French army decimated the meager, unorganized Belgian resistance. From this point, the Belgians would never outwardly revolt against the French. This revolt served as the final event that began Belgium incorporation into the Empire.

Through the revolt of 1798 and prior to the Coup of 18 Brumaire, the governing classes remained neutral in the Belgian political environment. The governing classes "had been thinking only of defending their own interests by collaborating with the French administrators."<sup>18</sup> Thus those who were in the position to lead Belgium did not focus on protecting Belgian independence. For these leaders, two variables were able to shift them from neutral to outright support of the French régime. First, Bonaparte's ascendancy to power in France created interest and support for the French government. Bonaparte came to power promising security, stability, and law. Early on, Bonaparte's single most important act for the Belgians was the signing of the Concordat in 1801. It was the Concordat that "more than any other measure – reconciled a large majority of the region's population to the

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<sup>16</sup> Kossman, *The Low Countries*, 77.

<sup>17</sup> Roegiers and van Sas, "Revolution in the North and South," 292-293; De Meeüs, *History of the Belgians*, 249.

<sup>18</sup> De Meeüs, *History of the Belgians*, 250.

French régime.”<sup>19</sup> Now, the masses were able to accept how Bonaparte interpreted the Revolution, a revolution of judging men based on merit and not birth. Belgian leaders, recognizing the shift in support of the masses, could openly support the French régime. The support became evident when these governing individuals filled local and intermediary administrative roles such as mayors which first occurred in Brussels and Liège.<sup>20</sup>

With their approbation of the French, the governing classes took full advantage of the new French market. Previously producing goods for three million, Belgian industrialists and producers were now selling to a market of thirty million.<sup>21</sup> Dues and customs barriers were discontinued, and Belgian producers now had access to much of Western Europe. After becoming Emperor of the French in 1804, Napoleon created a more conservative structure of government. He courted the old nobility in Belgium in order to emphasize a more conservative tone. The conservative tone won over nobles and entrepreneurs who wished to utilize their new found ally, France, to improve infrastructure and provide protection for their fledgling industrialization. These acts enabled Belgian entrepreneurs to begin expanding on Bauwens’s foundation of industrial output.

But, as Crouzet discussed in his other two points, it was the British naval blockade coupled with Napoleon’s Continental System that led to economic prosperity in Belgium under the Empire. Between 1793 and 1806, the French had instituted twenty-six customs laws against British trade and goods.<sup>22</sup> These laws did little in the way of fostering industrial growth in Belgium. British competition was still prevalent, and in most cases, prices continued to fall due to the decline in the price of British yarn.<sup>23</sup> All forms of protectionism

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<sup>19</sup> Roegiers and van Sas, “Revolution in the North and South,” 293.

<sup>20</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 80.

<sup>21</sup> De Meeüs, *History of the Belgians*, 250.

<sup>22</sup> Stuart Woolf, *Napoleon’s Integration of Europe* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 140.

<sup>23</sup> Crouzet, “Wars, Blockade, and Economic Change in Europe,” 575.

prior to 1806 provided minimal coverage for fledgling industries. Britain was able to continue to lower prices and experience profits with trade on a customs-ridden continent. Emperor Napoleon on 22 February 1806 issued a decree for the Empire that banned British textiles and yarn. The decrease in supply from Britain created a push in Belgium, specifically Ghent, to expand the cotton-spinning industry. The prefect of the department for Ghent, Faipoult, wrote to the Minister of the Interior, Crétet, to highlight Ghent's progress from Crétet's last visit eighteen months before. Faipoult wrote on 5 November 1807:

When you came to Ghent, there was only one spinning mill of any note, that of Messieurs Bauwens; today, within the department there are seven or eight establishments as large if not larger. Judging by the growth rate of the last 18 months, there will be 30 within three years...No industrial progress has ever taken place more rapidly.<sup>24</sup>

From the onset of the French Revolution through the Napoleonic Wars, the emigration of peoples out of France and parts of the Rhine provided the possibility for rapid growth. These peoples were refugees and unemployed. Thus a large, cheap labor force existed in Belgium for industrialists to hire. Seventy percent of the cotton-spinning workforce consisted of women and children.<sup>25</sup> The percentage of working women and children demonstrated that even with the high levels of immigration, the demand for labor was still greater than the supply of labor. But unemployed people were not the only individuals who wished to take advantage of the new industry. The cotton-spinning industry attracted not just the unemployed. Prior to the "boom" described by Faipoult in 1807, industrialists such as Bauwens were offering five to eight francs per day, compared to a carpenter's wage of two

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<sup>24</sup> Jan Dhondt, "The Cotton Industry at Ghent during the French Régime," *Essays in European Economic History, 1789-1914*, ed. F. Crouzet, W.H. Chaloner and W.M. Stern (London: Edward Arnold, 1969), 24.

<sup>25</sup> Cook, *Belgium*, 52.

francs per day.<sup>26</sup> This disparity created the mass exodus of people from the countryside into towns and cities. As a result, Belgium's population increased on average by 22,500 people annually beginning in 1784 and reaching 3,379,000 people in 1815.<sup>27</sup> Such a prolonged, steady growth in population was characteristic of sustained economic growth and industrialization due to the French demand for these goods. The great mobilization of people was sustainable. The French market was able to provide immense quantities of wheat, an amount consumed by Belgians that Belgium alone could ever sustain.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, a symbiotic, dependent relationship existed between France and Belgium, demonstrating Napoleon and France's policy of colonizing Europe. From this relationship, Belgium was ripe for unequalled industrial growth.

The cotton-spinning industry was not the only one to gain from French annexation, the British Blockade, and Napoleon's Continental System. Most industries in Belgium until 1810 experienced increases in production. The textile industry in Verviers grew at a frenzied pace of six percent annually from 1800-1810. By 1810, the industry had increased by eighty-eight percent over its level in the *ancien régime* and expanded to eighty-six manufacturers employing 25,000 laborers.<sup>29</sup> Such advances were due to mechanization and progress in technology, such as the introduction of steam engines in coal mines near Borinage. Belgian industries were sheltered from British competition and were able to gain a foothold in industrialization. But the other great driver for growth was the high level of demand from the army. Industrialization provided Belgium the capacity to take on the majority of military contracts. Belgium mined a half of the total amount of coal mined within the French

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<sup>26</sup> Cook, *Belgium*, 53.

<sup>27</sup> Kossman, *The Low Countries*, 66.

<sup>28</sup> De Meeüs, *History of the Belgians*, 253.

<sup>29</sup> Crouzet, "Wars, Blockade, and Economic Change in Europe," 581; Kossman, *The Low Countries*, 79; Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 81.

Empire and employed half of its 70,000 coal miners by 1810.<sup>30</sup> Four years later, Belgium constructed eighty-nine blast furnaces which would not be equaled in France till fifty years later.<sup>31</sup> In some cases, production remained at stable levels and did not experience tremendous amounts of growth. But certain sectors, such as steelmaking and secondary metal industries (hardware, cutlery, tools, buttons, harness pieces, and tinplate articles) in Liège, gained much from the lack of British competition.<sup>32</sup> War was the norm, not the exception, which led to a constant demand for armaments from Napoleon's armies. Pig iron production rose from 24,000 to 37,300 tons from 1789 to 1811. During that same time, iron manufacturing expanded from 17,382 tons to 27,925 tons. Belgium was then the fourth largest arms producer in Europe.<sup>33</sup> The French reopened the River Scheldt in 1796. This reopening allowed for maritime trade to enter Antwerp. After the rapid expansion in maritime traffic which ended by the Blockade, Antwerp became a crucial port for the construction of the imperial navy and military ships.<sup>34</sup> Belgium gained from Napoleon's war machine due to France's demand and Napoleon's protection. For Belgium, France was a benevolent and beneficial colonial power that brought economic development and prosperity to the country.

Thus by the advent of the Continental Blockade of 1806, Belgians had completely rallied to Napoleon. Belgians participated in government, cooperated with local officials, and became active participants in the Empire and economy. But it is important to stress the foundations for the active participation and endorsement of the French Empire. They did so in order to solidify and protect the economic affluence they had gained. Belgium had a

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<sup>30</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 81.

<sup>31</sup> Cook, *Belgium*, 51,

<sup>32</sup> Crouzet, "Wars, Blockade, and Economic Change in Europe," 582-583.

<sup>33</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 81.

<sup>34</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 82.

vested interest within the Empire because the Empire benefited the Belgians. Coupled with the pacification of the Catholic clergy and parishioners, Belgium was in full support of the French régime.

## **Economic Development**

Belgium's high rate of industrialization was victim to a high level of economic instability. Beginning in 1806, Belgium would journey through six years of turbulent growth and decline specifically in the cotton-spinning industry. The first economic depression occurred in 1808 and lasted throughout 1809. The depression was due to two factors. First, the decree of 1806 did not provide a tight enough grip on trade. Opportunistic merchants smuggled significant amounts of British and Indian cotton at considerably lower prices than French cotton. The continent's large sums of raw material cotton stockpiles, still being sold at pre-Continental Blockade prices, had a greater impact on the cotton market than smuggling. After the stockpiles of raw materials ran out, continental cotton yarn prices increased from 5.25 francs to eleven to twelve francs in May 1808. The 1808-1809 depression demonstrated the immense superiority of the British industry and the monopoly it had on the continent. Even the Bauwens family, the initiators of the cotton-spinning industry, fell victim to the depression to the point of complete collapse in Ghent. The Escaut department that included Ghent experienced a decrease of 1,852 workmen in cotton spinning and weaving from 1 May to 1 November of 1808.<sup>35</sup> It was not till later in 1809 that Belgium, specifically Escaut, saw a return to prosperity.

Napoleon as well as the Belgians learned from 1808-1809 that trade with Britain had to be totally barred from the continent in order for the cotton-spinning industry to thrive.

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<sup>35</sup> Dhondt, "The Cotton Industry at Ghent," 29-30.

But by 1810, the economy began to take a turn for the worse due to overproduction and decreased demand. At this time, the army did not demand as many goods from continental industries which created large amounts of unemployment. The War of the Fifth Coalition had ended and relative peace befell the continent. Guerilla warfare continued in Spain, but new armies were not raised at invasion levels, such as armies raised for war with Austria and Prussia. Therefore, there was little demand from the already existing armies. With a surplus of cotton goods, producers did not have a population to sell to because of the general population's increase in unemployment and decrease in wages.

1812 would be the year for recovery and growth. The 1812 expansion, the greatest under the Empire, can be credited to the creation of a 650,000 man army to invade Russia. But interestingly, industrialists understood the cycle that they existed within. M. Voortman, a cotton-spinning industrialist, remarked during the first quarter of 1812 that “unless supplies of cotton arrive, it is so expensive a raw material that consumers cannot afford it and production will have to be cut down in the first half of 1813.” Voortman would be vindicated. By the third quarter of 1813, Ghentish firms suffered the greatest depression in terms of scale and impact under the Empire.<sup>36</sup> Again, the industry was at the mercy of a steep increase followed by an even greater decrease in demand. The supply of cheap raw materials decreased dramatically as the surpluses of raw materials from the previous trade with Britain ran out and an adequate cheap substitute had yet been found by the Empire. The supply of raw materials was not non-existent. Raw materials were supplied by the Levant and southern Italy but were two to four times more expensive than those supplied by the British.<sup>37</sup> Voortman simply was a representation of the typical individual in the Belgian economy where people had lost faith in the consistency of that economy. In a letter to the

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<sup>36</sup> Dhondt, "The Cotton Industry at Ghent," 35.

<sup>37</sup> Crouzet, "Wars, Blockade, and Economic Change in Europe," 578.

prefect on 10 November 1813, the mayor of Ghent reported that 1,281 workmen were laid off. Prior to this report, between the last quarter of 1812 and the first quarter of 1813, the workforce dropped from 10,600 workers to 6,150. The depression cost 5,731 laborers their jobs in less than two years after the greatest expansion that they had undergone.<sup>38</sup>

Industrialization did leave its impact on Belgium in the end. From 1808-1812, looms in operation increased from 282 to 3000, and independent weaving mills swelled from ten to twenty-eight.<sup>39</sup> Spinning mills also saw an increase from eight mills to twenty-five. Weaving factories grew from ten to fifteen factories during this time.<sup>40</sup> Belgium, while consistency was lacking, gained the foundation for further industrialization. Belgium was one of few that substantially economically benefited from the Empire. But as a colony of France, Belgium was at the mercy of the demands of France and Napoleon, many times serving as a detriment to the Belgian economy. The total effects of the French Empire nourished the “Belgium colony” by placing it on a strong footing to continue into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the end, there was substantial growth, and the Napoleonic Era cultivated Belgium’s economy.

## **Environment of Passive Resistance**

The working class prospered with the introduction of new industries such as the cotton-spinning industry. But as the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century continued, their plight became ever more evident. The masses originally welcomed Napoleon’s régime because it brought about a uniform price for bread and kept bread at a lower price than it previously had been during the Revolution and wars. Wages had been based upon the price of bread

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<sup>38</sup> Dhondt, "The Cotton Industry at Ghent," 40-41.

<sup>39</sup> Dhondt, "The Cotton Industry at Ghent," 26-27.

<sup>40</sup> Dhondt, "The Cotton Industry at Ghent," 36.

during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and this system continued into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>41</sup> Social mobility was rare and increases in wages even rarer. Wage earners typically could purchase between two and seven pounds of “black” bread a day, just enough to feed their families.<sup>42</sup> While initially higher wages were offered by such industrialists as the Bauwens to attract labor, the trend reversed as cotton-spinning and other industries increased in production. Even with the addition of thousands of jobs created to meet the increased demand of the Empire, labor was still overly abundant in Belgium. War-stricken populations were still displaced throughout the first decade, and they traveled to the peaceful, annexed territory of Belgium. With the promise of jobs and booming industries, people hoped to gain a better life.

But this abundance in labor negatively affected wages. Therefore, any laborer clamoring for higher wages could be replaced by unemployed people who would work at a lower wage. This single fact kept workmen at the mercy of industrialists.<sup>43</sup> And if workers attempted to cooperate or unionize, their efforts were halted and those involved fired. Guilds, which were seen as inhibitors to growth and organizations of self-interests, were disbanded during the French Revolution and abolished by law under Napoleon.<sup>44</sup> Many workers did not contest this fact nor equate it the possibility of industrialists’ greed. Workers believed their state of being in industry was the “result of the free interplay of economic forces.”<sup>45</sup> With complete control over labor, industrialists were able to act without impediments from an organized group during the 1810 depression. In 1810, wages were cut by half their previous level. Furthermore, the shortage of bread exacerbated people’s unemployment as famine began to take hold of the territory after the poor harvests from the

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<sup>41</sup> De Meeüs, *History of the Belgians*, 259

<sup>42</sup> Cook, *Belgium*, 52; De Meeüs, *History of the Belgians*, 259.

<sup>43</sup> De Meeüs, *History of the Belgians*, 260.

<sup>44</sup> Cook, *Belgium*, 52.

<sup>45</sup> De Meeüs, *History of the Belgians*, 260.

previous season. The masses slowly lost faith in the French régime but did so under a combination of economic well-being, religious persecution, and conscription.

In 1809, there was a resurgence of the issue over religious autonomy, specifically the Catholic Church. In that year, Napoleon detained Pope Pius VII, much to the enmity and worry of the Catholic population in Belgium. Belgians believed this act demonstrated Napoleon's irreverence for religion and reawakened visions of anticlericalism during the Revolutionary governments of France. Their fears were realized during 1811 when Napoleon demanded a universal Catholic catechism. Napoleon called for the National Council in Belgium to take up the issue of a universal Catholic catechism. The Council was to reorganize the Church and take up issues to modernize it by bringing it in unison with ideas and principles of the Revolution and Napoleonic régime.<sup>46</sup> Bishops Hirn of Tournai and de Broglie of Ghent opposed Napoleon's orders. Their resistance was not founded on anything particularly Belgian but rested upon their concern over the amount of influence a secular government could have over the government of the Church.<sup>47</sup> Although the Belgian clergy was anti-Revolutionary, it was not anti-French as demonstrated by their general pacification after the issuance of the Concordat.<sup>48</sup> But the actions Napoleon took against the Church were interpreted as attacks upon the sovereignty and very existence of the Church. Opponents to Napoleon were removed and either sent into exile, imprisoned, or sent to compulsory military service where most of them died in Russia.<sup>49</sup> Napoleon replaced these individuals with appointed bishops and priests, but these appointments were rejected by the majority of the parishioners and clergy.<sup>50</sup> Napoleon's aims at subjugating the Church's

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<sup>46</sup> Roegiers and van Sas, "Revolution in the North and South," 295.

<sup>47</sup> De Meeüs, *History of the Belgians*, 256.

<sup>48</sup> Kossman, *The Low Countries*, 81.

<sup>49</sup> Cook, *Belgium*, 51.

<sup>50</sup> Roegiers and van Sas, "Revolution in the North and South," 295-296.

power to his rule had enflamed many of the loyal Catholics within Belgium. They began to see these attacks as coordinated efforts to remove God from their daily lives.

Napoleon's religious opponents were not the only ones thrown into compulsory military service. Napoleon's drive to invade Russia demanded a number of troops never seen before on the European continent. The only means to reach that threshold was conscription. Belgium provided a considerable amount of troops to Napoleon in 1810, approximately 160,000 Belgians. The total Belgian obligation for the army during the Napoleonic Wars equated to 216,111 men or 6.12 percent of the total Belgian population. Of those 216,111 soldiers, 79,000 men were casualties of war, equivalent to 35% of all conscriptions.<sup>51</sup> These numbers demonstrated the extraction of Belgium's human resources. The conscripts served Napoleon and the imperial aims all in the name of France, not Belgium. Such conscription created strains on families and communities which were only intensified after the blunders and massive levels of deaths during the Russian campaign. With such large numbers of casualties, the Belgian populace could easily be affected by Napoleon's conscription policy and place a face with his "death marches." Seeing Napoleon's aims, Belgium had reverted back to its level of resistance before Napoleon's rise to power at the turn of the century.

## **Conclusion**

After the failure of the Russian campaign, Belgian support for the Napoleonic régime was close to nonexistent. Religion became an important variable again with the masses. The economy was unstable and the benefits of industrialization had become sporadic. Famine and unemployment factored into people's perceptions of the French

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<sup>51</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 82.

Empire. Conscription was an onus that brought about death and no glory or promises of peace. French colonization had taken its toll upon the population. When the Allies entered Belgium in 1814, there was no resistance and many proclaimed the Allies as liberators. Equally so and to the anger of the Allies, Belgians did not rise up against Napoleon as did other areas ahead of the Allies' advances. Thus Belgian passiveness reemerged with their disenfranchisement with Napoleonic policies after the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their great hope had dissipated along with the existence of "their French Empire" from 1801-1812, an empire Belgians supported and from which they reaped bountiful benefits. The argument can be made that the Belgians supported Napoleon because they felt that Napoleon could provide a stable, more prosperous society, with or without adequate Belgian representation in the government. Belgium had rallied to Napoleon's government and fully participated in it economically, militarily, and politically. But the Empire's demise in Belgium occurred due to the variables of economics, conscription, and religion. These three variables influenced the many differing interests to end their support for the régime. But each interest did so on its own accord and for separate reasons. Therefore, the idea of Belgian nationalism as a force against the Empire is minimal at best. Belgians abandoned the Empire on the basis of personal beliefs and lack of prosperity and not a sense of the existence of a national people. The concerns of the people were stability in their everyday lives, the autonomy of the Church, and the economic prosperity of their country. They supported the Empire for as long as they could benefit from it.

## CHAPTER II: THE NETHERLANDS

The story of the Netherlands through the French and Napoleonic régimes was volatile, disobliging, and economically and financially depressive. Politically, the Netherlands attempted to institute a stable democracy that ended with French intervention in order to serve Napoleon's interests and demands. Until the annexation of the Netherlands in 1810, Dutch governments were, in Napoleon's and France's eyes, incapable of administering the country. Before making his brother King of Holland, Napoleon explained to Louis that "Holland owes her existence to France...protect her laws and liberties, but never cease to be French."<sup>52</sup> For Napoleon, Dutch governments could not effectively administer their country given the institutions Napoleon had created for them. The country was entrenched into highly partisan debates between the political and economic factions that existed within the Netherlands. These factions led to the government remaining inactive and ineffective. The government was meant to extract resources and use the Netherlands as a launching pad for military offenses into Germany and a possible invasion of Britain. The Netherlands were meant to act as a loyal French colony. When the Dutch could not achieve this, Napoleon intervened so that his goals could be met. The greatest impact of the ineffectiveness in government was on the national finances which were at the root of all of Napoleon's aims for the country. Inadequate administration of Dutch finances led to Napoleon's continual disappointment and anger with the Dutch not fulfilling his demands. Furthermore, the Continental System's by-product in the Netherlands halted the Dutch economy in almost

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<sup>52</sup> Owen Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms* (New York: The Free Press, 1965), 133.

every sector in order to economically bring Britain to its knees. Throughout the Napoleonic Era, economic and financial hardships as well as seizing the government from Dutch hands created an antagonistic relationship between the Dutch and Napoleon which only led to Napoleon's further distrust and exploitation of the Dutch. Even though the Dutch never completely supported the French régime, the masses never rose up or outright resisted the régime. Napoleon's failure to pacify and convince the Dutch was in large part due to Napoleon's aims for the area as well as the impact on the Dutch people's daily lives. Unlike their Belgian counterparts, the Dutch substantially suffered under the Napoleonic régime while causing Napoleon never able to pacify them and incorporate them into the French Empire.

