MANAGING THE FALL OF FRANCE: THE FRENCH DECISION TO ASK FOR ARMISTICE CONDITIONS FROM GERMANY (MID-JUNE 1940) ANALYZED THROUGH A NEOCLASSICAL REALIST APPROACH

BY

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ABSTRACT

Between May 10th and Mid-June 1940, a series of military defeats forced the French Council of Ministers to make a hard choice: whether to ask Hitler for armistice conditions or try and set up a government in French Algeria or in exile and continue the war on Britain's side. This last course of action required a military capitulation of the French Army in the *Métropole*, for the Ministers not to be seen as fleeing the fight. This Independent Study analyzes the decision-making process through a neoclassical realist lens, at the systemic-international and domestic level and at the level of the individual actors. First, it analyzes the international and domestic contexts and the respective roles of Paul Reynaud, France's Head of Government, Maxime Weygand, France's Army Chief, and Marshal Philippe Pétain, hero of Verdun and Vice-President of the Council in France's Government. It then studies what it calls "the decision", a course of action that decants between the installation of the Government at Bordeaux and the resignation of Paul Reynaud and President Lebrun's designation of Pétain as President of the Council with a view to inquiring Germany´s armistice conditions. In this part the study analyses French civil-military relations and the underlying issues in the struggle between those in favor of an armistice and those in

favor of a capitulation. Finally, the study treats the issue of formal versus real power, the imperfect mediator role of the "Foreign Policy Executive" (Reynaud) and ultimately the role of elites in an existential-survival crisis.

Keywords: Fall of France, 1940 Armistice, neoclassical realist approach

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Fernando Berguño

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CHAPTER 1
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1.1 The Fall of France

Between May 10th and Mid-June 1940, a series of military defeats brought the French Third Republic to the edge of collapse:

- May 12th -15th: Sedan breakthrough;
- May 15th: Capitulation of the Dutch Army;
- May 27th: Capitulation of the Belgian Army;
- June 5th - 8th: Battle on the Somme;
- June 10th: Paris was declared an open city;
- June 14th: The Germans entered Paris.

Towards the end of those agonizing weeks, the French Council of Ministers (*Conseil des Ministres*) had to make a hard decision: whether to ask Hitler for armistice conditions or whether to try and set up a government in French Algeria or in exile and continue the war on Britain's side. This last course of action, preconized by the President of the Council (*président du Conseil)* Paul Reynaud, required a military capitulation of the French Army in the *Métropole,* for the Ministers not to be seen as abandoning France in the thick of the fight.

1.1.1 Main protagonists: Reynaud, Weygand, and Pétain

One of the main protagonists of this dilemma was Paul Reynaud, the French Head of Government, called President of the Council (*président du Conseil*) under France's Third Republic. He was in favor of a capitulation by the Army and of continuing to fight on Britain's side. For Reynaud, the future of France depended upon her honoring her pledges to Great Britain and continuing the fight, regardless of the German occupation. France still had one of the most modern navies in the world and a colonial empire with immense resources. He believed the United States would eventually join in the struggle and that French North-Africa could be defended. Opposite him, stood two soldiers, the Commander-in-chief of the Army - and French g*énéralissime* - General Maxime Weygand, and the old *Maréchal* Philippe Pétain, at

the time Vice-President of the Council (*vice-président du Conseil)* in Reynaud's ministerial cabinet, both of them in favor of an armistice, a political agreement between the French and German Government that would put a stop to the fighting within certain agreed conditions and so preserve the honor of the Army in their mind and permit the establishment of an administration on French metropolitan soil, avoiding the total occupation of metropolitan France, keeping control of her navy and colonies, so as to later reach and honorable peace or prepare a *revanche*, in any case regenerate as a nation.

The stage was set for a contest that played itself inside and outside of different Council of Ministers (*Conseil des Ministres)* and other instances, throughout the last half of May and first half of June 1940, in different French locations. We will analyze this contest and its results, from a neoclassical realist perspective. The time frame: June 12th - June 16th, 1940. For context we would have to treat events-issues from the German offensive in the West onward (May 10th), but the decision-making contest starts to unfold from the success of the German offensive on the Somme and Weygand's consequent intervention at a meeting of the Council of Ministers at Cangé on June 12th stating that the "God of armies had decided" (this is the expression noted in Reynaud's account) and that the Government should ask for an armistice.