## **The Revolutionary Netherlands**

The Netherlands in the 18<sup>th</sup> century participated in its own "Great Experiment" by shifting its government from monarchy to democracy. With the expulsion of the monarchy there came a division within the Patriots who ousted the royal family, the House of Orange. The true test did not lie in transforming the structure of government to be based upon the public's will but how that structure would take form within the Netherlands. The Patriots became embroiled in a debate between a federal or unitary approach to a republican Dutch government. A Dutchman commented to the French emissary at The Hague, Noël Saéz, in 1795 that "there had been less of a gulf to fill between monarchism and republicanism in France than exists here between federalism and unity."<sup>53</sup> This political choice is similar to the division in the United States between those wanting power to rest largely with the states

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<sup>53</sup> R.R. Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760-1800* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 193.

or those advocating a large-encompassing national government. While similar, the Dutch debate was different than the debate between Federalists and Anti-Federalists in the United States. In the Netherlands, the debate was over a federalist system similar to that of the United States with a central government that dealt with foreign policy. It also included provincial governments that largely decided issues of everyday life. The unitary mindset in the Netherlands related to the authority that resided within the French National Assembly. Unitarists believed that to continue on as a European influence throughout the continent and world, they would need a strong, centralized government. The debate over the structure of a democratic government created an impassible impediment to a true, sustaining government in the Netherlands.

In combination with the continuing strains between religious factions and the urban/rural conflicts, some form of a synthesis became impossible in the Netherlands.<sup>54</sup> The old cleavages that existed began to align themselves with either the Federalist or Unitarist approaches throughout 1795 and 1796. The Unitarist approach was the most radical and many scholars equate it much more closely to what occurred in France.<sup>55</sup> The creation of a single, all-powerful, unified government would strip away the authority of the entrenched provincial patricians who were seen by Unitarists as at the root cause of the ineffectiveness and corruption of government. Samuel Iperusz Wiselius, a Unitarist Patriot, described the current provincial system as an “odious system of federalism; the provincial assemblies [which are] wet-nurses of self-interest and ambition; the nests from which the aristocracy have been hatched.”<sup>56</sup> Gogel, who would later come to serve the French as the

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<sup>54</sup> E.H. Kossman, *The Low Countries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 83

<sup>55</sup> Scholars such as R.R. Palmer and Simon Schama state that the political ideological lines are distinctly drawn; Democrats are considered Unitarists and Conservatives are considered Federalists

<sup>56</sup> Simon Schama, *Patriots and Liberators: Revolution in the Netherlands 1780-1813* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1977), 216.

Finance Minister in the Netherlands, believed that if these provincial powers were not subjugated by the national representative government, the national government would be powerless to these local lords. In time, these local lords would then conceivably bring about another Stadholder, the hereditary head of state in the Netherlands prior to the Revolution, to sit in power over all the provinces. But a single-bodied national government that was meant to curb oligarchic families' powers in the provinces was simply one principle the Unitarists stood upon. They sought many reforms such as a national fiscal system and consolidating the debt (which favored the province of Holland), separation of Church and State, and the abolition of the slave trade.<sup>57</sup> Most importantly, and very much in conflict with the Federalist mindset, the Unitarists saw the Revolution as the opportunity to provide equal rights for all of its citizens. The Unitarist believed that a unitary state "meant that sovereignty of the people, one and indivisible, which in turn was a legalistic way of saying that neither family, nor church, nor estate, nor town council, nor provincial assembly possessed any public power in its own right."<sup>58</sup> Nothing short of equality for all and the full eradication of the *ancien régime* including the provincial powers would suffice the Unitarists. It became evident that the intensely radical debate between the two factions created an environment that was unlikely to yield a compromise.

While allied to overthrow the House of Orange and their government during the 1790's, the opposite Patriot faction, the Federalists, stood in philosophical difference to the Unitarists. These conservatives saw themselves as the natural successors to the Orangists. They, along with Unitarists and the revolutionaries in France, promoted the ideal that merit should decide an individual's competency and not social rank or birth. But to these Dutch

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<sup>57</sup> Alexander Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 63.

<sup>58</sup> Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution*, 194.

conservatives, the thought of the general population being given the right to vote for their elected officials with no stipulations was too radical and empowering of the masses.<sup>59</sup> Such power to decide who would rule could not be in the hands of individuals who did not understand such complex and difficult issues pertaining to government. Federalists believed that voting rights should be given to men who were educated and involved in public affairs to ensure against “unrestrained democracy.” To conservatives, the business of the revolution was serious, complex work that revolutionaries were not prepared to handle.<sup>60</sup> But conservatives endorsed the need for reform, even within their own ranks such as the authority of provincial governments, various societies which many of them belonged to, and the basic national administrative machinery that proved to be ineffective. Conservatives were moderates in the sense that they fought against a government based on inheritance and supported one of merit. But they placed the brakes on how far political enfranchisement went, a kind of “evolution, not revolution” manner of thinking. Even the United Committee of Revolution in the Netherlands stated that “quiet and order were the characteristics of the true popular revolt,” resembling the views of Bonaparte.<sup>61</sup> The debate raged in what was considered France’s first “sister republic,” and in being so, France would come to intervene and force its will on how it thought the democratic Dutch government should be structured.

It is important to discuss this foundation because it underpins the ineffectiveness of the republican government to address the issues of the country which was why the Netherlands never became incorporated into the Empire and why the Empire failed in the Netherlands. The debate between the Unitarists and Federalists gave way to no

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<sup>59</sup> March 1795, the electorate was all men above the age of 20 who had to take an oath against the former régime; Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 63.

<sup>60</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 215, 251.

<sup>61</sup> Kossman, *The Low Countries*, 85.

compromise, even when moderate options were set before both sides. Without a constitution and government, the Republic's financial, economic, and war issues could not be addressed. Those issues were to be addressed in order for the Netherlands to adequately meet Bonaparte's demands as he moved forward in conquering and colonizing Europe in the name of France. The Batavian Republic was held hostage by this divisive debate.

The Dutch republic became the first sister Republic and major ally to France in May of 1795. In the treaty, the French recognized the Dutch government while the Dutch ceded territory to the French and financed the existence of 25,000 French troops in the Netherlands.<sup>62</sup> The Dutch republic became of strategic military importance for France. Initially, the Dutch republic was to serve as a defensive buffer for France against Prussia and northern amphibious landings from Britain and to serve as protection for the newly annexed territory of Belgium from any Austrian revivals. But the end of the First Coalition brought about a different mindset of how the Netherlands could be used to serve France. Austria had been defeated, Catherine the Great, Tsarina of Russia, had passed away, and France faced only one enemy at the end of 1796, Britain. The French saw an opportunity to take advantage of Dutch naval power in turning France and its allies' attention toward defeating Britain.<sup>63</sup> The Netherlands was seen as a factory for producing war ships and naval armaments to be used in the war against Britain. The failure of the Dutch Batavian constitution complicated the French military strategy as the unresolved political situation stood as an impediment.

Prior to the drafting and vote on the Constitution, the French did not openly endorse the Federalists or the Unitarists. That was not to say that they did not have reservations. To the French, the Unitarists reminded them of the radical and truculent sans-

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<sup>62</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 62.

<sup>63</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 275-278.

culottes.<sup>64</sup> The memory of the sans-culottes's virulent behavior, striking fear in elected officials to do their will, was still fresh in the minds of the top French officials. These Unitarists in the Netherlands were artisans and shopkeepers just like the sans-culottes. The French official in the Netherlands, Noël Saéz, reported the political situation back to Paris after the plebiscite on the constitution overwhelmingly failed. He wrote to the Directory in February 1797 that "the federalists are much less dangerous than the ultra-revolutionaries whose system is one of violence and murder."<sup>65</sup> But the political opinions of the Unitarists coincided more with the style of government in France which would allow the French to best utilize the Netherlands and its resources. A centralized, over-arching national government would be more efficient and easier to work with in waging a war against Britain. A Federalist system could complicate matters of raising troops and coordinating a naval offensive against the British because it would continue to give substantial power to the provinces. While they were conservative in nature, their belief in the structure of government would make it difficult to raise and coordinate troops in invading Ireland in late 1797.<sup>66</sup>

Between August 1797 and January 1798, the Second National Assembly in the Netherlands stood at a standstill with redrafting a new constitution because many of the same disagreements and concerns that had caused the previous drafted constitution to fail had arisen again. Still without a constitution, the legitimacy of the Assembly stood only on the revolutionary grounds it was founded on. In the Second Assembly, there were fewer moderates and more Unitarists but no side had a clear majority in order to formulate a

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<sup>64</sup> Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution*, 192.

<sup>65</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 275.

<sup>66</sup> After the Coup of Fructidor (4 September 1797), Paul François Jean Nicolas, vicomte de Barras, and Jean-François Reubell followed an aggressive expansionist policy that included reintroducing plans to invade Ireland; Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 279.

constitution.<sup>67</sup> While the debate raged on, the Dutch navy suffered a tremendous loss to the British at Camperdown in October 1797. For the public, moderates, who were in power, were over eager and premature to launch the fleet while provincial powers did not act in unison for the war cause.<sup>68</sup> Such a stunning blow to the Batavian Republic demonstrated to the nation the need for a unified and efficient government. The shift reached its climax on 19 January when the Assembly voted eighty-six to twenty-four to support a proposal for an interim executive government, fitting the Unitarist mold. The reversal of power had almost come full circle from 1796 when it was the Federalists with the overwhelming majority over the Unitarists.<sup>69</sup> With the replacement of Noël Saéz with Charles-François Delacroix, an old Jacobin, and Talleyrand's ascendance to Foreign Minister of France, the French were sending messages to the Dutch that the French supported any Dutch government that could act in a manner that was best for the war effort against Britain, behind it all, serving France's interests.<sup>70</sup> That government was a Unitarist government. Political clubs and radicals mobilized to push the Assembly towards a strong, central government. With a constitution in hand that had French and Dutch input as well as the blessing from Barras and the Directory, Delacroix moved to have the Assembly legitimize the constitution.

The "legal" means of codifying the constitution took place as a coup on Monday, 22 January 1798. On the night before, Unitarists leaders agreed to the constitution Delacroix laid before them. A few members of the Assembly heard about the upcoming events so they had proceeded to enter the Assembly the morning of the 22<sup>nd</sup>. The representatives were met at the door by French soldiers, forbidden to enter, and escorted to an anteroom. In all, twenty-two Federalists were purged from the Assembly. The rest of Assembly walked

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<sup>67</sup> Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution*, 199

<sup>68</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 292; Palmer, *The Age of Revolution* 200

<sup>69</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 306.

<sup>70</sup> Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution*, 200.

down the streets lined with troops to the hall. Assemblymen had no choice but to obey the order to convene in the hall. The troops also guarded against any potential outside disturbances that could affect the proceedings. In the hall, the Unitarists took Delacroix's draft constitution a step further. The Assembly approved more direct elections than those that occurred in France and a system for amendments to the Constitution by popular vote.<sup>71</sup> The constitution resembled the French Constitution of 1795. The Netherlands was reorganized into eight departments and granted male suffrage. Finally, the Netherlands had a constitution, and the French had a government that could cooperate and begin the business of extracting resources from the Republic for the benefit and usage of French goals.

The plebiscite on the constitution was passed overwhelmingly, in large part due to the exclusion of Orangists and Federalists. 165,520 Dutchmen, representing 40 per cent of the total male population, voted on the plebiscite with only 11,597 voting against the plebiscite.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, the vote demonstrated that the population had been in stronger support of the radical, Unitarist view than that of the Federalists' view. The French had intervened to instill political stability that was in favor of a unitary government that could efficiently and effectively act, and, in the case of France, act in accordance with their military strategy against the British. All fears subsided in June 1798 when moderate Patriots, after a military *coup d'état*, were elected into the Assembly and upheld the unitary government after the radicals were forcibly removed.<sup>73</sup> The new calm and stability would be short lived. Two key factions were not supportive of Delacroix's draft or what the final result became. Dutch financiers as well as the navy withheld their support for the new government.<sup>74</sup> They were not alone in their dissatisfaction and unsupportive position for the new government. After a

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<sup>71</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 309.

<sup>72</sup> Kossman, *The Low Countries*, 91.

<sup>73</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 63-64.

<sup>74</sup> Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution*, 203; Kossman, *The Low Countries*, 92.

new constitution and several political upheavals, many Batavians abandoned politics and government altogether.<sup>75</sup> As the political mindset in France shifted away from the Directory and “over-democratization” and with the rise of a general recently greeted home as a hero from Egypt, the new government would be victim to a recalibration that served the interests of France’s all encompassing war machine.

## **The Republic’s Failure**

Prior to the Coup of Brumaire, the Batavian Republic strained relations with their republican French allies. From 1798 to 1801, there seems to be a rising sense of Dutch nationalism in the sense that they no longer wished to be the front line and primary tool used for either side in the Anglo-French war. Many Dutch leaders, such as two of the executive directors Anthonie van Haersolte and Augustijn Besier, wished to distance themselves from their republican allies.<sup>76</sup> They recognized themselves as the sacrificial arm of the French army instead of a partner in a coalition. While they reached out to the British for assistance in breaking away from the French, the Dutch knew the British would attempt to use the Netherlands as a landing post for sending troops over to the continent. The Anglo-Russian invasion and political coup was a terrible blunder receiving little support even from Orangists inhabitants. After this event, the French Directory mistrusted the Dutch, and the alliance was strained worse than before. But the Coup of Brumaire brought about a new French régime and philosophy on government.

1801 brought about another coup in the Netherlands. Napoleon Bonaparte represented a shift from strong and complex legislatures to efficient and decisive executives.

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<sup>75</sup> J. Roegiers and N.C.F van Sas, “Revolution in the North and South, 1780-1830,” ed. J.C.H. Blom and E. Lamberts, *History of the Low Countries* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999), 278-279.

<sup>76</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 397.

Napoleon did not simply make changes to the France's structure of government. He turned his and France's attention to the Batavian Republic. Just as the Directory was inherently flawed and failed in France according to Napoleon, the Netherlands's government resulted in the same. For Napoleon, the Dutch government had failed to stop the importation of British goods and to successfully address the financial problems in the Netherlands. Only a strong executive with the approval of an efficient and non-radical legislature could achieve Napoleon's aims.<sup>77</sup> Such a government would also diminish the detrimental effects of the entrenched political factions. Just as Delacroix had in 1798, Sémonville, the French ambassador to the Netherlands, gained the support of the Dutch Directors for a new constitution approved by Talleyrand. But in September 1801, the legislature was against the new structure. Their rejection fell short of anything meaningful as the French army disbanded the Assembly. Bonaparte would not allow for a legislature to stand against necessary reforms, reforms that were meant to provide a government to meet his aims. The new government structure of the Batavian Republic included twelve regents, the Regency of State, who initiated legislation and nominated officials who also chose thirty-five individuals to construct an assembly with minimal powers.<sup>78</sup> This constitution was much less democratic as it focused power within the executives. The constitution was more federalist in nature which caused concern to financial Unitarists like Gogel who would become the Minister of Finances in Napoleon's Kingdom of Holland. Gogel saw the decentralization of the debt as a way to re-empower the provincial aristocracy. Schimmelpenninck, the soon to be right-hand man of Bonaparte's in the Batavian Republic, wrote to Gogel to express his support for a unified state and the necessity to solve the Republic's financial crisis. This correspondence began an important relationship that Bonaparte would come to use to

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<sup>77</sup> Kossman, *The Low Countries*, 93.

<sup>78</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 65.

administer the Netherlands to effectively extract the resources he need to wage war in Europe.

Bonaparte was in desperate need of a government with an individual at its head who could stop the squabbling between the various factions in the Batavian Republic and could effectively administer the country. In the Netherlands, Schimmelpenninck understood that the issues of the Republic could only be resolved by a more centralized government. Schimmelpenninck also shared Bonaparte's antagonism towards popular sovereignty and support for a more controlled electorate, what Americans could relate to as an "enlightened electorate." But for these two men, that controlled electorate was more exclusive than the electorate that had previously existed in the Batavian Republic. Thus Schimmelpenninck, the quintessential moderate Federalist in 1796, found an ally in Bonaparte to shift the pendulum of the Batavian Republic's mindset back to a more moderately conservative approach to the structure of government. Orangists and aristocrats were once again allowed to serve in the government while the French were weary of Patriot, mostly Unitarist, participation. Gogel stated that in the new constitution "the great republican principle is money – in the present [1798 constitution] it is ability, service, and virtue."<sup>79</sup> Gogel was most likely correct in Bonaparte's intentions. Bonaparte believed this constitution to be a remedy for the failure of the former Batavian governments. Those governments had been inadequate in dealing with state issues as national finances and participation with France in its war efforts. This coup was able to be achieved relatively smoothly because of the disenfranchisement of the Dutch masses. They were uninterested in Dutch politics because they did not see the value in the Dutch government. For them, the government had failed to address the country's concerns and solve its problems.

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<sup>79</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 415-418.

The plebiscite on the new constitution had abysmal numbers of voter turnout compared to the last plebiscite. In 1801, only 60,000 Dutchmen voted out of the possible 400,000.<sup>80</sup> The Dutch had become disinterested in the politics of their country. Many reasons could be given for such a shift, but the most notable would be because of the horrendous economic and financial state of the Netherlands which will be later discussed. While in modern elections, a poorly performing economy typically mobilizes the masses to participate in the election, the Dutch were indifferent and believed that there was no one that could not solve the Republic's grave issues. Part of the apathy was due to the fact that through elections and on the principle of democracy, Dutchmen were expected to bring about prosperity and a certain pride back to the country. They failed. There were no monarchs to blame, no fingers pointing at an aristocracy bent on control, only elected men who did little if anything to salvage the country's finances and economy. Each candidate promised that, if elected, they would advocate for their form of government and their approach in solving the financial and economic crises. But the Assembly would enter into debates that would stall progress, and if a consensus was reached, there was no executive to enact the law or the population would demand for the removal of the perceived inactive legislators. With a distant and disconnected population and powerful executive, Bonaparte could enact the policies he wanted in the Batavian Republic so that it acted in the manner he deemed necessary to feed the French war machine. Bonaparte treated the Republic as an incompetent colony that would be utilized for the sole benefit of France by strictly adhering to Bonaparte's outline for the Batavian government.

The French's switch in favor from Unitarists to Federalists demonstrated that the French were not interested in the principles government, only a government that would

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<sup>80</sup> Kossman, *The Low Countries*, 93.

direct Dutch resources and attention in completing France's European goals. Initially, the French supported a Unitarist constitution because of the consolidation of authority within a legislature that had overarching powers throughout the country. But the individuals who were Unitarists caused concern. They were radicals who believed in an immense level of political enfranchisement and were against the landowning class and aristocrats. As mentioned earlier, they were reminiscent of the sans-culottes back in Paris. Unitarists in the Batavian Republic were unreliable and their actions potentially unpredictable. As the temperament in France towards democracy changed during the Coup of Brumaire, Bonaparte and France shifted their support more towards conservatives, many of whom were Federalists. For Bonaparte, conservatives embodied stability, reliability, and efficiency in government. While their form of government had a decentralized nature to it, Bonaparte could disregard that structure and form his own because of the lack of interest in the government from the public's perspective.

Barring any catastrophe, Bonaparte could "play democracy" in the Batavian Republic in order to give the appearance of legality to the initiatives he deemed necessary to achieve his goals. Democracy and the bourgeoisie were of secondary concern, evident in Bonaparte reaching out to Dutch aristocrats and Orangists who were formally excluded from the political process in the Batavian Republic. Therefore, Stuart Woolf's thesis that Bonaparte attempted to benevolently integrate Europe did not hold for the Netherlands. Bonaparte was not interested in creating a single European state based upon various French Revolutionary principles. Bonaparte simply wanted a Dutch government that could provide the necessary resources so that he could complete his goals. Bonaparte's new Batavian government now was an instrument for executing Napoleonic policies, and those policies were not always for benefit of the Netherlands but rather of France. The Dutch

government would only continue to become more centralized and less democratized in order to meet Bonaparte's ever-growing demands.

## **Last Chance at Republican Government**

After the title of Emperor was bestowed upon Napoleon in May 1804, Napoleon again prepared for war. His preparations refocused his attention on the inefficiencies in the Batavian Republic. The Regency of State consisting of twelve individuals proved to be a government of inaction. For Sémonville, the government's inaction was the signal of the success of the new constitution of 1801. The republican government was weak, divided, and non-collaborative with their French allies so much that the republic was not of any concern for the Empire.<sup>81</sup> While in 1801 this may have been the aim in order to dissuade any uprising or unified Dutch sentiment, the republican government in 1804 served to meet none of Napoleon's aims. Napoleon still feared that the Dutch might shift their support to the British, but how that fear was quelled the government was to take on a different form of a more centralized government vested in a loyal and capable steward so that it could serve Napoleon's most recent aims. Napoleon summoned Schimmelpenninck to stand before the Emperor and report on the state of the Batavian Republic. But Napoleon was interested more in the competency of the man than his words. Schimmelpenninck was to be the means to Napoleon's goals of a more effective and efficient Batavian government that could utilize Dutch resources to serve Napoleon's interests.

Napoleon had set the wheels of constitutional change in motion. He requested proposals for changes to the constitution in the autumn of 1804.<sup>82</sup> Sémonville originated the

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<sup>81</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 455.

<sup>82</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 459.

idea of the Grand Pensionary and who should fill the role of Grand Pensionary, Schimmelpenninck.<sup>83</sup> The title of Grand Pensionary was meant to be nostalgic for the Dutch. The title was used during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in the United Provinces. The individual who held that seat was a civil servant of the major landowners and exercised full political power when there was not a stadholder. Schimmelpenninck was nominated to the position in March of 1805. The Republic's decline in electoral participation continued as voter turnout reached only about four percent for the election of Schimmelpenninck, the lowest it had ever been for the Republic.<sup>84</sup> The public was disinterested in Napoleon's governments and actions within the Republic. Such disinterest allowed Napoleon to make changes without resistance or truly active participation outside of a few key players. The people's passive acceptance of the new government sent a message to Napoleon that he misinterpreted as the Dutch were disinterested and non-reactionary to Napoleon's intervention into their government. The masses did not participate because they lost faith in government, not because they were apathetically accepting of Napoleon's changes.

Schimmelpenninck saw his role in a more paternal, presidential manner. He believed the executive had to hold broad reaching powers in order to amend the financial and economic conditions of the republic. He also wished to be seen as the centralizing individual for all political factions.<sup>85</sup> Centralization effectively took place under Schimmelpenninck's one year of power. The national government exerted more power over the departments by constituting national regulations and procedures, mandating that any local taxes must be approved by the national government, and the national government

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<sup>83</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 460.

<sup>84</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 67.

<sup>85</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 466.

could dismiss and nominate local officials.<sup>86</sup> But the most effective change Schimmelpenninck was able to bring about was the appointment of Gogel as Finance Minister. As what will later be discussed, Gogel's reforms under the Grand Pensionary gave the republic and later kingdom a footing for national finances. Gogel was also artful in how he went about fixing the fiscal crisis in the Republic. Gogel never included a tax on merchants within his reforms which gave him support in the maritime departments which typically had higher levels of radical Patriots. In doing this, he could better pacify the merchants who were already angered at Napoleon's attempts to control trade. His political bias was also evident in issuing a national tax which resulted in stripping power away from the provincial oligarchs.<sup>87</sup> Schimmelpenninck was to bring to the Batavian Republic an efficient government. Talleyrand through the eyes of the Empire saw Schimmelpenninck's role in the Batavian Republic as "to mobilize the whole of its naval and military forces in the next phase of the life and death struggle with Britain."<sup>88</sup> Napoleon and his régime saw in the Batavian Republic a country of resources that France could extract and utilize to the Empire's benefit. Even with Napoleon's overwhelming confidence and support in Schimmelpenninck, he was simply the instrument to reach the goal of finally fully utilizing Dutch resources to defeat Britain. The idea of a sister republic that embodied many of the virtues that had arisen from the French Revolution was not prevalent in the minds of Napoleon and Talleyrand. Spreading liberty and republicanism was a distant thought compared to the necessity of mobilizing the resources of the Batavian Republic for war. The Republic stood as a colony of resources for France.

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<sup>86</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 66.

<sup>87</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 67

<sup>88</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 466

The end of the Grand Pensionary government was a result of the deterioration of Schimmelpenninck's health. After Napoleon's victory at Austerlitz, further European territories were annexed to the Empire according to the Treaty of Pressburg. The Batavian Republic became fearful of the possibility of annexation, especially with the presence of Louis Bonaparte as commander of the Armée du Nord in the Batavian Republic.<sup>89</sup> There were also rumors of British influence in close proximity to the Grand Pensionary. Rumors began again of a possible British invasion with the help of Dutch leaders. In return, the Republic would be granted complete sovereignty and become allies with Britain against France. Whether Napoleon fully believed these rumors, he did recognize Schimmelpenninck's deteriorating health. The position of Grand Pensionary was created strictly for Schimmelpenninck, and the government was built around him. Napoleon had complete faith in Schimmelpenninck at the onset of the government, and Schimmelpenninck was loyal to Napoleon. But just as Schimmelpenninck was placed into power to extract the resources from the Republic, he was to be removed because of his deteriorating eyesight and the effect it would have on his ability to gather resources for Napoleon's war machine. The legislature along with other government officials debated how they saw their future in the Empire after knowing Napoleon's wishes to abolish Schimmelpenninck's government. The result of their discussions was to make concessions to Napoleon in order to keep "the name of Holland on the map of Europe."<sup>90</sup> But there were dissenters, such as the political economist Johannes Goldberg, who believed annexation was a future inevitability. The convening body of legislators and officials should request annexation in order to salvage their economy. Within the Empire, the Dutch would return to prosperity and prominence under the direct protection of the Empire. He was in the small minority. A delegation of

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<sup>89</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 481-482.

<sup>90</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 483.

officials carrying the wishes of the majority of Dutch leaders left the Republic to travel to St. Cloud. After a treaty written by Talleyrand, the delegation returned to the Netherlands with a new government in hand accompanied with a king in Louis Bonaparte.

### **Kingdom of Holland: Reintroduction of Monarchy**

The creation of the Kingdom of Holland initially served two purposes. First, Napoleon believed he could set in place a king, his brother Louis, who would be able to mobilize the Netherlands for war and to support the Empire. Second, Napoleon did not wish to disrupt the fragile peace of Europe. Britain was open to peace talks, and Prussia held no purpose to declare war on France. If the Netherlands were annexed, any peace with Britain would be undone, and the Prussians would see the act as another encroachment from Napoleon and France to swallow Europe whole.<sup>91</sup> Napoleon was not prepared to enter into another war just yet. The dawning of the Kingdom was met with much enthusiasm from Napoleon and much promise for the Netherlands' relationship with the Empire. Louis's job was simple. He was to be a Frenchman in a Dutch world, sent there to set the Netherlands into proper accordance with the Empire, and most of all, not to become independent minded, as some felt Schimmelpenninck had. The last of these responsibilities was already placed into question when Louis reached the Dutch border. There, Louis wrote in his memoirs that he removed his French cockade for a Dutch cockade.<sup>92</sup> Louis's responsiveness to the Dutch people was apparent throughout his reign. Upon entering The Hague, he proclaimed to the Dutch "Your principles are mine," "...You have the right to a Dutch King," and "...From this day begins the true independence of the United

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<sup>91</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 68.

<sup>92</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 489.

Provinces.”<sup>93</sup> Louis’s ministers also took on a Dutch-look. To the surprise of his brother, Louis mostly chose Dutch officials as his ministers, not Frenchmen. Many of these individuals were “carry-overs” from Schimmelpenninck’s government. Most influential was Gogel who retained his position of Minister of Finance along with other Batavian republicans.<sup>94</sup> Napoleon demanded that Louis choose a Frenchman for Minister of War, but Louis later replaced Napoleon’s French choice with Dutch General Hogendorp.<sup>95</sup> Louis created concern back in Paris about his reign from the beginning. Napoleon assumed that the fears of a Dutch identity and revolt would now subside with Louis at the helm. Instead, Napoleon received a Bonaparte fully embracing the Dutch culture and serving its various political factions.

Louis continued the emperor’s practice of embracing the conservative order. He reached out to the old nobility by inviting about fifty of them to have an audience with him. He also acted to gain the loyalty of another subset Orangist loyalty, the navy. Louis personally traveled to harbors and naval yards to address concerns and demonstrate how he saw himself as King of Holland. These trips were more successful than even Louis had hoped for.<sup>96</sup> Louis supported his brother’s purpose in continually centralizing the Dutch state. By the same token, he was able to empower local conservatives. Conservative aristocrats held a majority in Louis’s Council of State and many became heads of various departments. These individuals supported Louis’s shift towards efficiency in government. And with efficiency came even greater centralization. The local government law of 1807 finalized the shift toward a centralized government. The law ended provincial autonomy by instituting *landrosts*, equivalent to French prefects, who each monitored one of eleven

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<sup>93</sup> Connelly, *Napoleon’s Satellite Kingdoms*, 134.

<sup>94</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 60; Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 491.

<sup>95</sup> Connelly, *Napoleon’s Satellite Kingdoms*, 134.

<sup>96</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 490-491.

departments. The departmental governments were hierarchical just as those in France with *drosts*, or sub-prefects, and mayors.<sup>97</sup>

A higher level of administrative competency was successfully achieved within the Kingdom of Holland, but it did not translate into efficient practices to raise troops, although that was the ostensible reason for centralization. The issue came to the forefront with Friedrich William III declaring what became the War of the Fourth Coalition on France in August of 1806. Napoleon demanded that Louis raise an army of 50,000 Dutchmen to battle the Prussians.<sup>98</sup> But Louis would not use his new found power within the centralized state. Louis, in an act of defiance and deference for Dutch culture, did not carry out any conscription laws in the Kingdom. He believed it to be beyond the Dutch culture and a hardship that was unnecessary and unwarranted. But Napoleon did not accept Louis's irreverence to Napoleon's demands. In 1807, Louis was able to come up with 20,000 of the 25,000 men Napoleon requested and did so according to Louis's terms. Napoleon was still yet to be satisfied. Napoleon could not understand the absence of a Dutch National Guard that could be call upon to protect the Netherlands against an invasion, most notably from the British. Louis complained that the Emperor utilized Louis more like a general in the French army than the King of Holland. Furthermore, Napoleon only allowed French generals full command of the Dutch armies, with the highest Dutch general serving simply as a division commander.<sup>99</sup> Louis was failing to complete his mission, to effectively and efficiently extract resources for the benefit of the Empire.

Napoleon's purpose for Louis and the Kingdom of Holland was apparent. Louis was to be a facilitator and administrator. Napoleon explained to Louis in a letter on 6

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<sup>97</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 68-69.

<sup>98</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 71.

<sup>99</sup> Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms*, 138-139.

September 1809 that “you are not a King and you have no idea how to be one... You have neither army nor navy and yet you pretend to be a free and independent state.”<sup>100</sup> As for the Kingdom, Napoleon distrusted its people. Napoleon justified keeping the Netherlands in a submissive state on the grounds that in the past, there were Dutch leaders who conspired with the British to rid the Netherlands of all French influence and control. Napoleon did not respect Dutch beliefs as an existing state nor truly take into consideration the perceptions and consent of the Dutch population. To Napoleon, the Dutch population was noncompliant and non-participatory in making the Empire succeed. The Netherlands simply existed to supply Napoleon and France with the necessary resources to continue to expand the Empire and benefit France. It took more than conscription or the non-existence of it to cause Napoleon to end Dutch independence. What broke the deal for Napoleon was the Kingdom’s non-participation in the Continental Blockade and how they failed to partake in the economic warfare against Britain.

## **Government and Economics**

The failures of the Netherlands’ multiple constitutions were largely due to their inability to craft a policy to fix their financial and economic crises. In many ways, the two were directly related to one another, but there is a separation. Prior to the Batavian Revolution of 1795, the Dutch finances were in dire straits and continued to be throughout Napoleon’s régime. While the economy of the Netherlands was stagnant or suffered minor recessions through the 1790’s, the conditions were not alarming enough to cause a panic until after Napoleon’s rise to power in France and the institution of the Continental System. The primary concerns of the Netherlands focused on their financial crisis. The first debate

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<sup>100</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 71.

over the Dutch finances came with the first attempt to create a constitution in 1796. At the center of the debate between the Federalists and Unitarists was the question of the Dutch national debt. Unitarists wished to see the establishment of a national fiscal system as well as the amalgamation of all provincial debts. Holland stood to benefit from this the most since the other provinces would be contributing a portion of their revenues while they had little or no debt.<sup>101</sup> Federalists wished to keep a decentralized state and not to take on the massive debt that had been accumulating within Holland over the previous decades. All the provinces minus Holland held a total debt of 155 million guilders while Holland alone owed 455 million guilders.<sup>102</sup> This fact created a great void that would not be able to be traversed with the drafting of the failed constitution of 1797. The Netherlands was in desperate need of financial and fiscal reforms. Within the same debate between centralization and federalism, the Federalists fought against a general tax system. Once again, the disparity was stark between Holland and the other provinces. Holland's taxes came to a sum of twenty-five guilders while other provinces like Gelderland and Drente simply totaled eight and five guilders respectively.<sup>103</sup> On 20 January 1797, the Assembly did an "about-face" and included a constitutional article on national funding. The vote was sixty to forty-five in favor of the Unitarists view of consolidating the debt into a national debt, with forty votes coming from Holland's representatives. This leads to a theory that many conservative patricians from the other provinces supported this Unitarist idea. The centralizing of all finances was important to create a national government. Any national government needed the power of the purse, and the creation of a national fiscal policy would give that power to the national assembly

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<sup>101</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 63.

<sup>102</sup> Kossman, *The Low Countries*, 88.

<sup>103</sup> Kossman, *The Low Countries*, 88-89.

and executive.<sup>104</sup> The resulting constitution of 1797 failed its plebiscite and the result was that the finances of the new Batavian Republic were still being held hostage. Political factions had only prolonged the financial problems of the Republic. Even prior to French intervention, the Dutch government had no resolution in sight to remedy both the political and financial questions that were so closely interlocked.

The French-influenced constitution of 1798 contained in it many of the ideals of a national government intervening into the Dutch economy. The constitution called for all feudal duties and guilds to be abolished and empowered the National Assembly to legislate direct taxes on the entire republic. Gogel was the Financial Minister at the time who lobbied the legislature to approve an increase in direct taxes as well as the creation of a tax-collecting bureaucracy.<sup>105</sup> While the measures were approved, they were never executed since the radicals were removed from the Assembly in June of 1798. The government continued to drift towards a more Federalist approach towards the government and the country's finances were hardly dealt with. From 1798-1801, the national debt continued to expand, making the financial status of the Batavian Republic that much more critical.

Bonaparte's rise to power brought a new government to the Batavian Republic. Gogel was retained as Schimmelpenninck's Finance Minister. Under Schimmelpenninck, the Batavian Republic took a much more centralized tone. With the more centralized state, Gogel was able institute many financial reforms. But the finances in 1804 and 1806 were worse than Gogel's previous attempt to remedy the crisis in 1798. Military and naval expenditures grew at an immense rate while the debt-service was almost unbearable for the Batavian Republic. The national debt had expanded from 760 million guilders in 1795 to

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<sup>104</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 265-266.

<sup>105</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 64.

1126 million in 1803.<sup>106</sup> The estimated interest payment on the debt for 1806 was thirty-five million guilders.<sup>107</sup>

Gogel's first concern in 1805 and 1806 just as it was in 1798 was to tackle tax reform. First, Gogel wished to alleviate the strains on the poorer classes. He abolished excise taxes on foodstuffs and increased taxes on the middle and upper classes beyond *ancien régime* levels. The increased taxes were luxury and prosperity taxes on such items as house servants, horses, and furniture. Gogel succeeded in increasing the yields on taxes from a projected 18 million to 47 million guilders in 1807.<sup>108</sup> Gogel also reformed the land tax by creating a Cadaster Commission to evaluate and fairly assess tax rates on land. This act coupled with ending provincial taxation can be seen as a direct attack on the ruling landed aristocracy. Gogel's aggressive taxation targeted the landed aristocracy, the former ruling parties within the provinces, to generate new revenue and subordinate them to the new government. Equally, Gogel did not propose any taxes on the merchant classes, demonstrating his bias towards Holland's predominant class.<sup>109</sup> Gogel's tax plan continued to divide the maritime and inland departments while he was Finance Minister during Schimmelpenninck's government and Louis's reign. Animosity and distrust remained evident between the two factions within the Batavian Republic and through the Kingdom and annexation of the Netherlands. In the end, his tax reform generated a total net revenue in direct and indirect taxes of 42,688,731 guilders, but as highlighted earlier, that amount barely covered the interest on the debt.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 65-66.

<sup>107</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 501.

<sup>108</sup> Kossman, *The Low Countries*, 95.

<sup>109</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 67.

<sup>110</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 509.

1806 brought about two great changes to the Netherlands. First, Louis Bonaparte was crowned King of the Kingdom of Holland. More importantly economically, Napoleon issued the Berlin Decrees which instituted the Continental Blockade. Such laws were not foreign to the Dutch. Between 1793 and Brumaire, nine custom laws were issued with another seventeen before the 1806 Blockade.<sup>111</sup> Johannes Goldberg, a Dutch political economist who later advocated for annexation in 1806, traveled the Republic in 1800 and found that industries dependent upon a strong merchant economy such as sugar, tobacco, and shipbuilding were in steep decline. He equated the result to this decline as from the war and continual political instability in the Republic.<sup>112</sup> Within a four year span from 1805-1809, maritime traffic entering the Netherlands plummeted from 2700 vessels annually to 259.<sup>113</sup> The public in certain regions, typically within the maritime provinces, felt the economic downturn. In Leiden, one in every four or five received public assistance.<sup>114</sup> For a merchant country, this decrease in traffic truly hit at the heart of the merchant industries. Maritime industries such as tanning, milling, oil-pressing, and brewing experienced declines as individuals in those fields resorted to vagrancy and beggary in coastal towns.<sup>115</sup> But merchants were adaptive. Some merchants were able to remain in business and sometimes even turn a profit. While there were differences between the commodities, the Continental System was not immensely detrimental to the economy initially. Between 1803 and 1809, trade was reduced by thirty percent.<sup>116</sup> While not a small percent, it was not an economically devastating number. Traders were able to respond to the lack of enforcement from Louis's

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<sup>111</sup> Stuart Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 140.

<sup>112</sup> Erik Buyst and Joël Mokyr, "Dutch Manufacturing and Trade During the French Period (1795-1814) in a Long Term Perspective," *Economic Effects of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, ed. Erik Aerts and François Crouzet (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990), 66-67.

<sup>113</sup> Katherine Aaslestad, "Revisiting the Continental System: Exploitation to Self-Destruction in the Napoleonic Empire," *Napoleon and His Empire*, ed. Philip G. Dwyer and Alan Forrest (New York: Palgrave, 2007), 121.

<sup>114</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 581-589.

<sup>115</sup> Aaslestad, "Revisiting the Continental System," 121.

<sup>116</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 562.

régime. An entire new industry arose from the System. The new industry was centered on by-passing the System for merchants. Such trades as forgery, smuggling, and nocturnal ship driving became modestly profitable.<sup>117</sup> These trades demonstrated the Dutch people's resistance to Napoleon's policies, and to Napoleon, the Dutch were disloyal and had to be strictly policed so that his policies had the greatest impact possible.

Napoleon's dream of economically strangling Britain into submission found its weak point in the Kingdom of Holland, ruled over by his own brother Louis. While Napoleon saw Louis's lack of enforcement as his inability to govern, Louis deliberately disobeyed Napoleon's orders. Louis sent couriers to his brother in France stating that he was confused and objected to Napoleon's policies. Louis continued these communications intentionally to slow the process of enforcement. Louis "openly expressed his 'extreme repugnance' for the 'blockade' and declared it 'denationalized' Holland."<sup>118</sup> Louis constantly governed to the relative satisfaction of the merchant class. Besides his reluctance to enforce Napoleon's policies, he continued to side with Gogel on taxing the landowning class. The Kingdom instituted a tax of "twenty-five percent of income from land, after cost." While Gogel wished to continue to attack the former ruling oligarchies in order to curtail any power and influence they had, it was the merchant class that exerted the most amount of influence within the Kingdom and who continued to remain relatively untouched by any tax increases. Louis was borrowing money from merchants when he could have easily been taxing them for that revenue.<sup>119</sup> He continued to pander for their approval and acceptance as the true and lasting King of Holland, instead of the role his brother had envisioned of a Bonapartist executive meant to extract resources from the Netherlands.

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<sup>117</sup> Aaslestad, "Revisiting the Continental System," 119.

<sup>118</sup> Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms*, 145.

<sup>119</sup> Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms*, 149.

According to Napoleon, Louis was there to “strip Holland of all means of making war so as finally to remove the temptation, one day, to rebel against us.”<sup>120</sup> Even with the aid of Gogel, Louis could not contain the finances of the Kingdom nor find a way to reconcile the huge demands Napoleon placed on Louis and the poor economic and financial state of the Kingdom. By 1809, an estimated amount of 116,000,000 guilders was added to the national debt since Louis was crowned.<sup>121</sup> Louis and Gogel had failed. Gogel could not stabilize the national debt and formulate a taxation model well enough to meet the demands of Napoleon’s war machine and the Kingdom’s rising expenditures. Louis lost the purpose he was sent in with when he was crowned King at St. Cloud back in Paris. Napoleon could no longer have his own kin undermine his policies and ambitions when the Netherlands were meant to be in compliance well before 1810. Louis was forced to relinquish his throne in 1810.

There can be much debate whether Louis had an impossible job in meeting Napoleon’s goals (just as the great Schimmelpenninck did not completely measure up to Napoleon’s expectations) or if Louis was too assimilated into the Dutch culture to truly care about the goals for the Empire. A conclusion that carries both ideas is probably best suited to describe Louis’s failure. The financial situation had been held hostage for years by political factions in gridlock with almost no action taken on the issue. It was not until Gogel’s reforms under Schimmelpenninck and Louis that a true effort was taken to deal with the nation’s finances as a result of Napoleon subordinating the Dutch legislature. But the Netherlands had been in a financial tailspin for over a decade. Coupled with the economic hardships of the Continental System, the finances were doomed to remain on its path towards destruction. Louis did not remain idle and apathetic. His quest to be assimilated

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<sup>120</sup> Schama, *Patriot Liberators*, 614.

<sup>121</sup> Connelly, *Napoleon’s Satellite Kingdoms*, 143.

into Dutch culture and seen as the actual and true King of Holland led him to favor the merchant classes and free them from any rightful responsibility in financing the Kingdom. He also could not come to terms with imposing the trade restrictions of the Continental System which made a mockery of the Emperor because Louis, the Emperor's own brother, stood in defiance to the Empire's policies. Louis's actions did intensify the differences and resentment between the political factions. The Netherlands needed better policing, and Napoleon demanded greater control over the country. The end result was the annexation of the Kingdom of Holland and a much more direct control of those departments.

### **The Failed Solution: Annexation**

The French reasoning for not annexing the Netherlands in 1795 was that a “seafaring nation cannot be annexed: it escapes over water” carrying with them the “national wealth, their money, securities, and credit.”<sup>122</sup> But the mindset changed after fifteen years of failed indirect administration of the Netherlands. Napoleon explained to a Dutch deputation at St. Cloud that “I hold you by right of conquest and that, to be sure, is the most sacred right of all.”<sup>123</sup> To a few in the Dutch departments, annexation was to be a potential blessing. The Netherlands believed that, like Belgium after its annexation by France in 1795, they would now have access to the entire French market without duties or stipulations. But their initial perceptions quickly turned into a depressing reality. Napoleon continued with the high tariffs on many Dutch goods entering France. Napoleon did not see them as truly equals within the annexed territories of France. Trade decreased at its greatest rate after annexation. Employment declined in the export-intensive tobacco industry in 1806 from

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<sup>122</sup> Kossman, *The Low Countries*, 84.

<sup>123</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*. 634.

2,125 workmen to 376 in 1811, and other export industries such as sugar, potteries, and paper industries as well as herring fisheries experienced equivalent reductions in labor.<sup>124</sup> Specifically, the sugar refining industry almost became non-existent. From 1796 to 1813, sugar refineries plummeted from eighty to three factories.<sup>125</sup>

There were areas in the Netherlands that benefitted from the annexation. Inland areas such as Helmond and Tilburg experienced economic growth in the linen and woolen industries due to the demands from the French army and Napoleon shifting the tariff boundary to include the inland Dutch territories into the French market.<sup>126</sup> Just like Belgium, those industries served a specific purpose. Napoleon's gesture that stimulated economic growth was not meant to be a benevolent act from ruler to subjects but the foundation to create industries to solely satisfy the demands of his war machine. Wheat and dairy goods were allowed to be traded within the French market but threats were placed on farmers to keep their prices low or else they could not trade within the French market. But high prices ensued due to the high demands from the army in 1811 and 1812 for grain and dairy goods. Prices did collapse, and French and Belgian prefects who governed the Dutch departments forbade any dumping of their goods within Flanders and departments to the west.<sup>127</sup>

The combination of the detriments to the merchant industry and poor harvests created the worst economic environment since the rise of the Napoleonic régime. Napoleon's iron fist demonstrated his insistence on enforcing the Continental System.

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<sup>124</sup> Buyst and Mokyr, "Dutch Manufacturing and Trade," 68.

<sup>125</sup> François Crouzet, "Wars, Blockade, and Economic Change in Europe, 1792-1815," *The Journal of Economic History* 24, no. 4 (1964): 571, JSTOR.

<sup>126</sup> Buyst and Mokyr, "Dutch Manufacturing and Trade," 69.

<sup>127</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 622.

Authorities conducted acts of brutality, arbitrary arrests, and unwarranted house searches.<sup>128</sup> While they created much public outrage and animosity, the new government was able to execute the Continental System at a much higher efficiency than Louis and his administration and better satisfy Napoleon's demands.

The strains of conscription had a great effect on the population as well. An attempt was finally made to implement conscription in the Netherlands, an act Louis had refused to execute. But Louis was vindicated in that the Dutch rebelled in 1811 and 1812. The revolt was focused not on administrators and the government but more on the individuals who were altering the daily lives of the Dutch people, the coastguard, the conscription officer, and the privateer.<sup>129</sup> The rebellion caused the French conscription efforts to fail miserably. Conscription only amassed half of the total recruits Napoleon demanded from the Netherlands to serve in the French Imperial army. After the failed attempt at conscription in the Netherlands, it was abandoned. The war in Russia added to the Dutch sentiments towards Napoleon's war machine. Almost every soldier of the fourteen thousand men of the Dutch contingency of the French army died in Russia.<sup>130</sup> Napoleon was broken. For many of the ruling classes within the Netherlands, the defeat was the opportunity they were looking for. The dam that held back the massive rush of Dutch resistance finally broke after Napoleon's defeat at Leipzig. With that defeat, Russian and Prussian troops crossed into Dutch territory. In towns across the Netherlands, posters were hung calling to action all people. Such posters stating "Revenge, citizens, revenge! It is all over with the tyrant. Now then, revolt and revenge!" became more frequently visible as Napoleon's grip on the

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<sup>128</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 72.

<sup>129</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 622.

<sup>130</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 72.

Netherlands loosened.<sup>131</sup> The remaining French authorities with their troops created bastions of French occupation within towns such as Amsterdam and The Hague. Lebrun, chief executive of the Dutch departments, wrote to Napoleon at the end of 1813 that “in Amsterdam our withdrawal is (actively) desired; the Cossacks, it is true, are feared, but no one will lift a finger either for us or against us.”<sup>132</sup> A weakened and bewildered French authority, which even at its highest point of authority could barely mobilize the Dutch, now realized how little power they actually had as the Empire began to crumble. The Allies did not attack many of the towns because the towns included small numbers of French forces. The French were not a threat though because they could not mount any type of offensive against the allies. The régime had no support from any of the political factions. The French no longer had a foundation to govern. The end of French Imperial rule had arrived.

## Conclusion

Napoleon never truly pacified or won over the Dutch peoples. They experienced no benefits of being first allies then a part of the Empire. Without pacifying the Netherlands, Napoleon could not adequately follow his policy of colonization and extracting resources out of the country. Equally, Napoleon never trusted the Dutch because of their close historical ties with Britain. That distrust created a fervor in Napoleon to bleed all resources out of the Netherlands. To Napoleon, the Netherlands were an ungrateful people who were not contributing their portion to the Empire. In the end, Napoleon was never able to find that individual who had the necessary traits to facilitate the Netherlands to reach his goals. Louis was a failure and annexation under Lebrun came too late. The best chance Napoleon

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<sup>131</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 626.

<sup>132</sup> Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 637.

had was with the trustworthy and effective Schimmelpenninck, but Napoleon's paranoia of the Dutch potentially revolting together with Schimmelpenninck's failing health made him continually less desirable throughout his tenure as the Grand Pensionary. What is important to note is that Napoleon had inherited an alliance with a sister republic that was in chaos and that could not correctly align itself to concentrate on the issues of the Dutch people and work with France in defeating their common enemies. The Netherlands had entrenched interests that were unwilling to compromise along with a culture that was foreign to French policies such as conscription. Napoleon failed to look past his passion for economic warfare with Britain and visualize the effect it had on the Dutch. There was no one item that caused the French Empire to not succeed in the Netherlands. All that can be concluded is that the Dutch were never assimilated into Imperial French society or ever felt that they were a part of a grander European empire because Napoleon simply wished to subjugate them to French imperial rule. For Napoleon, the Netherlands was problematic European colony.

## **Belgium and the Netherlands Compared**

The Belgium and Dutch experiences were in stark contrast to one another. Initially, the key difference was the role their countrymen participated in politics. Belgium included individuals who were not concerned with creating a government nor did they plead with the French government to remain independent. Belgium had a long history of not being recognized as a separate political entity, and therefore did not lobby to gain that recognition. Furthermore, the French viewed Belgium as an extension of their "natural frontiers." The Dutch had been participating in a national revolution against the House of Orange. The French also believed the Netherlands to be beyond any claims of potential territorial

acquisition. The French and, early on, Napoleon allowed Dutch leaders to work to construct a constitution and address the issues that most concerned the French and Napoleon, finances and military participation. But as discussed, the Dutch were unsuccessful in adequately fulfilling their responsibilities which led to French intervention multiple times. French intervention was so that the Netherlands could fully serve the alliance and later Empire. The greatest difference in the destinies of Belgium and the Netherlands in the Empire was their level of resistance. Belgians were apathetic. They were never actively resistant or fully welcoming of the French and Napoleonic régimes. Napoleon was able to trust them and fully incorporate them into the Empire. He encouraged economic growth that both benefited France and Belgium. But Napoleon did not trust the Netherlands because of multiple conspiracies to cooperate with the British and their lack of participation in their alliance with France. Even after annexation, Napoleon would not fully incorporate the Netherlands into the Empire.

Lastly, the Dutch worked alongside the Allies to overthrow the Napoleonic régime whereas the Belgians did not rush to support the Allies. While the Belgians decided to stop supporting the Napoleonic régime in 1814 on the basis of religious differences, anti-conscription sentiments, and continual instability of their economy, they stood idle while the Allies entered Belgian. The Belgians in large part did not fully resent the Napoleonic Empire. The Dutch grew to despise it. With their economy's decline accelerated under Napoleon and his incredible demands for troops and financing, the Dutch loathed Napoleon and the impact of his policies. They never truly saw themselves as incorporated into the Empire or ever believed they were the beneficiaries of Napoleon's policies. Simply stated, the Dutch had no investment or reason to support the Empire and several reasons to despise it. Belgium was the recipient of the constructive actions by Napoleon that subdued

Belgians into accepting the Empire. Belgium and the Netherlands represent the duality of the benefits and detriments of Napoleonic colonization of Europe.

## CHAPTER III: NORTHERN ITALY

“Italy is a mistress whom I will share with no one.” Napoleon’s quote demonstrated the love affair and fascination that he came to have with Italy. According to Michael Broers, Northern Italy was divided, part of it was in what he called the “inner empire,” the North and the area along the Adriatic Sea. The rest of Italy was in the “outer empire” from Tuscany down along the western coast to Rome.<sup>133</sup> Compared to the Low Countries, there were not the internal beginnings of a national identity within Italy. A national identity would be forced upon them by Napoleon. Localities controlled the populations while being marginally subordinate to a larger government, typically under a duchy. In Northern Italy alone, there were nine different states. Within these states there existed deep rifts between urban and rural as well as traditionalists and revolutionaries that created disorder and brigandage. The common populations blindly followed the landowning classes and clergy. But unlike in other areas of the Empire, there was not much of a social gap between nobles and the bourgeoisie.<sup>134</sup> What united these various states was the Roman Catholic Church. Everyday people still sought out advice and comfort from the Church. When Napoleon Bonaparte entered Northern Italy, he brought with him the French Revolution and later the trappings of his own ideas on government and how Italy would fit into the grander scheme of his Empire. Italians did embrace the practice of forming republican governments and would later participate in the Empire. Northern Italy would stand to see substantial levels of

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<sup>133</sup> Michael Broers, *Europe Under Napoleon* (New York: Arnold, 1996), 181.

<sup>134</sup> Desmond Gregory, *Napoleon’s Italy* (Cranbury, NJ: Rosemead Publishing, 2001), 18.

economic success and receive much attention from the Empire. But Napoleon's action against the Pope and the Church as well as his officials' inability to control rural areas led to the Empire's diminished influence and authority up to its collapse in 1814. Napoleon's Empire experienced its greatest successes where Napoleon had a more substantial amount of time to first pacify the territory and implant a government then later extract resources from the territory, where there was a foundation of enlightened thought and liberal individuals, and where the Church fully cooperated outside of the temporal power of the Papacy.

### **The Twin Republics**

Bonaparte crossed the Alps in April 1796. From 1796 till 1814, Bonaparte would be the most influential man on the Italian Peninsula. He brought an army of administrators and military officials prepared to serve Bonaparte and govern Italy. Italian leaders were open and welcoming to Bonaparte and French ideals. Bonaparte became synonymous with public order and liberty. He addressed the concerns of the nobility and bourgeoisie by focusing France's initial efforts to bring order and civility to the Italian countryside. He then moved to create republican governments that rallied the nobility and bourgeoisie to a single government. Those aims along with military victory brought prestige and reward to Bonaparte and the *Armée d'Italie*. Bonaparte's army received forty-five million francs in cash and goods as well as twelve million in gold, silver, ingots, and jewelry. While Bonaparte did not initiate the extraction of these resources, it gave him a taste for the potential wealth he could amass. When placed into perspective, the loss of this immense sum of treasure was not a burden to the Italian states. The Duchy of Modena alone raised twenty-four million

lire to offset the amount the French had levied, twelve million lire.<sup>135</sup> Many times the French promised not to occupy Italian states in return for financial compensation. In 1796, Lucca for example lent the Cisalpine Republic 150,000 lire in order to support French troops in the Republic. The deal was not kept for long as in 1799 French troops moved into Lucca where the French forcibly demanded and received a loan from the nobles to the sum of two million lire.<sup>136</sup>

After entering Italy in 1796, Bonaparte and the French immediately began to force their will upon the Italian states without much initial consternation from the Italians. A large portion of the reason for the lack of an initial backlash was the Italians' openness to republicanism. Italian Jacobins began to organize and mobilize after the arrival of Bonaparte and the French army. The Jacobin or "Patriot" opinion was best embodied in Melchiorre Gioia. Gioia supported the creation of an Italian republic that could uphold and protect liberty. Bonaparte aided republican movements on the peninsula but that did not come before the aims of France. In the Treaty of Campo Formio on 18 October 1797, France gained recognition of the Cisalpine Republic by Austria, and in return, Austria received Venice, ending the Venetian Republic. To Italian Patriots, the Austrian annexation of Venice led Italians to raise questions about Bonaparte's and France's true intentions of creating an independent, republican Italy. Nevertheless, Bonaparte empowered the Patriots by creating a republic constitution similar to the French Directory Constitution of 1795. The Cisalpine Republic contained 3.5 million people organized into twenty departments and governed by a Directory and a bicameral legislature. It included the territories of Milan, Mantua, and portions of the Venetian Republic. Just as the French had forced upon the

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<sup>135</sup> R.R. Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760-1800* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 298.

<sup>136</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 49.

Batavian Republic, the French worked a provision into the treaty between France and its sister republic that demanded the Republic to finance 25,000 French troops stationed there. Furthermore, the Republic had to raise 22,000 troops on its own. This stipulation created a budget deficit for the Cisalpine Republic. While the initial loss looks to be these new impositions, it was actually the precedence of French intervention that became Italy's greatest loss. The Jacobins attempted to resist this mandate from Paris. Paris's reaction was to cut the legislature by half from 240 to 120 members and empower the executive. Male suffrage was also reduced to those who paid a direct tax.<sup>137</sup> The principles of republicanism the Italians believed Napoleon stood for were merely a means to construct a French machine to further their interests.

Its neighbor to the South, the Cispadane Republic had greater problems. The Cispadane Republic resided within the former Papal States of Bologna, Ferrara, Modena, and Reggio Emilia. The French did not overly force their will upon the ratification of the constitution though. This is demonstrated by the vote on ratification, 76,382 in favor to 14,259 against. The vote was perceived that people were not fearful of voting against the French "inspired" constitution, even though the French aggressively lobbied for it. While Italians felt comfortable in voting their conscience, the French were even more comfortable in knowing that the voting populace would ratify the constitution. The constitution also reached out a hand of "special protection to manufacturers, merchants, artists, and men of letters."<sup>138</sup> Bonaparte and France were creating a new governing class with the intention of promoting commerce and rallying support to the French régime. Thus it is not a surprise that the legislature included mostly the "business, professional, and landowning middle-class,

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<sup>137</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 54; Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution*, 322.

<sup>138</sup> Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution*, 305.

but included several priests and a few nobles.”<sup>139</sup> This trend would continue into the Cisalpine and Italian Republics.

Middle-class individuals also stood to gain the most by the selling of Church lands. In Bologna, the proportion of land owned by the Church decreased from nine per cent to two percent from 1796 to 1804. The main beneficiaries were middle-class urbanites who put the land to better and more productive use.<sup>140</sup> These beneficiaries were the same individuals who had the greatest amount of influence over the populations besides the Church. Bonaparte actively worked to gain the support of the bishops throughout the Cispadane Republic though. Ironically, one of the greatest supporters of the French occupation, according to R.R. Palmer, was the Bishop of Imola, Cardinal Barnaba Chiaramonti, the future Pope Pius VII and future chief adversary of Bonaparte in Italy. The Bishop was so accepting of French demands and receptive to French ideas that he was seen by some as a “Jacobin.” He accepted the republican constitutions, abolition of nobility (he of noble blood himself), and even embraced the new title of “Citizen Cardinal.”<sup>141</sup> Nonetheless, Bonaparte and the French could not pacify and subordinate the Church. Chiaramonti and others did not agree with the government nomination and election of bishops. Napoleon wrote to the Directory that:

The choice of representatives has been very bad. The priests have influenced all the elections...the Cispadane Republic, like Lombardy, needs a provisional government for three or four years while an effort is made to lessen the influence of the priests: otherwise you will have done nothing by giving them their liberty.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution*, 303.

<sup>140</sup> Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution*, 313.

<sup>141</sup> Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution*, 315.

<sup>142</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 35.

The Directory's remedy was to unite the Cispadane and the Cisalpine Republics. The Church did not hold as great an influence in various regions of the Cisalpine Republic, and therefore by combining the two, the Church's influence was diluted. The Cisalpine Republic continued to secularize Church lands and sell them off for huge revenue gains. While monastic houses, religious vows, and "outdoor manifestations" of the Church were prohibited and civil marriage allowed, Jacobins did attempt to reconcile the Church with republicanism. A Jacobin newspaper editor in Milan, Giuseppe Poggi, described the necessity for religion in a republic. Poggi stated that religion provided the necessary morality for people to participate in government to better their fellow countrymen. But he also supported the separation between Church and State and bringing the priest down to the level of a citizen whose responsibility was to enhance and purify the conscience of the population.<sup>143</sup> Cardinal Chiaramonti did his part to reconcile the two as well. In his Christmas sermon at Imola in 1797, Chiaramonti proclaimed:

The democratic form of government adopted among us, dear brethren, is not in opposition to the maxims I have set before you; it is not contrary to the Gospel...Civil equality, derived from natural law, refined by moral considerations, brings harmony to the political body, when each person cooperates for the good of all to the good of all to the extent of his own moral and physical faculties, receiving in turn from the protection of society all the advantages which he has the right to expect...Be good Christians and you will be excellent democrats.<sup>144</sup>

The Cardinal had embraced and championed the republican cause by assuring Christians that republicanism was natural to their religion. But what republicanism turned into and its relation to religion pushed "men of the robe" away from any such marriage between the two

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<sup>143</sup> Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution, 1760-1800*, 314.

<sup>144</sup> Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution*, 316.

under Bonaparte. The process of reconciling republicanism with the Church as well as defining the authority of the Church in a French and later Napoleonic Italy would be the persistent problem until the fall of the Empire in 1814.

The other daunting task for French and Napoleonic rule in Northern Italy was consolidation. As stated earlier, Northern Italy consisted of nine different states. After the consolidation of the Cisalpine and Cispadane Republics, governance became a true concern. The major cities in the larger Cisalpine Republic resented and distrusted one another. They jockeyed for position within the Republic to be the principal influential city. The one thing in common all the cities had was their hatred for the capital, Milan. One city, Bologna, overtly ignored decrees from Milan, and “a Lombard regarded the Piedmontese, Venetians, Romagnose, and Genoese not as compatriots, but as strangers, in the same category as the English or French.”<sup>145</sup> Unity in creating a large state succeeded while the practice of unity within that state was much less successful. Besides that, the territories were estranged and distrustful of one another. Bonaparte initiated the tricolor cockade of red, white, and green and began referring to all as Italians. Bonaparte did more initially for an Italian identity than any Italian at that time. After the consolidation, the new Cisalpine Constitution was formulated by a committee of Italians that took aspects from the French Directory Constitution of 1795 and that of the former Cispadane Republic. Though Palmer highlights that the constitution was formed under French control, it was “modern-minded,” and “conservative countrymen” used the French blanket of security to push through the constitution.<sup>146</sup> In his conclusion on the Cisalpine Republic, Palmer argued that the “party conflict” of the Republic was inherent to the pre-existing Italian political struggles. Each of

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<sup>145</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 55.

<sup>146</sup> Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution*, 311.

those factions looked to the French to tip the balance in favor one of them.<sup>147</sup> Palmer's conclusion emphasizes the point that Italians did not act in unison in their support or disdain for the French régime. Instead, they remained in their various factions, lobbying for the support of the French. Nonetheless, Bonaparte and the French did impose their will and control over the process by recognizing that political struggle.

When the Austrians reentered the Peninsula and defeated the French in 1799, the Republic was dissolved with not much unified resistance from the Italians. After Bonaparte's victory at Marengo, the Austrians fled the Peninsula, and he reinstated his rule and the Republic in 1800. But Bonaparte was now First Consul and had a different view of the Italian Peninsula. Prior to the Coup of Brumaire, Bonaparte wrote to Talleyrand:

You don't know these people, they are not worth having 40,000 Frenchmen killed on their behalf...Since I came to Italy I have received no help from this nation's love of liberty and equality or at least such help has been negligible. Here are the facts: whatever is good to say in proclamations or printed speeches is romantic fiction. You seem to imagine great things are to be achieved with a people who are soft, superstitious, deceitful, and cowardly.<sup>148</sup>

The lack of Italian resistance to the Austrian advances infuriated Bonaparte. Bonaparte used the Italians' inaction to begin to lay the foundation for the justifications of his future actions in Italy. Bonaparte was frustrated and lost respect for so called Italian Patriots. The great thinkers and advocates were simply there to speak and spew their ideas instead of taking action. These Italians lacked execution and practicality, two values crucial to Bonaparte and his view of government. For Bonaparte, the lack of action and participation in their own future solidified Bonaparte's mindset that Italy would now serve the aims of the French.

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<sup>147</sup> Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution*, 322.

<sup>148</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 42-43.

Desmond Gregory ends his first chapter with the statement that best sums up the shift from Bonaparte the liberator to Bonaparte the ruler; “Italy became for [Bonaparte] a forward bastion against Austria, a right wing of his Grand Army, a colony to be exploited for its rich resources in money, matériel, and men, and a launching-pad for the destruction of British power in the Mediterranean and for an assault on the Ottoman Empire.”<sup>149</sup> Northern Italy’s destiny had changed from sharing a future with France to serving the future of France.

## **A National Italian Republic**

In 1802, First Consul Bonaparte changed the Cisalpine Republic to the Italian Republic with the same territory the former had. Bonaparte convened a congress of Italian notables in Lyon to address and vote on the proposed constitution. Lyon was meant to stand as a midpoint between Paris and Milan. There, over 480 delegates would not be disturbed by local Italian influences.<sup>150</sup> While seeming to protect the purity of the conference, Bonaparte chose Lyon so any pressures that were not in Bonaparte’s favor would not influence the Congress. The only influence that would be permissible over the Congress was Bonaparte’s. The Congress was to play the role of a deliberating body that was critical and opinionated but in the end, accept the proposed constitution. This all occurred to give the air that the constitution was whole-heartedly Italian. When the Congress became entrenched in debate and lacked consensus, Bonaparte intervened, and within one night, the Congress approved the constitution. Bonaparte once again demonstrated his impatience in democratic deliberations. Just as he had during the Coup of Brumaire, Bonaparte personally entered the chambers of the deliberating Italian body and

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<sup>149</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon’s Italy*, 43-44.

<sup>150</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon’s Italy*, 57.

forced his will upon them. The Congress was to take on the appearance of a democratic assembly of Italian notables who endorsed the new French constitution for the Italian Republic. Bonaparte's actions left a sense of a ruler intervening and stifling the democratic process.

The constitution, like many of those that came from Bonaparte and his advisers, gave a sizeable amount of authority to the chief executive, the President. Placed into perspective, the President had even greater power because of the fractionalization of the legislature. This was typical of Bonaparte's governments, a centralized executive and a divided legislature. Bonaparte's most important act was to find the appropriate President to administer the Italian Republic. The word administer is chosen over govern because Bonaparte saw the Republic as a part of his orchestra that in accordance with other parts was to serve Bonaparte's and France's interests. This point became evident during the search for the President of the Italian Republic. Bonaparte's instinct was to offer the position to his eldest brother, Joseph. But Joseph came with demands. Joseph wished to see the Republic annex Piedmont, Bonaparte remove all French troops stationed in the Republic, and the end of Italian financial support for the French army.<sup>151</sup> These demands obviously did not sit well with Bonaparte, and he abandoned all attempts to recruit Joseph for the post. Bonaparte's intentions then turned to Francesco Melzi d'Eril. Melzi was a noble of Milan who was moderately liberal. In the eyes of Melzi, a liberal government was a constitutional monarchy. He emigrated from Italy during the twin Italian republics, largely due to his great disdain for Jacobins.<sup>152</sup> Melzi saw Jacobins as threats to private property and too radical for the governance of a credible government. The Congress at Lyon had first elected Melzi for the position of President, but he respectfully declined. Their second choice declined, and their

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<sup>151</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 58.

<sup>152</sup> Alexander Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 160.

third was not present thus the end result was that Bonaparte assumed the role of President with Melzi as his Vice-President. Melzi stepped into the role as the acting President since Bonaparte remained in Paris. Bonaparte informed Melzi that “my faith in you is complete and absolute...Work tirelessly to achieve the organization and happiness of the fatherland.”<sup>153</sup> The process of selecting a president further frustrated and demonstrated to Bonaparte the lack of implementation and execution from the Italians. But for Bonaparte, Melzi was an exception. Melzi saw his position as protecting northern Italy from being annexed by France. Bonaparte had his competent administrator, a man who despised the very Jacobins that had caused Bonaparte so much torture. Melzi was an administrator who understood his country and believed in a centralized state. But Melzi was first an Italian, not a Bonapartist.

Typical of a Bonaparte government, the Italian Republic had a hierarchical setup that led to the President at the top. The Republic had twelve departments, each with a prefect, and under the prefect, there were mayors and sub-prefects. Melzi ensured that moderates like himself were nominated and approved by Bonaparte. Melzi, wanting an independent northern Italian state, ensured that the top posts in the Republic were filled by Italians. Those posts were largely held by land owners, and during the span of the Republic and Kingdom, thirty nobles and twenty-two bourgeois filled the fifty-two prefect posts.<sup>154</sup> Melzi had difficulty in finding qualified Italians to fill the positions of prefects. Desmond Gregory analyzed the prefect level of the Italian Republic and the difficulty Melzi had in attracting qualified Italians. These men did not wish to move and govern a department foreign to them for 10,000 francs. They also believed French rule was temporary, and therefore did not want to leave their current careers. In the end, many men simply agreed to fill the

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<sup>153</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 58-59.

<sup>154</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 161.

positions out of obedience. Many of these individuals though had to be removed because of their inadequacies in governance.<sup>155</sup> Italians were proving to be unprepared to be rewarded positions in government based on their merit. Nonetheless, Melzi was more than administering the country; he was attempting to construct a government under his specific philosophy. In Italy, as will be discussed later, landowners were typically the ruling classes and held the authority at the local level. For the central state to be successful, the landowning class had to be incorporated into the government and given the feeling they had an active and influential role. Melzi informed nobles, specifically those of Lombardy, that Bonaparte would restore them to positions of power, the positions they held prior to the Austrians' policy of centralizing power.<sup>156</sup> Bonaparte's principle of *amalgame* was being fulfilled. Michael Broers described *amalgame* as "the politics of fusion, of consciously bringing together old adversaries within imperial institutions."<sup>157</sup> A joint political order was being constructed that could govern the Republic and be an instrument of Paris. To Bonaparte, these coalitions were created under the protection of France and under the banner of a sister republic and later satellite kingdom. Therefore, they were meant to serve France and furthermore, Bonaparte's interests of expanding his authority and influence in his quest for European domination.

After Melzi had successfully followed the policy of *amalgame*, Bonaparte wished to see the fruits of his policy. Melzi did not hold the same views on the purpose of the new Italian government. One of the greatest points of contestation was that of the stationed French troops in the Italian Republic. First, Melzi did not see the need for the French troops when the Republic was creating and expanding their own army. Second, those

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<sup>155</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 60-61.

<sup>156</sup> John A. Davis, "Divided Destinies? Napoleonic Rule in Northern and Southern Italy," *Napoleon and His Empire*, ed. Philip G. Dwyer and Alan Forrest (New York: Palgrave, 2007), 170.

<sup>157</sup> Michael Broers, *The Napoleonic Empire in Italy, 1796-1814* (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 124.

French troops should not be financed by the Republic because as Melzi saw it, they were not present to serve the interests of the Republic but those of Bonaparte and France.<sup>158</sup>

Bonaparte's justification was that the Italians could not adequately defend themselves from an Austrian invasion and thus the garrisoned French troops did serve a purpose for the Republic. Bonaparte pointed back to the Italian's recent history of barely resisting the invading Austrians. Although the Austrians always posed a threat, Bonaparte's former comments highlighted that his intentions were more along Melzi's inclinations. Bonaparte and the French army utilized the Republic as a launch pad for future campaigns against the Austrians. Mandated by Bonaparte, Melzi enacted the first conscription laws in Italy in August 1802. The policy was to recruit men between the ages of twenty and twenty-five for a service term of four years. The policy found much opposition especially in the rural regions of Italy. They were not accustomed to military service and bore the brunt of the conscription. Widespread opposition led to a more centralized and militant government so that it could enforce the conscription laws. The government did see success in the end. From 1802-1814, 155,000 men were conscripted into service, and by 1812, the Italian army numbered 70,000 soldiers.<sup>159</sup> But these acts were costly to the Republic. Within one year of issuing the draft, 18,000 troops were raised. Furthermore, one third of the Republic's total budget was given over to France for payment of Italian fortifications and military expenses.<sup>160</sup> Resentment and opposition to French influence and control only grew. But that resentment never manifested into outright opposition due to the vested interests the land owning classes and bourgeoisie had into the government.

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<sup>158</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 61.

<sup>159</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 163.

<sup>160</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 64.

What seemed to be of little consequence forced Bonaparte to doubt the government in Italy, including Melzi. An Italian poet, Giuseppe Ceroni, wrote a poem and distributed it privately. The poem denounced Bonaparte and the French as obstructing the Italians in their attempts for national unity and creating an independent state. Melzi did not take this poem or individual as a threat to the government or Bonaparte. Bonaparte did not agree with that interpretation. Bonaparte became infuriated:

The Italians declaring their independence! They had better merit it. When they have an army of 40,000 men, only then will the French leave Italy. Arrest of Ceroni? I would have had him shot. The Italians are a people without character, false, intriguers, whom I have been mistaken in raising to the status of nationhood.<sup>161</sup>

Melzi offered to resign if Bonaparte no longer trusted him. Bonaparte decided to keep Melzi and continued to support him, probably largely because Bonaparte was mobilizing for war against Britain again and needed Melzi's capable administering skills. Nevertheless, doubt was placed in Bonaparte's mind, and as he ascended to his imperial throne, the potential for a rural uprising or usurpation from his own government was too much allow in the hands of a non-Bonapartist. Any uprising or usurpation of the government would undermine Bonaparte's goals and grander scheme of French domination of Europe.

The Italian Republic under Melzi did benefit both Bonaparte and the Republic's people. Roads were built, Milan modernized, and troops raised for the French and Italian armies. Melzi rescued northern Italy from abandoning moderately liberal views and the sense of a larger Italian state. He was able to navigate through this period to satisfy Bonaparte so much that Bonaparte could not do away with him while Melzi also worked towards his goal of an independent northern Italian constitutional monarchy and kingdom.

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<sup>161</sup> Desmond Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 62.

He satisfied himself and Bonaparte by bringing together the nobility and bourgeoisie to cooperate and work for a centralized government. But Bonaparte's goals would be better fulfilled as he would remove Melzi from his top position when the Republic morphed into the Kingdom of Italy and Bonaparte's stepson Eugène became viceroy. Melzi did lay much of the foundations for Italian Unification later on in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By 1805, Melzi left an Italy that had been introduced to conscription and incorporated influential individuals into having a stake in the government. He had provided the foundation for the Kingdom of Italy's future success in responding to Bonaparte's demands.

## **Napoleon's Kingdom**

On March 17, 1805, the Italian Republic was transformed into the Kingdom of Italy. Napoleon was crowned King at the cathedral in Milan with the Iron Crown of Lombardy on May 26<sup>th</sup>. The Kingdom was meant to mirror the transformation that had occurred in France, and the crown was to symbolize Napoleon's similarities to Charlemagne. Napoleon was originally reluctant to take the crown of Italy though. Just as he did with the Republic, he offered the throne to Joseph. Joseph turned down the throne for the same reasons as he did the Republic. Bonaparte looked to his other brothers, but they too turned down the throne. Melzi seized upon the situation and offered Napoleon a new constitution. Napoleon was offended and threatened to annex the territory. Willing to accept anything but annexation, Melzi withdrew his suggestion and supported Napoleon's decision for the territory.<sup>162</sup> Napoleon accepted the crown and served simply as the ruler in name only. Napoleon's viceroy who would act on his behalf was his stepson, Eugène de Beauharnais. Eugène came into a much stronger position than Melzi or even Schimmelpenninck and

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<sup>162</sup> Owen Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms* (New York: The Free Press, 1965), 27.

Louis in the Netherlands. At the creation of the Kingdom of Italy, the territory had been under French rule for nearly ten years. Melzi successfully fused together the Italian ruling classes and the bourgeoisie into the new French-created Italian institutions. The landowning elites accepted the new roles of the middle class in society and most individuals were reaping benefits from increased trade with France and other areas of the Empire.<sup>163</sup> In summation, Eugène stepped into his role as viceroy with the best opportunity to succeed. That was not to say there was work to be done. Within nine years, the administration of the territory had changed three times by simply building a new administration atop of the former. Each new government inherited the young, inexperienced institutions of the former.<sup>164</sup> Napoleon wished to see Eugène succeed. Eugène came under Napoleon's tutelage. Eugène wrote Napoleon daily, and Napoleon always gave advice to the almost twenty-four year old on how to govern. He informed Eugène to "make my Italian subjects happy...Count yourself a failure if you do not succeed in convincing the Italians that you love them...Learn to speak good Italian." Napoleon also highlighted the importance of learning the history of the major cities and becoming knowledgeable of the fortresses, battlefields, and troops of the Kingdom.<sup>165</sup> Napoleon's success in the Kingdom was dependent upon Eugène. Eugène had to gain the confidence of the Italians so that he could implement Napoleon's policies to extract resources out of the Kingdom.

Eugène's first order of business was to gain the trust of the legislature and the local élites. Napoleon introduced Eugène during the first session of parliament on June 7, 1805. There, he asked the parliament to "rival in zeal my Council of State and by occurrence of

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<sup>163</sup> Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms*, 27-28.

<sup>164</sup> Frederick C. Schneid. *Soldiers of Napoleon's Kingdom of Italy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 8-9.

<sup>165</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 68.

wills...support my [viceroy].”<sup>166</sup> Eugène assured the legislature that he had their interests in mind and worked to serve the people of Italy. While publicly stated, Eugène did not believe this himself and always reassured Napoleon that the only will and interests he served were his stepfather’s. Eugène attempted to allow the legislature to play a role in the Kingdom. But the legislature resembled that of the Congress in Lyon that endlessly debated and never reached a resolution. In July 1805, Eugène dismissed parliament, and he never convened it again during the Kingdom’s existence. The legislature had been elected under Italian male suffrage that had steep property requirements. It would be replaced by the *consulta* of state that was formally a consulting body on constitutional issues. On March 21, 1808, it was modified into a senate whose members were all appointed by Eugène.<sup>167</sup> The Council of State remained and continued to draft laws to be taken up and voted on by the legislative body. Eugène was centralizing authority in the Kingdom and undermining all the democratic principles that the territory used to stand upon under the republics. But Owen Connelly explained that democracy in Napoleon’s terms was not “popular participation in government” but “careers open to talent.”<sup>168</sup> Eugène filled his senate with men who demonstrated the same qualities Eugène had, efficient, progressive, and diligent. If Napoleon was the head and Eugène the body of the government, then the Senate and Council of State were the arms. The two arms did not act without the signal from Napoleon. That signal had to then travel through and be initiated by Eugène. The legislative corps was not a check and balance but an instrument that allowed limited deliberations and created the shroud of a democratic vehicle for governance. This government was to serve the interests of Napoleon and ensure that his demands were met.

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<sup>166</sup> Connelly, *Napoleon’s Satellite Kingdoms*, 40.

<sup>167</sup> Connelly, *Napoleon’s Satellite Kingdoms*, 41.

<sup>168</sup> Connelly, *Napoleon’s Satellite Kingdoms*, 25.

The government was to raise troops, finance the French and Italian armies, and later, participate in the economic boycott of British trade. If the legislature were to operate without Napoleon and Eugène's intervention, the government would come to an incredibly slow pace, one that could not appropriately respond to the changing events in Europe and Napoleon's subsequent demands. Such a government was not effective or efficient.

Financially and economically, northern Italy and specifically the Kingdom benefited. The Minister of Finance, Giuseppe Prina, was a brilliant administrator who many believed to be more capable than Colbert during the reign of Louis XIV. Prina was placed into his role during the Italian Republic and served until Napoleon's abdication in 1814. The Italian Republic, like many other areas in Europe, was under financial hardships and found it difficult to reconcile its expenditures with their incoming revenues. Prina decided to reorganize the administration of finances and tax collection. The reforms were necessary to reconcile the greatly increased government budget, largely due to military expenditures. Tax collection became more "orderly, uniform, and efficient."<sup>169</sup> Tax collectors were signed to three year contracts and were responsible for the total amount of taxes even if they did not collect that total amount. Failure to collect taxes was not an option for the Kingdom. Prina needed such a reform in order to meet the rising demands Napoleon placed on the Kingdom. From 1802-1811, the Republic then Kingdom's expenditures grew from 70 million lire to 142 million lire. The increase was due to the creation of 70,000 troops for the Italian army, the upkeep of the stationed French troops, and new bureaucratic costs. Prina met the challenge of rapidly increasing expenditures. During the same time period, revenues increased from 81 million lire to 141.1 million lire. A major factor in revenues keeping up with expenditures was due to the success of the tax collection reforms. Tax collectors were

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<sup>169</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 163.

able to effectively and efficiently perform their duties by collecting over ninety percent of the taxes and doing so at a cost of only 8.5 percent of total revenues.<sup>170</sup> Prina had put in place a system like no other in the Empire that could keep pace with the incredible demands placed on governments by Napoleon. It is easy to compare. Prina was always able to pay the interest on any small debt that was incurred, even though the interest was nominally significant, increasing from one million to five million lire.<sup>171</sup> Because of that and the other previously mentioned reasons, when other countries' currencies and notes were dropping at alarming rates in 1810, the Kingdom of Italy's currencies and notes were able to stay solvent at sixty-five percent per note.<sup>172</sup>

Prina was masterful in how he manipulated the tax system for not only the Kingdom's financial benefit but also political benefit. As mentioned earlier, the landowning classes played a pivotal role in the acceptance of the Napoleonic régime. Thus Prina had to create a tax system that did not impact the landowning classes too greatly. Unlike the Netherlands, increasing the property taxes would have been a political disaster. The property tax remained at modest levels due to the existence of other taxes, the added territorial gains, increased agricultural productivity, and Prina's property survey that equalized differences between taxpayers.<sup>173</sup> Prina looked to excise taxes on tobacco and salt as well as consumption duties. From 1802-1811, tax revenues from salt and tobacco increased from 11.5 million to 25.4 million lire and 5.4 million to 11.8 million lire. Consumption duties experienced increases as well. In large cities, the increase was 7.9

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<sup>170</sup> Alexander Grab, "State, Society, and Tax Policy," *Napoleon and Europe*, ed. Philip G. Dwyer (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2001), 182-185.

<sup>171</sup> Stuart Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 105.

<sup>172</sup> Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms*, 45.

<sup>173</sup> Grab, "State, Society, and Tax Policy," 182-183; Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 162-163.

million lire and 4.2 million lire in small towns during the same timeframe.<sup>174</sup> Prina's other great tax was the capitation, or head, tax. At its inception, the tax was 176 lire per individual per year, but exceptions were made for children and the elderly.<sup>175</sup> Prina demonstrated how a Napoleonic state could meet the demands of Napoleon and the Empire. He was much more effective than his counterpart in the Netherlands, Gogel, who receives much more attention in the historiography of the era. The Kingdom's balanced budget was a major reason why the Kingdom never was annexed. The Kingdom of Italy became the model satellite kingdom for Napoleon, and it was largely because of Prina's mastery of finances. But what Prina gained in support and confidence from Napoleon he lost in favor with the Italian people. After Napoleon's abdication, Prina was brutally murdered by a mob of his countrymen. Even though Prina was not popular with his fellow Italian compatriots, Napoleon had an unequalled affinity for him. Prina benefited from Napoleon's continued favor and protection from his enemies within the government and angry aspects of the population. Prina, an Italian, acted more in the interests of Napoleon and France than for his own country, and that was the reason for Napoleon's support. Prina's legacy of a modern, effective, and efficient tax administration laid a tremendous foundation for future Italian states.

The Kingdom of Italy experienced a great expansion in infrastructure as well as an increase in trade. By the end of the Italian Republic, roads and waterways were constructed including the Simplon route which allowed for cannon to be transported from Paris to Milan without it having to be dismounted.<sup>176</sup> Such a route symbolized the military importance of the territory but also the new market for Italian goods. Commerce did not simply increase

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<sup>174</sup> Grab, "State, Society, and Tax Policy," 184.

<sup>175</sup> Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms*, 46.

<sup>176</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 65.

between the Kingdom and France but also internally. Especially with the construction of waterways, various cities and departments could better trade their goods amongst themselves.<sup>177</sup> But in the end, the economic purpose of the added infrastructure was to serve the interests of Napoleon and the Empire. Italy was to supply raw materials for French manufacturing and the army.

Economically, Italy was transformed. Tariff barriers were decreased, and the entire French market opened up to Italian goods. Owen Connelly, when discussing the economics of the Kingdom of Italy, simply referred to the Continental System specifically within the Kingdom as a mercantilist policy. Foreign territories, that is anything that was not French, was to supply raw materials and foodstuffs for the Empire, and France would then export manufactured and finished products to the satellite kingdoms and annexed territories. For France, Italy's main role was to be agriculture. "The granary of the Empire," as Napoleon would come to call Italy, directed three quarters of their entire agricultural exports to France.<sup>178</sup> Italy was fueling the Napoleon's war machine as it marched across Europe. Furthermore, due to the decrease in trade and commerce because of the Continental System and Britain's blockade, resources were shifted to expanding agriculture in the Kingdom. The amount of irrigated land experienced a thirteen percent increase, and rice cultivation expanded by twenty percent.<sup>179</sup> Italy's agricultural exports were so critical to the Empire that the poor harvests of 1810-1811 caused a spike in food prices and were a major variable in creating a domino effect of economic recessions throughout Europe.

Italy also became the chief provider of raw cotton for textile manufacturers in the Empire. The British blockade had cut off imports from the colonies, Turkey, and Egypt.

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<sup>177</sup> Schneid, *Soldiers of Napoleon's Kingdom of Italy*, 9.

<sup>178</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 146.

<sup>179</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 152.

Equally, a harsher Continental System forbade trade with the British and better policed smuggling. Cotton industries in Belgium and France relied on Italian cotton. Although more expensive, Italians began to invest their agrarian efforts in growing cotton to satisfy manufacturers' hunger for raw materials. Farmers who chose not to focus on growing grain, rice, or cotton were mandated by the government to grow those crops. Farmers abandoned growing olives, oranges, and vegetables which they have been doing so for centuries.<sup>180</sup> The demands of the Empire superseded the centuries-old way of life for many Italians. Their everyday practices had to adapt to their new government. The shift in agriculture was meant to meet the substantially increased French demands for raw cotton. Demand increased from four thousand metric tons in 1785 to eight thousand metric tons in 1809.<sup>181</sup> But all of this supply of raw cotton did not lead to a burgeoning textile industry. The French obtained a monopoly in that sector where cotton cloth sold to Italy from France totaled forty-three million lire in 1809 and ninety million in 1812. Only one Italian manufacturing center flourished; around Vicenza, manufacturers hired 6,000 individuals by 1814.<sup>182</sup> Outside of Vicenza, manufacturing never took hold in Italy because that was not the purpose Italy was meant to fulfill within the Empire according to Napoleon. Napoleon strived to ensure that Italy did not industrialize and compete with French manufacturing. Napoleon enacted a trade policy in 1808 that required French imports to Italy to only have two third the standard trade duty. Napoleon also had forbidden any skilled workers in 1812 from leaving France for Italy.<sup>183</sup> These actions aided in guaranteeing France's economic domination within the Empire and the satellite kingdoms. But still, the Kingdom had already seen enormous

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<sup>180</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 150.

<sup>181</sup> Stuart Woolf, "The Mediterranean Economy During the Napoleonic Wars," *Economic Effects of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, ed. Erik Aerts (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990), 118.

<sup>182</sup> Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms*, 49.

<sup>183</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 145.

increases in population. By 1814, the population of the Kingdom of Italy swelled to seven million.<sup>184</sup> The increases in population served Napoleon's interests of military service and taxation. Napoleon would not stray from his economic plan, even when Eugène objected. Eugène did remove his objection after Napoleon refused to change his mind, based on Eugène's belief that Napoleon knew what was best for both countries. Italy's chief advocate, Eugène, was squarely in the camp of remaining loyal to Napoleon and his demands.

Italy's greatest industry outside of agriculture was silk production. Silk was of such great importance that in 1810, no import duties were placed on Italian silk entering France. Silk was the principal export from the Kingdom of Italy. Export shipments were valued at fifty-six million lire in 1809 and sixty-two million lire in 1812.<sup>185</sup> Napoleon, though, wished to import raw silk so that it could be manufactured in France, specifically Lyon. In 1810, Napoleon informed Eugène that Italian silk could only be exported to France:

My silk manufacturers will suffer badly and this is one of my principal commercial resources...My principle is *La France avant tout*. Italy is independent only because of France, and this independence is the price of blood and victories and one that Italy should not abuse. It is unreasonable to calculate if France is getting commercial advantages. Parma and Piedmont also produce silk and I have made the same orders about the sale of it only to France. Why should I prefer Italy to Piedmont?<sup>186</sup>

At the time of this letter to Eugène in 1810, Parma and Piedmont had been annexed to the Empire. While Napoleon was correct that Parma and Piedmont could supply raw silk, the supply would not suffice the demand from manufacturers. Between the blockade and the

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<sup>184</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 147.

<sup>185</sup> Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms*, 48.

<sup>186</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 144.

Continental System, Italy remained the chief resource for raw silk. All of Italy accounted for anywhere between fifty to seventy-five percent of all raw silk production for the Empire.<sup>187</sup> Napoleon was in a co-dependent relationship with Italy beyond raw silk, but one in which he needed Italy more than Italy needed him or France. Italy provided the economic foundations for an industrializing France and allowed France to remain in a continual state of war. While those in the agrarian sector benefited immensely from the Napoleonic régime and internal trade and commerce prospered due to the termination of internal duties, Italy was denied almost every opportunity to industrialize and placed into a subservient role whose purpose was to fuel the French economy. With an unwavering and loyal administrator in Eugène, Napoleon saw great successes out of his Kingdom of Italy. The Kingdom was the model satellite state in meeting the demands and adhering to the responsibilities set by Napoleon, and it would be the most loyal satellite state during Napoleon's fall.

### **Religion: The Unseen Factor**

Religion, and specifically the Roman Catholic Church, played a major role in the day to day lives of Italians. Catholicism was something different on the Italian Peninsula than it was in France or the Low Countries. For a considerable amount of people over a sizeable portion of the peninsula the Church was the State as was the case in the Papal States which will be further discussed later. Bonaparte began to address the role of Catholicism in his empire with the French Concordat in 1801. Afterwards, he then commanded Melzi to agree upon a comparable treaty with the Church and Pope Pius VII. Melzi was incredibly anticlerical and distrusted anything or anyone associated with the Church. After receiving

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<sup>187</sup> Woolf, "The Mediterranean Economy During the Napoleonic Wars," 117.

his order from Bonaparte, Melzi replied that the Italian clergy “were of a cast of mind scarcely conforming to the views of the government and secretly supported all that was opposed to it.”<sup>188</sup> Melzi was not anti-religious; he proclaimed himself a devout Catholic. He plainly did not trust the Church and its practices. The Italian Concordat was agreed upon in September 1803. The Italian Concordat mirrored that of its French counterpart. Catholicism was the state religion but religious freedom existed. Priests were nominated by the Republic and confirmed by the Pope. Almost immediately after its inception, the Concordat was disregarded when it came to Church lands. Who was to blame seemed to be a contentious point. The truth lies in the intentions of Bonaparte and Melzi. Bonaparte, a man of practicality, could not afford to alienate and embolden the clergy to rally against him and his régime. Their support was crucial or at the very least their passivity because of their connection and influence over the Italian masses. Melzi did not value practicality like his superior. Melzi continued to allow the sale of Church lands and instituted his own Organic Articles of 1804 which gave papal authority to the State, a direct violation of the Concordat. Melzi was not afraid to fully utilize his power so he took control of the education system and the publication of papal bulls. He assumed the same authority that the Austrian emperors had previously obtained. Immediately after being crowned King of Italy, Napoleon abolished Melzi’s Organic Articles. Melzi was much more radical than Napoleon had wanted, and Napoleon could not have his top administrator ignoring formal treaties. At the inception of the Kingdom, the Church was relieved to see Eugène take the reigns of the Kingdom and not the continuation of Melzi.

For the clergy, the Kingdom brought with it the reinstatement of monarchy and hierarchy. Monarchy was “normal” for the Church, and Eugène was “inclined to abide” by

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<sup>188</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon’s Italy*, 64.

the Italian Concordat.<sup>189</sup> Eugène regularly attended mass, and the clergy basically supported the régime, some even participating in the Senate. Priests and bishops encouraged people to receive vaccinations, not to avoid conscription, and structured the debate about the ongoing war as a fight for public order. But present was a sizeable amount of paranoia and distrust in the Church. Daniele Felici, Minister of the Interior, wrote to Napoleon in 1805:

Although the conduct of the ministries of religion cannot be described as totally negative, it has been obscure and enterprising. Despite the mystical affectations in which this class of persons tries to cloak itself, in general it must be considered as not attached to the new order of things. Political theology, which has always tended towards independence, indeed towards domination, cannot submit to the idea of even a minimal restriction of ecclesiastical pretensions. The true character and inner nature of this class is revealed by the occasional statement or expression that sometimes escapes the lips of some zealous preacher or missionary.<sup>190</sup>

Napoleon was not cryptic in how he saw the State and the Church interacting. Napoleon appointed the bishops with the approval of the Pope. For Napoleon, those bishops were “to behave as prefects in clerical dress.” Napoleon likened himself to Charlemagne. Like Charlemagne, Napoleon wanted to be “the sword of the Church” and have as much control and influence over the Papacy.<sup>191</sup> The debate between Napoleon and Pius VII was not about the principles of government nor the more liberal philosophies that stemmed from the French Revolution. The Pope was left-of-center in his political views and welcomed many of the changes the French and Bonaparte brought to Italy. Rather the debate was over authority. The Pope saw Napoleon as another European monarch who would work in

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<sup>189</sup> Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms*, 55.

<sup>190</sup> Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe*, 208.

<sup>191</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 81-84.

accordance with the Pope, just as the Papacy treated all other European monarchs for centuries. Napoleon wished to alter that relationship in making the Papacy simply another arm of the Empire, an arm giving morals and values to the populations. Seen most evidently in the annexation of the Papal States, Napoleon stripped away the Church's activities of administration. The *Code Napoléon* replaced the need for the Church to administer birth registrations, marriages, and burial services.<sup>192</sup> Napoleon through Eugène was able to subordinate and spell out explicit purposes for the clergy. While religious upheavals were more common in other sections of Italy, Eugène as viceroy demonstrated a level of reverence towards the Church and rarely utilized force to oblige the clergy to submit to the Empire. In the Kingdom of Italy, State-Church relations were cooperative and did not lead to the level of resistance experienced in the annexed Italian territories.

## **Annexed Italians**

Substantial portions of Italy were annexed by France, specifically Piedmont, Genoa, Tuscany, and Rome. These four areas gave Napoleon the greatest challenges, created controversy, and in the case of Piedmont, eventually became immensely loyal. Piedmont demonstrated Napoleon's skills of rapid integration of a conquered territory. In 1799, Bonaparte placed Jean-Baptiste Jourdan, a respected and accomplished French general, as the proconsul of Piedmont. Jourdan's purpose, unbeknownst to him, was to pacify and prepare Piedmont for annexation. Jourdan first reached out to moderate patriots in order to gain their support.<sup>193</sup> These patriots' support was necessary in perpetuating the idea that Bonaparte and France were liberating Piedmont and bestowing upon them republican

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<sup>192</sup> Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms*, 56.

<sup>193</sup> Broers, *The Napoleonic Empire in Italy*, 95.

principles. But war broke out again in 1799, and the Austrians occupied Piedmont. A year later, Austria withdrew and signed the Treaty of Lunéville in February 1801 which upheld Bonaparte's claims to Piedmont. In March, Bonaparte had ordered Jourdan to prepare Piedmont for annexation "by the complete and rapid introduction of French laws and institutions."<sup>194</sup> By September 15, 1802, Piedmont was divided into six departments (later consolidated to five). Immediately, French administrators descended on the newly annexed territory to introduce into Piedmont the Concordat, French judicial system, and the gendarmerie. Bonaparte operated opposite to his principle of *ralliement* by not including the old elites of Piedmont and distrusting the patriots. Jourdan, acting as secretary of what was the 27<sup>th</sup> Military Division, policed the role individuals played in government. He suspended debate, moved trials away from the national tribunals to French courts, and in the end, disbanded the assembly.<sup>195</sup> Jourdan's focus was setting in place French institutions and incorporating the territory into France. In August of 1802, Jourdan wrote to Napoleon, "generally they heartily detest us, and those who support us grow daily fewer."<sup>196</sup> But as the institutions took hold and the former governing classes, old elites and the bourgeoisie, entered into administrative roles in the government, Piedmont became pacified and an extension of France. Within a year, Jourdan observed the Piedmontese shift in favor:

Those who continued to support the former rule, because they were afraid it would soon return, have now become supporters of the French régime; those who were committed royalists now submit because they are compelled to; the Italian party

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<sup>194</sup> Broers, *The Napoleonic Empire in Italy*, 96.

<sup>195</sup> Broers, *The Napoleonic Empire in Italy*, 96-97.

<sup>196</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 48.

[patriots] is rallying to the French out of necessity at the moment, but soon they will become attached to us by interest.<sup>197</sup>

Piedmontese support came on the heels of order being restored to the territory.

Michael Broers discussed the “center-periphery theory” which plagued the Italian territories during the Napoleonic régimes. The French were typically able to hold onto the center, the center being cities and towns. These areas were filled with individuals who saw it in their interest to cooperate, find a way to make the new régime economically beneficial, and manipulate the system so that any demands and burdens were placed on the periphery. The periphery, rural and mountainous areas with sparse populations, was typically the area where brigandage and rebellion occurred as will be later discussed in the interior of the Italian Peninsula. The responsibility lay with the *gendarmerie* and army to fight the brigands and mitigate any future hostilities. It was proclaimed that by 1809, civil order was completely restored to Piedmont, much to the effect of the French government.<sup>198</sup> But the French régime brought other benefits to the Piedmontese. The silk industry continued to prosper initially due to the increased trade Piedmontese silk producers had with France. Annexation would come to hurt the silk industry as Lyon demanded to hold a monopoly not simply over silk manufacturing but warehousing and exporting silk to Central Europe which served only as a detriment to the silk industry in Piedmont. Furthermore, Piedmontese silk producers created such a surplus that France was only demanding half the raw silk supplied which caused silk prices to plummet.<sup>199</sup> Like Belgium but on a much smaller scale, woolen and

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<sup>197</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 48.

<sup>198</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 170.

<sup>199</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 148.

cloth industries began to grow and prosper due to the protection from British textile industries and the incredible demand from the French army.<sup>200</sup>

French institutions in Piedmont took hold and were politically and socially accepted early on. The Piedmontese became experts with the French institutions, and with their Italian background and connection, they made perfect administrators for the Ligurian, Tuscan, and Roman departments. But when placed into those departments, the Piedmontese did not execute their responsibilities to the satisfaction of the French. To the French, the Piedmontese did not fully comprehend the Civil Code and the spirit of French political philosophy.<sup>201</sup> The Piedmontese did benefit from the French régime by gaining advanced administrative skills that would allow them to remain superior to other Italians during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The abolition of feudalism was enthusiastically welcomed by the poor classes, even though in reality the nobles still controlled the land and were in positions of power. Nice and Savoy were reunited with Piedmont, much to the satisfaction of merchants.

Merchants were also gratified by the annexation of Genoa in 1805 which did away with duties between the two territories. Piedmont and Genoa became known as the “Departments beyond the Alps” and were administered together from Paris in 1808.<sup>202</sup> Prior to French occupation and then annexation, the Ligurian Republic was one of the oldest existing republics in Europe. Napoleon allowed for it to continue to remain sovereign in name only until 1805. In June 1805, the Ligurian Republic was incorporated into France so that Napoleon could have a greater control over the port of Genoa. The Genoese had continued to trade with Britain and undermine Napoleon’s aims of directing all economic activity towards France. Napoleon demanded his Governor-General Charles-François

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<sup>200</sup> Woolf, “The Mediterranean Economy During the Napoleonic Wars,” 117-118.

<sup>201</sup> Broers, *The Napoleonic Empire in Italy*, 177-178.

<sup>202</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon’s Italy*, 48-49.

Lebrun to control trade and commerce with Britain. Prior to the annexation, merchants, the ruling class in the Ligurian Republic, pleaded with Napoleon to annex the Republic. In 1804, the Genoese senate requested French annexation after years of harsher French controls on Genoese commerce. The Genoese merchants believed that annexation would salvage the merchant trade industry by abolishing all duties into France and salvaging Genoese commerce. Within a two year span from 1802 to 1804, maritime traffic decreased from 953 ships to 136 ships respectively.<sup>203</sup> Annexation brought with it the Continental System that further worsened the plight of the Genoese commerce. Their remedy never became reality. In 1806, Napoleon instituted the Milan Decrees which further deteriorated trade for the Genoese. But unlike their northern neighbors, the Genoese support for the government was at the very least neutral after 1806. Lebrun was able to suppress a revolt in the territories after which he sought out nobles and senators to come back to serve in the government, even though many were anti-French. Patricians flocked back to the government, and patriots trusted that they had Lebrun's protection.<sup>204</sup> Lebrun understood the necessity for *ralliement* by searching out those who would want to have a stake in the government. With that policy, Genoese leaders would have a vested interest in the French government and want to see it succeed.. But Lebrun left in 1806 and the security of the territory fell into the hands of Nicolas Jolyclerc. While history views Jolyclerc as ill-prepared for the role, he made insightful critiques of Lebrun's handling of the Genoese patricians. Lebrun continued to allow the nobles in the government, even sought them out. Lebrun never made an effort to exclude them or select only the elites with moderately liberal views. What Lebrun left behind was the makings for the same oligarchic government that ruled

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<sup>203</sup> Gregory. *Napoleon's Italy*, 147; Katherine Aaslestad, "Revisiting the Continental System: Exploitation to Self-Destruction in the Napoleonic Empire," *Napoleon and His Empire*, ed. Philip G. Dwyer and Alan Forrest (New York: Palgrave, 2007), 117.

<sup>204</sup> Broers, *The Napoleonic Empire in Italy*, 95-96.

over the Ligurian Republic. *Amalgame* never fully occurred because of the continued distrust between liberal patriots and conservative patricians. In the end, Michael Broers placed Genoa and the surrounding country within the inner empire. The territory was pacified and incorporated into the Empire, but the population would turn on the régime given the opportunity. Napoleon was able to fully control Genoese commerce and implement French institutions. While Genoese loyalty never occurred, their relative cooperation and pacification lead to moderate levels of success for the Empire.

Unlike Piedmont and Genoa, Bonaparte did not initially annex Tuscany nor let it exist within its former political organization as the Grand-Duchy. In 1801, Bonaparte turned the Grand-Duchy of Tuscany into the Kingdom of Etruria. Bonaparte wished to see Etruria remain relatively semi-independent because annexation would revive hostilities with the Austrians. Bonaparte, as part of his alliance with Spain, placed the son-in-law of the Bourbon King of Spain, Louis, as King of Etruria. Two years later he died and his wife, Maria Luisa, became acting regent. During the life of the Kingdom of Etruria, Livorno, the capital on the coast, was still open to trade with the British. Livorno stood as one of the leaks in the Continental System as the British found in Livorno a willing trade participant. Napoleon could not allow such disobedience that undermined his Continental System. French troops finally entered Livorno in 1807 to destroy British trade goods and put an end to trade with Britain.<sup>205</sup> In 1808, Napoleon's alliance with Spain was non-existent and the Austrians were submissive.<sup>206</sup> Napoleon gave the order to occupy Tuscany, and it was annexed to France in May of 1808.

Édouard Dauchy was given the responsibility to oversee the implementation of French institutions in Tuscany while Elisa, Napoleon's sister, was made Grand Duchess. At

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<sup>205</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 170.

<sup>206</sup> Davis, "Divided Destinies? Napoleonic Rule in Northern and Southern Italy," 168.

the time of annexation, many Tuscans already resented French influence and control. The Tuscan economy had suffered greatly from the imposition of the Continental System and British blockade. The long-standing paper production and textile industries suffered as trade in Livorno collapsed.<sup>207</sup> Olive growing also halted due to the limited possibilities in exporting olive oil. But enlightened reformers and moderate patriots rallied to the French régime. Dauchy empowered these individuals and placed them into administrative roles.<sup>208</sup> The top posts were held by Frenchmen though. French General Miollis was Governor-General, and the two prefects for the Tiber and Trasimeno departments were filled by Frenchmen. Magistrates were typically Piedmontese because of their experience with the *Code Napoléon*.<sup>209</sup> Amalgamation found only one supporter, Elisa. She pleaded with Paris to continue to fill non-judicial posts with Tuscans. But the removal of all Tuscans from judicial posts for their ineffective abilities in prosecuting and sitting as magistrates created doubt in the minds of those in Paris. Elisa attempted to issue a decree stating that all Tuscan vacancies had to be filled by Tuscans. Paris rejected that decree and continued to rely on Frenchmen and the Piedmontese.<sup>210</sup> As the Tuscans were less incorporated into the administration, they became more resentful of the régime. Tuscany, according to Broers, demonstrated the overextension of the Empire. Overextension occurred due to the great demands Napoleon placed on Tuscany and the Empire and the timeframe given to achieve those goals. Tuscany did not reject the régime in a greater way than Piedmont or Genoa initially did. The difference rested within the length of time each territory had to accept French institutions. Upon entering Livorno, Elisa Bonaparte was warmly received by

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<sup>207</sup> Broers, *Europe Under Napoleon*, 206; Woolf, “The Mediterranean Economy During the Napoleonic Wars,” 118.

<sup>208</sup> Broers, *The Napoleonic Empire in Italy*, 98.

<sup>209</sup> Broers, *Europe Under Napoleon*, 206-207.

<sup>210</sup> Broers, *The Napoleonic Empire in Italy*, 184-185.

cheering crowds as she took to her new post as the Grand Duchess.<sup>211</sup> Tuscany was expected to adhere to French institutions and policies more readily and rapidly than its Italian counterparts that were annexed in 1802 and 1805. The annexation of Tuscany was not a complete failure as there was still a foundation of support, but many Tuscans resisted French incorporation largely on the basis of Napoleon's impatience. Napoleon demanded enforcement of the Continental System and the extraction of Tuscan resources. He did not have the luxury of training Tuscans how to administer French institutions and therefore, kept them out of the government for the option of the more experienced French and Piedmontese officials. This alienated Tuscans who grew to resent their lack of participation which spilled over into resisting other institutions as tax and religious reforms and conscription.

The annexation of Rome and the Papal States posed different types of concerns and questions for Napoleon and the French. The Papal States were founded on religion. It was not that there was no separation between Church and State; the Church was the State. Out of a population of 1.5 million in the Papal States, seventeen thousand were clergy. As mentioned earlier, Pope Pius VII was an aristocrat with liberal views, signed the Concordat, and cooperated with Napoleon. But the Pope was stern on the point of sustaining his temporal power in the Papal States. The Pope wished to remain neutral during the ongoing wars in Europe. Napoleon explained to the Pope that Napoleon was the sword of the Church, and that "Your Holiness is the sovereign of Rome, but I am the Emperor and all my enemies have to be yours."<sup>212</sup> Napoleon and the Pope also stood at odds over enforcement of the Continental System. The Pope would not exclude British goods from entering Rome. Napoleon ordered General Miollis in Tuscany to invade and occupy Rome

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<sup>211</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 118.

<sup>212</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 171.

in February 1808. Three months later, Napoleon annexed Rome and the remaining territory of the Papal States. The three institutions Napoleon was most interested in, conscription, taxation, and religion, failed in Rome and the surrounding territories.

The population vehemently rejected conscription. Mostly due to men fleeing Rome for the countryside so that they could avoid conscription, the population in Rome dropped from 136,268 in 1809 to 112,648 in 1814.<sup>213</sup> The French régime had not run its course of institutionalizing order. Napoleon demanded the removal of anything that would be a symbol of Papal superiority. The law courts were abolished, and feudal jurisdictions ended.<sup>214</sup> The French régime failed to realize that removing the authority of the Church was eliminating any government structure for the territory. While the Roman bourgeoisie applauded Napoleon's efforts, the nobility and the peasants resisted him. The French régime increased taxes on property by three times the previous amount. The nobility and clergy were not welcomed into the French administration and followed the Pope's resentment of the French régime. The clergy was informed not to take the oath of loyalty to the régime which created a large number of vacancies at the various dioceses. The peasants were angered by the sacrilegious actions of the French in removing public references to the Pope. Peasants turned to brigandage, and the French Enlightenment ideals had no foundational support from the peasant population.<sup>215</sup> While it is difficult to assume that the French had any chance of succeeding in the four to five year period of their occupation, any greater length of time would have yielded the same result, rejection of French and Napoleonic institutions. Napoleon was too confrontational with the Church and attempted too aggressively to subordinate the Pope. The Church's influence over the population was

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<sup>213</sup> Broers, *Europe Under Napoleon*, 207.

<sup>214</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 130.

<sup>215</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 172.

too great and their connections too strong. The peasants rejected the Enlightenment, and the nobility had too many social and economic ties to the Church. The nobility never believed that they should place their interests within the Empire while they were more than satisfied with the old régime of the Church. Furthermore, Napoleon's aims of *ralliement* and *amalgame* never occurred because Napoleon did not attempt to follow his own policies. Due to time constraints and the demand for resources the wars called for, Napoleon simply focused on extraction and not institutionalizing. Those conditions coupled with Napoleon's hunger for resources gave the French régime no chance to succeed.

## **The End of Napoleonic Italy**

The fall of the Napoleonic régime in northern Italy occurred in a different manner depending on the area that is discussed. The French administration in the annexed territories in central Italy, specifically Rome and Tuscany, simply fell apart. Napoleon did not apply the conscription acts of 1813 and 1814 to central Italy signaling the régime's loss of all control over the countryside to widespread brigandage.<sup>216</sup> On May 24, 1814, the Pope returned to an elated Roman populace after being held in captivity at Fontainebleau in Paris. Napoleon believed that releasing the Pope would result in a rise in Catholic support.<sup>217</sup> Napoleon was overly optimistic in his assumption. The return of the Pope only spelt the end of Napoleonic rule in central Italy. Napoleon never had the support of the Pope and clergy which was so deeply necessary for the success of his régime in Italy, specifically central Italy. Without that support, *ralliement* failed.

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<sup>216</sup> Broers, *Europe Under Napoleon*, 249.

<sup>217</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 95.

In the Kingdom of Italy, the story was different. Eugène was accepted as the Kingdom's leader, and he had a loyal following although it was not immensely broad based. Napoleon began to lose much of his support after the Russian campaign. From the twenty-seven thousand troops that came from the Kingdom and served in the campaign, only one thousand returned.<sup>218</sup> Conscription had proved to be a death sentence, and the public resented Napoleon for his costly campaign and the loss of young male Italian lives. But as the Austrian troops pushed into the Kingdom, Eugène still had a loyal and well-trained army. Furthermore, there were those who wished to see Eugène crowned king. In 1812, Melzi and a select group of senators approached the Austrians and proposed that they would make peace with the Kingdom and Eugène cut ties with Napoleon on the conditions that the Kingdom continue to exist with Eugène as its King. The group's actions demonstrate the level of success of Eugène's *amalgame* policies. Eugène never accepted the proposal and would never betray Napoleon.

Eugène's prefects were also loyal. All prefects held their posts to the end or when they were told to abandon them as was the case with the prefects in Veneto.<sup>219</sup> But the administration was the only segment of society that remained loyal to the very end. Before Eugène retreated from the Kingdom with his forty-five thousand remaining troops, the old societal rifts remerged between the landowning classes and the professional bureaucrats. But on April 26, 1814, Eugène and the army withdrew from the Kingdom in an orderly and civil fashion. Lombardy demonstrated one of the most loyal territories in the Empire. But Piedmont stood out as the most loyal to Napoleon and the Empire, rivaling that of Paris. As the Kingdom of Italy saw its end, the Piedmont department was still collecting taxes and conscripting men into the army. When Eugène came through Piedmont, most of the police

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<sup>218</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 172.

<sup>219</sup> Broers, *Europe Under Napoleon*, 250-251.

forces and *gendarmerie* joined him in his retreat. The departure of the régime caused no uprisings or lawlessness. This event or lack of an event demonstrated the incredible success the régime had in Piedmont. Genoa was different. They were greatly affected by the Continental System and British blockade. The British were able to incite banditry in the Genoese departments. When the British entered Genoa, they claimed to be liberating them and returning to the people the Ligurian Republic. However, the Republic would not come back into existence as they were placed under the new Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia. The Genoese would unsuccessfully petition the Congress of Vienna to be annexed by the French.<sup>220</sup>

## Explaining the Empire

Northern Italy was both a success and challenge for Napoleon. In the territories that had been under French control the longest, Piedmont and the territories of the Kingdom of Italy, French institutions succeeded, the countryside was pacified, and the principles of *ralliement* and *amalgame* took hold. Italians rallied to the régime and actively held positions within the administration. Taxes were collected and troops raised. While peasant Catholics initially resisted the Concordat and anticlerical policies, they accepted the changes in the end because the clergy in these regions generally accepted the French régime. But the most important factor for the successes in Piedmont and the Kingdom was time. Piedmont originally stood against the French régime but after a year, came to support it. Conscription laws and taxation were not introduced simultaneously with other French institutions and religious reforms. They forced conscription and taxes upon populations after they had accepted French institutions and became integrated into the French sphere of influence.

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<sup>220</sup> Broers, *Europe Under Napoleon*, 251-252.

Even though Genoa held a general disdain for Napoleon's Continental System and its effects on their trade, the Genoese related to the French in the end. They chose to be annexed by the French instead of becoming a part of the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia because the Genoese believed they were more similar to the French and accepted many of the French institutions outside of the Continental System.

Time was the factor for the failures in Tuscany and Rome. In both those regions, the implementation of Napoleon's tax and conscription systems coincided with the introduction of the Napoleonic administration. Without a foundation in either region, the population found it easy to detest their "occupiers" and resist the administration. Former governing classes were turned away from participation because of their lack of experience in the French system. In a heightened time of war and Napoleon's desperate need for more resources, local governing classes could not be trusted to meet Napoleon's demands. Furthermore, the French were unable to gain order in the periphery which became a breeding ground for discontent, banditry, and a safe haven from French control. Rome was an extreme case because on top of the time factor, there was no structure that was in place to accept enlightened ideals. The Church had too great of an influence and alienating the Church only exacerbated the difficulties the French already had. In the end, factions and religion were the contributing factors to the failures in central Italy. But in the Kingdom and Piedmont, the French were in control until they retreated out of northern Italy. Italian nationalism was a French construct to gain rally the population to the government. Italian nationalism was meant to recruit and conscript troops, gain the loyalty of the people for the government, and to accept policies that may hurt them individually but benefited the state, such as the Continental System and increased taxation. All Italian nationalism was meant to accomplish was to convince the population to make sacrifices in the name of the state.

Their attempts failed, but the institutions they had supplanted did take root. What occurred in Italy during the Napoleonic régime subsequently aided the creation of the modern, unified Italian state.

## Chapter IV: Naples

Naples stood as the territory of great mysterious hopes for Napoleon and the Empire. Britain's command of the seas limited the possibilities for resources for the Empire. Naples was seen as an alternative solution to Britain's naval supremacy because it was believed to be a land of untapped resources. For Napoleon, those beliefs materialized never materialized. In this chapter it is not important to analyze the lack of success and overall failure of the Napoleonic régime in Naples but why and how the régime failed. Naples was conquered because it was meant to supply France with resources that would fuel the French to victory over the Prussian, Russians, and even the British. Placed into perspective, the Kingdom of Naples was established in 1806, a year after its counterpart to the north, the Kingdom of Italy, was created and the same year the Batavian Republic morphed into the Kingdom of Holland. While the three parallel each other in their founding dates, the Kingdom of Naples stood out from its sister satellite kingdoms. First, Naples was never fully pacified and incorporated into Broers's "inner empire." As will be discussed, revolts and resistance persisted throughout both Joseph Bonaparte's and Joachim Murat's rules as King of Naples. Second, France's rule in the Kingdom of Naples was more of a continuation of the previously conquered Kingdom with changes made at the demand of Napoleon. Naples's attempt at republican government in 1799 failed. Unlike the republics that came before the Kingdoms of Italy and Holland, the Neapolitan Republic existed for only six months and was returned to its Bourbon monarch, King Ferdinand IV, until it was conquered again by the French in 1806. Without limited French-influence prior

to 1806, French liberal reforms were forcibly and hastily applied to the Kingdom. Nonetheless, Napoleon attempted to make it appear that they entered the country as liberators. The government newspaper, *Monitore Napoletano*, declared that:

The Nation will in very short time witness the emergence of a new order of things that will implant in its midst the virtues of righteousness, watchfulness, justice, generosity, honesty, disinterestedness, and the love of the common good, conjoined with the sincere and effective desire to make the Nation great and happy in deeds, not just in words.<sup>221</sup>

In the end, Naples was simply a miscalculation for Napoleon. The questions surrounding Naples are did Napoleon and the French realize their miscalculation of the amount of resources in Naples, why were the applications of Napoleon's institutions a failure, and how did Joseph and Murat contribute to the failure of *ralliement* and *amalgame* in Naples if they did at all? Comparable to the Tuscan and Roman departments, Naples resisted the Napoleonic régime on religious grounds, lack of native leaders in high-ranking administrative posts, and their rejection of French institutions such as the abolition of feudalism, implementation of conscription, and the hardships that resulted from taxation and the Continental System.

## **Purpose for Conquest**

Before discussing the Kingdom itself, it is important to analyze the expectations with which Napoleon and France entered Naples. First, Naples became a solution for the great naval question that had plagued Napoleon since France's defeats at the Battle of the Nile in 1798 and Trafalgar in 1805, both at the hands of British Admiral Horatio Nelson. With its

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<sup>221</sup> John A. Davis, *Naples and Napoleon: Southern Italy and the European Revolution 1780-1860* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 173.

many ports, Naples gave the prospect of rebuilding a Mediterranean fleet that could challenge Britain's supremacy on the Sea. Naples also stood at the mouth of the Adriatic Sea and would give Napoleon control of most of the Adriatic Sea and the coasts surrounding it.<sup>222</sup> Naples also stood as the launch pad for Napoleon's projected future expeditions to the East that never materialized. From Naples, Napoleon envisioned a great expedition to the Ottoman Empire, the Middle East, and even into India, a fulfillment and second chance at his failed attempt to conquer Egypt and the East at the end of the eighteenth century. Napoleon's Minister of the Interior, Pierre Louis Roederer, explained that in reference to Naples, "your territories are a jumping-off place for this expedition à la Alexandre." Roederer's allusion to another great empire and conqueror, Alexander the Great, enticed Napoleon.<sup>223</sup>

Naples embodied Napoleon's hopes for a resurgence and recommission of a grand French fleet that could rival and at some point defeat the British navy and allow Napoleon to one day invade the British Isles. Beyond his naval aspirations, Naples provided other incentives for conquering the territory. It was believed that Naples had an immense wealth of untapped resources. The Neapolitan Bourbons were not fully utilizing the resources that were at the end of their fingertips, and to an exhausted French economy after over a decade at war, Naples held a great allure for many in Paris. In addition to that, conquering Naples would provide various high-ranking posts for the new elite in Europe of administrators and government officials who were typically former military officers.<sup>224</sup> Finally, conquering Naples gave Napoleon full control of the Italian Peninsula. All of Italy came under Napoleon's direct or indirect rule, each state needing to meet his demands, most notably the

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<sup>222</sup> Davis, *Naples and Napoleon*, 131.

<sup>223</sup> Desmond Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy* (Cranbury, NJ: Rosemenont Publishing, 2001), 96-99.

<sup>224</sup> Davis, *Naples and Napoleon*, 132.

application of the Continental System.<sup>225</sup> These items are what led to Napoleon into Naples and what his administrations carried with them when initially governing the Kingdom. The expectations that were preconceived before entering Naples were over-ambitious. After exploring Naples and gaining better knowledge of the environment of the population, the régime began to understand their over-estimation. Naples was not as advanced as northern Italy, and the town-rural cleavage was much more distinct and severe. Naples stood as the impossible solution to Napoleon's naval problems, and Napoleon assumed Naples could more than adequately feed the Empire's hunger for men and resources to continue wars throughout Europe. This mindset was the context that Joseph entered Naples with in 1806 as King.

## Joseph's Naples

The importance of Naples was demonstrated by his choice of its King. Owen Connelly in *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms* appropriately emphasizes the importance of choosing Joseph Bonaparte as King and what message that conveyed. Joseph was the head and eldest of the Bonaparte family. Napoleon's new Mediterranean policy made the old Kingdom of Naples the most important assignment left to be filled. It was only fitting to give the post to Joseph. To Napoleon, Naples was a conquered territory that came under the administration of the French through Joseph. Naples's top administrative posts were to be filled with Frenchmen, and Napoleon had final say in the governing of the Kingdom. But unlike Eugène in the Kingdom of Italy, Joseph was given a relatively sizeable portion of independence, flexibility, and understanding from his brother. Even though Napoleon declared to those around him that "I have the right to command a little where I have 40,000

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<sup>225</sup> Alexander Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 166.

men,” Napoleon allowed the independent and increasingly nationalistic Joseph to govern unchecked because of Napoleon’s preoccupations with war and Spain.<sup>226</sup>

Joseph recognized his level of flexibility with his brother and the support given to him by the landowning classes and clergy. Upon entering Naples, Carlo De Nicola, himself a noble and member of the Regency in Naples, an advisory council of ruling élites, commented how “the people remain calm since in any case these measures have placed them in greater subjection.”<sup>227</sup> The landowning classes and clergy had initially rallied to Joseph because of his commitment to restoring order and providing security. Within three weeks, Joseph had created the Ministries of Police and Interior in Naples and appointed Police Commissars in each district. But order as defined by Napoleon and Joseph went beyond what the Neapolitans desired. The Commissars were responsible for censorship, regulating public meetings, controlling all mailings, and detaining all “vagabonds, beggars, and unknown persons.”<sup>228</sup> Joseph also provided the aura of a controlled society by traveling and visiting areas of his Kingdom such as Apulia, Abruzzi, and Molise. Most importantly, Joseph personally commanded the reserve as he conquered the fortress of Gaeta which subsequently ended the revolts in Calabria province that were inspired by the British and the exiled Neapolitan Bourbons in Sicily.<sup>229</sup> The clergy too had a hand in the insurrection. They reached out to the brigands and incited them to take up arms with the remnants of the Neapolitan Bourbons’ army. While this revolt was quelled, resistance would continue out on the periphery during the French occupation, costing the lives of 20,000 French soldiers and an even greater number of Neapolitans’ lives.<sup>230</sup> To the Neapolitans though, Joseph’s brief

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<sup>226</sup> Owen Connelly, *Napoleon’s Satellite Kingdoms* (New York: The Free Press, 1965), 68-70.

<sup>227</sup> Davis, *Naples and Napoleon*, 134.

<sup>228</sup> Davis, *Naples and Napoleon*, 134.

<sup>229</sup> Connelly, *Napoleon’s Satellite Kingdoms*, 71; Davis, *Naples and Napoleon*, 135.

<sup>230</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 166.

reign was synonymous with order and security, and on those issues, Joseph was seen as a success to both Napoleon and the Neapolitans.

Napoleon's trust in the Neapolitans was limited at best. Talleyrand offered advice indirectly to Joseph: "Once on the throne of Naples, he should not make any constitution, leave the nobility and all institutions as they are and only give office to Frenchmen. If he gives any to Neapolitans, he will have to rely on local factions."<sup>231</sup> Talleyrand's advice demonstrated the purpose behind the régime in Naples; it was to simply extract resources and not institutionalize French ideals, a responsibility only for Frenchmen. Joseph did not heed Talleyrand's advice or threats as he appointed three Neapolitans to his ministries, the Marquis de Gallo in Foreign Affairs, Michelangelo Cianciulli in Justice, and the Prince di Pignatelli-Cerchiara in Marine.<sup>232</sup>

Joseph preferred to rule with "the carrot" instead of the stick. He began to form an identity that he was the King of the Neapolitans and not a Bonapartist King meant to serve the Empire. Joseph lowered the prices on oil and bread and aggressively pursued putting an end to raids by the Barbary pirates on the Neapolitan coast. Joseph's methods could be seen as pacifying the populations and the pursuance of gaining the Neapolitans' loyalty by demonstrating the benevolence and effectiveness of the French régime, both former qualities of the Napoleonic régime earlier in the first decade of the nineteenth century. But Napoleon demanded that Joseph pursue more arduous policies. He informed Joseph to "Arm your forts! Disarm, DISARM, the Neapolitans! Believe me, you will never hold on to the country just by winning over public opinion, because sooner or later you will have an insurrection."<sup>233</sup> Napoleon distrusted the Neapolitans and, at that time, saw the French

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<sup>231</sup> Davis, *Naples and Napoleon*, 138.

<sup>232</sup> Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms*, 71-72.

<sup>233</sup> Davis, *Naples and Napoleon*, 138.

régime as occupiers in Naples and not a force for *ralliement* and *amalgame*. Napoleon further demanded tribute from Naples to the imperial treasury. Naples would supply one million francs annually to Paris for Napoleon believed that Naples could supply thirty million francs immediately if need be to the Empire. It was Napoleon's unfounded belief that Naples was richer than Vienna or Milan.<sup>234</sup> This belief was more shrouded in myth than actual fact. Thus extraction was the overwhelming purpose for Napoleon to enter Naples. Neapolitans could not be trusted and any act to gain their loyalty would simply be appeasing and empowering them to one day revolt against the French régime. Whether Napoleon's premonitions were correct on the basis that the Neapolitans would inevitably revolt no matter what Napoleon did or because his policies caused resentment and angst within the masses, the point remains that Naples was not at the same level of participation and governance as its sister satellite kingdoms of Italy and Holland. Naples was to be administered by Frenchmen so that French aims were met simply to strengthen and better the French Empire.

Joseph did attempt to implement reforms in Naples although at the consternation to his brother. Napoleon was uninterested in making a more liberal and more democratic Naples. Joseph was to focus solely on extracting resources for the Empire. But Joseph decided to do more than pillage Naples of its resources. The greatest reform Joseph and his successor Joachim Murat pursued was the abolition of feudalism. Joseph, within six months of his reign, "suppressed feudal jurisdiction without compensation, declared feudal fees on land redeemable, and transformed baronial land into private property."<sup>235</sup> Joseph went further by stripping power away from the local authorities and attempting to appeal to the peasant population. He demanded that towns' communal land be divided up and given to

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<sup>234</sup> Davis, *Naples and Napoleon*, 138-139.

<sup>235</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 167.

their local peasants. This process of land redistribution was to strip power from the land-owning classes, increase agricultural production, and produce a tax base of small and middle landowners.<sup>236</sup> The Feudal Commission was created in 1807 and led by Giuseppe Zurlo. The commission was to oversee and report on the progress of the abolition of feudalism in Naples. Zurlo commented that while there had been progress, for the most part, the abolition of feudalism was simply a philosophy and not actually executed. He reported the following:

I have observed neither agricultural changes nor the redemption of feudal dues, so that many territories in the Kingdom are in the same condition as during feudal times. On the other hand, lands that were supposed to remain intact, like wooded hillsides, were instead cultivated, causing immense damage. Wherever one goes, one sees many places where the abolition of feudalism was in word and not deed.<sup>237</sup>

The promise of great social equality and the chance for the peasants to lift themselves out of poverty did not occur, rather poverty simply continued due to the lack of ability to execute policies from the government's end.

While abolishing feudalism was largely a failed policy, controlling religious orders and convents was successful. Joseph abolished monastic establishments and suppressed all convents, equalling thirty-eight in the city of Naples alone.<sup>238</sup> Even with this attack on the Church, the Pope instructed the clergy in Naples to cooperate with the French régime although the Pope did not recognize Joseph as the King of Naples. The clergy in Calabria were more so the exception and not the rule for State-Church relations in Naples. While the clergy were not actively in opposition to the régime, the poorer masses grew angrier and

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<sup>236</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 167.

<sup>237</sup> Giuseppe Zurlo, "Report on the Abolition of Feudalism in Naples," *Napoleon: Symbol for an Age, A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Rafe Blaufarb (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008), 149.

<sup>238</sup> Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms*, 78.

more resentful towards the régime. Many of the poor depended on the charity of the monastic orders and convents. The action of confiscating religious lands and suppressing these religious houses only worsened the plight of the poor as it became more widespread.<sup>239</sup> Between 1806 and 1811, the government auctioned off 1300 monasteries, convents, and religious houses, leaving the poor with much fewer options in times of desperate need.<sup>240</sup> An act that was to give peasants the possibility to own land ended up empowering the already wealthier land owning classes. Sixty-five percent of the land that was sold went to those who already owned substantial amounts of land.<sup>241</sup> Therefore, religious resistance did not stem from the clergy actively challenging the régime and the populations subsequently rushing to the clergy's support, but rather the populations were directly economically affected by these religious reforms and resisted the French régime without incitement from the clergy. The reforms that were meant to free the populations from the strangle-hold of the Church instead led to resistance movements that would make it impossible to pacify the periphery.

Joseph's reign lasted roughly two years. In that time, he set the precedent of ruling as a Neapolitan attempting to best serve his subjects and not the interests of the Empire. But Joseph did not go as far as his brother Louis in the Kingdom of Holland. Joseph did provide tribute to the imperial treasury and restored a fragile order to the Kingdom. In all, it is too difficult to judge Joseph's reign on the spectrum of where he would be in serving the interests of the Empire versus that of his subjects. What can be said is that he falls somewhere between Eugène and Louis. Napoleon was basically satisfied with Joseph's reign in Naples or he wouldn't have given him the higher and more prestigious post of King of

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<sup>239</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 93.

<sup>240</sup> Davis, *Naples and Napoleon*, 178.

<sup>241</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 156.

Spain. Napoleon applauded Joseph's suppression of the Church's power within Naples and the use of military force to end revolts. But Napoleon miscalculated the level of pacification and subordination that was present in Naples. With the arrival of Murat, Napoleon issued greater demands on Naples, expecting them to be met. Those demands together with Murat's style of governance led to a resurgence in resistance and the failure of the French régime in Naples.

### **Continuing Napoleon's Rule: Murat's Reign**

Napoleon chose Joachim Murat as the next King of Naples. Murat married Napoleon's sister Caroline Bonaparte. Murat was a decorated veteran military officer of Napoleon's army. Napoleon trusted him and welcomed his skills of control and order. But Caroline would play an important role. As the representative of the Bonapartist clan, she was the intermediary between the intense and confrontational exchanges of her brother and husband in the years to come. Murat initially was very accommodating to Napoleon's demands. The most important shift from Joseph was the implementation of conscription. Joseph introduced conscription in 1806, but implementation was complicated by the revolt in Calabria and the lack of enforcement of the conscription laws. Furthermore, when Joseph left for Spain, he took with him the troops that he raised. Murat took a more efficient and effective stance with conscription.<sup>242</sup> In 1809, Murat decreed the conscription laws to be in effect even though he pleaded with Napoleon to pursue aggressively a voluntary service army. In Murat's mind, the compromise between Napoleon's demands and Murat not wanting to enforce the laws was a low conscription quota, only amounting to one in every 1500 inhabitants, much lower than Belgium's quota of one in every five

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<sup>242</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 169.

hundred.<sup>243</sup> But Napoleon was again at war with Austria and desperately and emphatically demanded more troops.<sup>244</sup> Murat, as the loyal soldier who understood the demands necessary to defeat the Austrians, effectively pursued conscription acts and construction of warships. According to the treaty between Naples and France that Murat agreed upon, Naples was to supply eighteen thousand infantry, three thousand cavalry, twenty-five cannon, six ships of the line, six frigates, and six brigs or corvettes.<sup>245</sup> The cost of raising forces was financed by the Neapolitans. In that way, Naples was impacted doubly in providing young adult males to serve in the French army while taxing the population. Napoleon's first order to Murat represented Napoleon's truest intentions. He intended to extract Naples's resources for the benefit of the Empire.

Murat had a rogue characteristic that only became more predominant further into his reign. Napoleon became stricter not only with his demands but with what Murat was permitted to do. The greatest issue was again on the raising of troops. Murat continued to raise troops beyond the amount dictated by Napoleon of fifteen thousand soldiers. Within a short time, Murat had raised forty thousand troops. Napoleon told him to cut his troop totals by half. Instead by 1814, Murat responded by having an army of eighty thousand troops. Murat had fourteen divisional generals, ten of whom were French.<sup>246</sup> Murat began to pursue creating an independent Naples from France. Even when Murat seemed to be protecting Naples from Napoleon's demands, he did so out of his own personal ambition and his pursuance of greater independence. Even the creation of Neapolitan national identity was a construct of Murat's just as the Italian one was of Napoleon's in the Kingdom of Italy. On June 14, 1811, Murat declared that all French citizens in the government must

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<sup>243</sup> Stuart Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 160.

<sup>244</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 101.

<sup>245</sup> Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms*, 103.

<sup>246</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 101.

apply for Neapolitan citizenship. Murat wished to purge from the administration any individuals who were more loyal to Napoleon than himself. Napoleon quickly and defiantly responded that all French citizens were also citizens of Naples, a move that undercut any authority Murat attempted to obtain. Even with his attempts at independence, Murat did not succumb to the same fate as King Louis of Holland. A potential rift between Murat and Napoleon would have led to an all out revolt in Naples against the French with support from the British and Sicilians. Baron Durand explained the reality of the anti-French sentiments. "The King in truth deludes himself with the state of his country and seems to believe that he is strong enough to do without the co-operation of the French and rely entirely on the Neapolitans."<sup>247</sup> Therefore to keep order and control, both men needed one another. A precarious sense of security was simply held together by the tenuous relationship between Napoleon and Murat. Neither man ever truly attempted to institutionalize French principles or using more than the bayonet to pacify the country. *Ralliement* and *amalgame* were nowhere to be found.

Finances were what made the Kingdom of Naples rot. The economic burden of Napoleon's military demands as well as Murat's army threw Naples into severe debt. Prior to Murat, Joseph attempted to modernize Naples. Joseph worked to have a college and girls' school in every province, roads were built and finally completed, music conservatories were created, and the Academy of painting was encouraged. More importantly, Joseph was able to increase revenues from seven million ducats to fourteen million ducats while cutting the one hundred million ducat debt by half.<sup>248</sup> Roederer reformed taxation and finances in Naples by introducing a progressive land tax, ending tax farming, and paying off debts of the

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<sup>247</sup> Davis, *Naples and Napoleon*, 154-155.

<sup>248</sup> Nicholas-Philibert Desvernois, "Reforms in Naples," *Napoleon: Symbol for an Age, A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Rafe Blaufarb (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008), 146.

monarchy from the sale of public lands. He explained to Joseph that “by stripping the Nobility of an immunity that has damaged the interests of the Prince, Your Majesty may at a stroke bring peace to the People, the Nobility and the entire Kingdom.”<sup>249</sup> These reforms served one purpose, to maximize the potential revenue that could be collected in order to meet Napoleon’s rising demands. And the perceived notion that the nobles were open to such changes without being incorporated into the decision-making process was to be proven wrong at the first sign of weakness in the régime. Joseph also attempted to expand and diversify the Neapolitan economy by growing cotton, silk, sugar beets, and sugar cane to meet the demands of the imperial market. Iron was mined more efficiently in Calabria which adequately supplied the army and navy.<sup>250</sup> But the difficulty in all of this was that Joseph was only King for two years which could not lead to any truly major changes in the economy. Joseph’s efforts did attempt to economically develop the country so that it could possibly greater stature in the Empire.

Murat entered into a near-impossible situation, and his own personal ambitions and vanity did not aid him. Murat was a man who ensured he was taken care of by having beautiful estates and a sizeable salary. He failed to look out onto “his people” and truly recognize their plight. The Continental System and British blockade strangled agriculture in Naples and had all but killed one of Naples’s largest industries, olive oil production. Both had an even greater effect on the olive oil industry because olive oil revenues largely came from overseas trade.<sup>251</sup> While the economy staggered, finances were relatively stable until 1811. By adjusting Roederer’s reformed land tax, the budget was nearly balanced in 1809.

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<sup>249</sup> Davis, *Naples and Napoleon*, 166, 175.

<sup>250</sup> Connelly, *Napoleon’s Satellite Kingdoms*, 85-86.

<sup>251</sup> Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe*, 168.

The budget incurred a surplus of over one million ducats in 1810 and two million in 1811.<sup>252</sup> But 1812 became the year of incredible demands on the Neapolitan treasury. Napoleon's preparations for the Russian Campaign forced Naples to increase taxes and divert other funds to the raising of troops. No less than eighty percent of the government budget was consumed by military expenditures, military expenditures increasing by sixty percent in three years. In the same time period, revenues only grew by fifty percent.<sup>253</sup> And expenditures only grew from there. In 1813, revenues were seventy three million lire with a projected budget of between eighty and eighty-four million lire for the following year. Furthermore at the demand of Napoleon, Naples had to pay back its debt of twenty million francs to both Holland and France.<sup>254</sup> Naples's finances and budgetary decisions were simply a reaction to the demands placed on them without a thorough plan to rein in spending or increase revenues. The Neapolitan government was successfully navigating through the debt of the former monarchy, the added costs of administration which now equaled one million ducats a year, and the rising military expenditures.<sup>255</sup> Not until the severe demands of 1811-1812 did the government begin to have troubles with solvency. Napoleon's interests did not lie in whether Naples could independently succeed but if Naples could adequately supply Napoleon with the resources he needed to continue his imperial expansion.

Napoleon's goals came into conflict with the aspirations Murat had for Naples. Initially, Murat did what he could to spark economic expansion. He pursued a protectionist policy that enticed foreign capitalists to invest and create textile industries in Naples. Within three to four years, raw cotton production had increased from five thousand bales to twenty

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<sup>252</sup> Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms*, 116.

<sup>253</sup> Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe*, 173.

<sup>254</sup> Davis, *Naples and Napoleon*, 156-157.

<sup>255</sup> Davis, *Naples and Napoleon*, 146.

thousand bales.<sup>256</sup> By 1813, the protectionist policies forbade any and all imports from France. There were industries that benefitted from Napoleon's demands. Napoleon set a quota for production of warships that created an increase in demand for labor.<sup>257</sup> Murat also redirected grain exports. Grain that was earmarked for the Empire but sat in warehouses due to high duties was now exported to ports in the Middle East.<sup>258</sup> But while there were sectors of economic success, one of Naples's most important industries, silk production, experienced severe economic downturns. Naples's originally supplied fifty to seventy-five percent of the Empire's demand for raw silk. After Piedmont was annexed, the French colonized the production of Piedmontese raw silk so that it could supply the silk industry in Lyon.<sup>259</sup> Napoleon preferred to have raw silk produced in Piedmont because it was further pacified, met the guidelines for higher quality silk, and was more incorporated into the Empire. The effects such a shift would have on Naples was a distant thought as he believed it did not have any negative consequences on the greater scheme of the Empire. As mentioned in a prior chapter, the sharp decline in demand after supplying the French army to invade Russia economically distressed the European economy in 1813. That lack of demand set off a cycle of events that led to unemployment, decrease demand, production surpluses, and sharp decline in prices. The Royal Silk Factory in St. Leucio incurred huge surpluses in silk, so much that they failed to dispose of the surpluses by lottery because of the lack of buyers.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Stuart Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe*, 149.

<sup>257</sup> Gregory, *Napoleon's Italy*, 148-149.

<sup>258</sup> Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms*, 117.

<sup>259</sup> Stuart Woolf, "The Mediterranean Economy During the Napoleonic Wars," *Economic Effects of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, ed. Erik Aerts (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990), 117.

<sup>260</sup> Davis, *Naples and Napoleon*, 194.

## The Inevitable Fall

The fall of the Kingdom of Naples was not surprising. After the Russian Campaign and the total defeat of Napoleon's army, Napoleon's threats to Murat became empty. Murat was able to begin to appeal to the British and Austrians so that Murat could remain in power in Naples. Murat had successfully put in place a high-level bureaucracy protected by a well-trained and experienced army. To that, the Bourbons in Sicily offered nothing to the Allies that Murat himself could provide. Murat had a stronger hold on Naples than the Bourbons did so the Allies had no incentive to reinstate the Bourbons as the ruling family. Murat then joined the Allies against Napoleon. Murat's shift in allegiance demonstrated the fragile control Napoleon had over Naples. Murat simply needed an alliance from a great power to ensure he would be protected from invasion. Any invasion would have led to a widespread revolt within Naples that would end Murat's reign. Murat abolished the Continental System which resulted in Murat gaining the favor of the merchant classes in Naples.<sup>261</sup> But as the Empire collapsed and the Congress of Vienna convened, the Allies wished to reinstate the Bourbons in Naples. Murat abandoned the alliance, attempting to keep control, but was defeated by the Austrians in 1815.

Murat's defection occurred after Napoleon's power was diminished. To Murat and the Neapolitans, Napoleon ruled with the stick and never offered the carrot. Naples was the quintessential land of resources and exploitation for Napoleon. He did not see the country as an extension of French institutions. Napoleon's intentions were not to create another French government with French ideals and institutions in Naples. What Napoleon did intend for was a mass exodus of resources out of Naples. Napoleon succeeded in his mission of gaining resources, raising troops, and commissioning the beginnings of a new

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<sup>261</sup> Michael Broers, *Europe Under Napoleon* (New York: Arnold, 1996), 249.

navy. What can be debated is whether Napoleon was ignorant of the repercussions of his own actions or if he was intentionally disregarding the population. It was evident he had no concern for the plight of the poor or incorporating the former ruling classes into the higher levels of government. *Ralliement* and *amalgame* were not meant to find their way into Naples. In the end, there were benefits to the régime via economic development and modernizing taxation and the finances in Naples. While history typically fails to recognize those contributions because of the Neapolitans discontent with the Napoleonic régime, there was a lasting legacy. But outside of those modernizing policies, Napoleon's greatest legacy was his drive to do what was necessary to fuel the Empire with complete disregard for the sovereignty and welfare of the Neapolitans.

# CONCLUSION

## Napoleon's Colonization of Europe

Napoleon's purpose for the Empire was to colonize Europe for the benefit of France. Colonization of Europe may be a difficult concept to understand because when discussing colonization, we typically speak of Europe as the colonizer, not the ones actually being colonized by another power. But colonization is the process of settling territories and subjecting them to imperial rule where the colony abides by the rule of the home country and serves the Empire primarily for the benefit of the home country. Obviously Europe was already settled, but it was evident that there was a substantial immigration of French administrators and officials into the Low Countries and Italy. Napoleon's governments demanded hundreds of qualified administrators to see that the Empire effectively and efficiently operated. At first in the Netherlands and the Italian Republics, Napoleon allowed the top officials of those countries to be natives and not French officials. Yes, Napoleon still held considerable say in those countries, but the day-to-day operations were governed by natives. Even in the case of Piedmont, they became colonizers themselves by following the Empire into Genoa, Tuscany, and Rome in order to successfully administer those territories. As the republics turned into kingdoms, it became less obvious that the countries were equal to France. Napoleon strengthened the power at the top and more aggressively pursued policies that resembled a colonial power.

When we think of colonization, we think of two types, American and African. Napoleonic colonization of Europe had varying aspects of European colonization of the Americas and of Africa. The Empire did not see the conquered territories as inferior or the French as superiors, bringing civilization to the populations of the Low Countries and Italy. These were countries Napoleon admired and respected, especially Italy which he had such an infatuation with. Unlike African colonization and more along the lines of American colonization, Napoleon was not fearful of empowering various elites to high-level administrative posts. Until 1805 and like the Americas, most countries were ruled by natives as long as they formed Napoleon's governments which contained a strong executive, limited legislature, and departments with prefects at the head of them. If we want to attempt to attach Napoleonic colonization to another type of colonization in order to better understand it, it was most similar to American colonization. Like the American colonies and Britain, Napoleon gave varying levels of autonomy to the satellite kingdoms but became enraged when they were irreverent and disobedient. They were given parameters to govern, and as long as they were within those parameters and met Napoleon's goals, Napoleon was satisfied. Unlike African colonization, Napoleon had a respect for those who became a part of the Empire. But there was a sense of bringing enlightened government, as interpreted by Napoleon, to these areas which do resemble African colonization. Napoleon saw himself as the harbinger of liberating these territories from the *ancien régime* of the Church and the old dynastic royal families. For Napoleon, France was more advanced than any other country because France abolished feudalism, reformed Church-State relations, and empowered the bourgeoisie. While Napoleon respected the cultures of other countries, he did supplant their institutions with French ideals and institutions throughout Europe because to Napoleon, they were superior to anything the conquered territories had before. What Napoleonic

colonization had in common with all forms of colonization, specifically American and African colonization, was the economic domination that was set in place.

It is undeniable that French economic policy attempted to make France the sole economic power in Europe. Colonization provided France with the opportunity to become that economic power. First, France was able to provide countries like Belgium an incredible market for goods that they had never been open to before. France's population demanded goods such as cotton, silk, and food. Annexation provided Belgium free trade with France and France with suppliers for its army and people. Without the French market, Belgium would never have been able to industrialize as it did. Furthermore, the Continental System protected the fledgling Belgian industries from British competition. Along those lines, Italy also greatly benefited from the Continental System as Italy became the chief trade center for raw cotton. Italy provided start-up cotton industries throughout the Empire with raw cotton after the British supply from the Americas was shut off.

But Italy experienced the economic manipulation aspects of colonization. Italy gained much from the increased trade with France by means of the grain trade. France had a high demand for grain, and Napoleon needed a great amount for his army which was in almost constant warfare. But to meet France's demands, Napoleon forced Italian farmers to abandon growing olives and other century-old produce so that France's hunger was satisfied. But farmers fared better than others in Italy. They were able to continue to produce and make a profit at least. Napoleon aggressively pursued a policy of moving silk production out of Naples and the Kingdom of Italy to the more pacified and incorporated territory of Piedmont. There, Napoleon could better monitor silk production, and trade costs to Lyon in France would be cheaper. Napoleon developed Lyon to be the center for silk refineries and warehouses to trade with the rest of Continental Europe. In typical colony-fashion,

Piedmont simply supplied the raw material so that France could produce finished goods to trade with Europe and profit from the trade of finished silk.

The greatest resource that was extracted from the conquered territories was manpower. The Empire claimed thousands of Belgians, Dutch, and Italians all for conscription into the French army. The French army served to accomplish the goals of Napoleon and France. If the territories happened to benefit from Napoleon's goals, so be it, but they were never the primary focus. These young men that were conscripted now served Napoleon and French interests and were expected to serve as fervently as their French imperial "compatriots." The extraction of young men from these territories was not only great in the number that Napoleon demanded, but the number that was lost was even more startling. As was discussed in the Netherlands and Northern Italy chapters, only small fractions of the men that were conscripted returned after the Russian campaign. Industries could be rebuilt and trade reopened, but the number of lives lost in the Napoleonic Wars came to be too much.

This single act of conscripting thousands outside of France for the French army demonstrated the overall colonization effort of the Empire. By arguing that Napoleon spread French institutions throughout Europe for the benefit of Europe to move towards a single European state, Woolf seemed not to acknowledge the incredible losses Europe under Napoleon sustained. Woolf also failed to be more critical of the autocratic shift in Napoleonic rule from 1805 till its fall and to see the true purpose of creating French institutions in each country, that purpose being for the extraction of resources for the benefit of France. Woolf's studies did provide a strong case that Napoleon did have a "grand scheme," even though it was a makeshift scheme and was constantly altered to fit the demands of Napoleon's goals. What did not change were Napoleon's goals. From his time

as the commander of the Army of Italy until his abdication, the grand scheme was not for a single European state but a Europe dominated and controlled by France for its own benefit.

## **The Myth of Nationalism**

The fall of the Empire is even simpler to see. The belief that nationalism was the underlying theme for all countries to finally resist and topple the French empire does not coincide to the facts of what actually occurred. For nationalism to exist, political factions would have to have been pacified and those individuals united under the same circumstances and beliefs. That did not occur. As we have seen in the Low Countries and Italy, there were multiple interests who all wished to vie for Napoleon's favor. Napoleon tipped the balances between these factions that had been in embittered battles for years. Each faction resented the other, and Napoleon only made that resentment worse.

In the end, the fall of the Empire was a combination of the economics and finances, conscription, and religion. All of these items converged after the failure of the Russian campaign. The preparations for the campaign in 1811 had created great demands for goods for the army. Most of the goods were supplied by industries that had been in existence for barely ten years, and they did not adequately know how to handle such a demand. After the demand from the army was satisfied in 1812, industries were left with huge surpluses that they began to sell off at decreased prices. This created a race to the bottom for prices which led to industries having to cut costs. The simplest way to cut costs was to fire people so unemployment peaked. With an unemployed population, people could not afford any goods, even at decreased prices. Therefore, the benefits capital-owners and labor saw in the Empire evaporated and with that their outright support and participation in the Napoleonic régimes.

The Russian campaign also led to massive increases in military expenditures that placed greater strains on the government finances. Even territories that managed to gain control of their finances, as in the Kingdom of Italy, experienced large deficits from Napoleon's demands for more troops and tribute to adequately supply them. Countries were forced to raise taxes since little revenue could be gained from selling Church lands since most of the lands had been sold prior to 1812. Taxation was simply inconceivable to the already suffering populations, especially the masses in the countryside. In many instances, taxes were simply never collected or running deficits became a necessary evil that hopefully one day in the future might be solved. The solution became supporting the removal of the régime that imposed these demands upon each country.

Conscription may have been the greatest variable in the fall of the Empire. The fact that after the Russian campaign only a handful of each country's youth returned was simply too much to bear. Casualties were more easily swallowed when accompanied with victories, even though the countries were not great beneficiaries of the spoils of war. But military failure coupled with unimaginable death could not be swallowed even by some of the Empire's greatest supporters. Belgium and the Kingdom of Italy, two areas that experienced many benefits from the Empire and were in many instances loyal to the Empire, would not stand with Napoleon when the Allies invaded. The population could be over-taxed, their industries crumbling, and the government ruled by foreigners, but losing loved ones all for the glory of a foreign emperor and his foreign country was too much.

Finally, religion, more specifically the Catholic Church, was defiant. Pope Pius VII had been more than willing to compromise with Napoleon. He embraced liberal ideals, agreed with a certain level of religious toleration, and reconciled republicanism and religion. But the issue of the Pope's temporal power and Napoleon's addiction to control the Church

forced the Church to become confrontational with Napoleon and resist his régimes. The clergy had close connections with the people, especially in Italy. The clergy were friends and business partners with nobles. The clergy were also the spiritual leaders for the masses, and the educated and philanthropists in the countryside. Their influence and impact of their words was immeasurable. So when it came time to choose between the Pope and Napoleon after the Pope's imprisonment, the clergy could alienate the masses away from supporting the French régime. Without the masses, the nobles would fear any repercussions from the masses if the nobles continued their outright support of the French régimes.

In the end, these variables simply created the environment for the fall of the Empire.

Without the Allies' invasions into Italy, the Netherlands, and Belgium, it would have been unlikely that Napoleon would have lost complete control. With that said, Napoleon's control over those territories was not the same as it previously was. He had little support if any and simply relied on the rule of the bayonet to keep any form of control over these territories. What was evident was that nationalism never existed in the manner that it rallied the populations against the Empire. The political factions ran too deep ever be reconciled in such short of a time. Each faction had a different reason for their resentment of the Empire while at the same time continuing to resent the faction they had traditionally been with. Never did a single slogan or idea unite the peoples in these countries. Never did a single leader successfully rally the country to the cause. The fall was local, partisan, and issue specific. Nationalism failed to envelop each country against Napoleon and the Empire.

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