The following chronology was taken freely from Charles Pomaret, *Le Dernier Témoin*, Paris, 1968, pp.25-26 and Paul Baudouin's *Neuf mois au gouvernement, (avril-décembre 1940)*, Paris, 1948:

- June 12th, 19:30-23:00, Council of Ministers at the Château de Cangé (near Tours). General Maxime Weygand asked the Ministers to request an armistice. Reynaud invoked the March 28th Franco-British declaration. The Council decided to invite Churchill the next day;
- June 13th, 15:00, another Council of Ministers took place at Cangé. The Ministers were irritated at Churchill's absence; Marshal Pétain declared that he would never leave France;
- June 15th, 16:20, Council of Ministers in Bordeaux. Chautemps presented his proposal to ask for armistice conditions from Germany and continue the fight if they were not acceptable. Before

and after this Council meeting Reynaud and Weygand clashed over the issue of cease-fire, on both occasions the *généralissime* refused to order a cease-fire or capitulation;

- June 16th, the first Council of Ministers of that day started around 11:00. Reynaud read Roosevelt's answer to France's request for American intervention: material help was promised but America would not join the war. Pétain read a letter of resignation (but did not resign);
- June 16th, second Council of Ministers between 15:00-17:15: Reynaud declared that Britain had given a negative answer to France's petition to be allowed to ask (Germany) for armistice conditions and presents a project for a Franco-British Union approved by the British but that the French Council of Ministers did not adopt.
- June 16th, 22:00, a third Council of Ministers, with Pétain as *president du Conseil* decided to ask for armistice conditions from Germany.

1.2 The Research Question

When analyzed through a three-layered approach, international-systemic, domestic and at the level of the individual decision-makers: **was the decision of the Council of Ministers on the night of June 16th, 1940, to ask Germany what would be its conditions for an armistice, a decision consequent with France's national interest, from the point of view of the information available to the decision-makers at the time?** This Independent Study is based on the belief that under certain conditions, when the survival of a state or a society is at stake, it is possible to discern between an objective national interest and one that simply reflects the interests of given groups in a society.

1.3 The Research Objectives and Contribution

Objective**:** by treating this complex subject through a neo-classical realist approach that has never been applied to it before, to try to produce a research as unbiased and as objective as possible.

Contribution**:** lessons could be learned from this episode, applicable to other situations in the life of a nation.

The armistice has defenders and detractors in France. There is a strong opprobrium associated with Vichy, a regime born from the Armistice of 1940. Some present the armistice as the product of a right-wing complot. Others have argued that from late May onwards, Weygand deliberately managed France's military resources with a view to forcing the French Cabinet to ask for an armistice, when he could, so they contend, have prepared, early on, the conditions for an effective resistance from North-Africa.[1] By applying the neoclassical realist approach to the subject, we hope, as far as possible, to isolate it from the political and ideological debates and biases that over the years have complicated its understanding.

1.4 Review of Memoirs and Other Sources

Memoirs and diaries: As all protagonists are now deceased, their memoirs are invaluable. Reynaud, Weygand, Camille Chautemps and also the President of the French Republic, Albert Lebrun, are the principal French protagonists. These memoirs are biased accounts that must be processed with a healthy degree of caution. Another set of important memoirs and diaries belong to close aides of Reynaud, such as the Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs Paul Baudouin, 1948, and Colonel Villelume, 1976 (both in fact pro-armistice) and others: De Margerie, 2010, and Leca, 1978. Although they are not the main protagonists, their notes and compte-rendus constitute rich and valuable sources. There are a few relevant contemporary Anglo-Saxon sources, statesmen who were actually in contact with the relevant French Ministers, namely Churchill, General Spears (liaison officer), etc. We should also add the correspondence between American Ambassador William C. Bullitt and President

[1] Eleanor M. Gates, *End of the Affair: The Collapse of the Anglo-French Alliance, 1930-40* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1981).

Roosevelt, as American support was vital for the Reynaud faction. Though the reviews that follow do not form an exhaustive list of memoirs of the period, we believe these are the most important titles with regard to the decision-making process:

Reibel, Charles. ***Pourquoi et comment fut décidée la demande d'armistice (10-17 Juin 1940),*** **Vanves: Imprimerie Kapp (no date: Sept. 1940?).** The value of this testimony lies in the early date of its publication and of the direct interviews of Senator Reibel with Weygand and General Georges as well as with President Lebrun. Reibel pushes himself into the anti-chambers of History by trying to lobby (apparently successfully) some of the cabinet ministers and the President himself. This gives us an honest account of his meetings with Weygand and Georges, but tells us little about the decision-making process – inside the Council of Ministers - as it unveiled in those fast moving days.

Lebrun, Albert. ***Témoignage*****. Paris: Plon, 1945.** These memoirs by the man holding the position of President of the French Republic in My-June 1940, are particularly interesting with regards to Lebrun's offer to Reynaud to continue as Head of Government or President of the Council (*président du Conseil)* if he accepted to implement Chautemps policy, with regards to Reynaud's refusal, and Lebrun's own decision to name Pétain as *président du Conseil.*

Bourget, Pierre-André. ***De Beyrouth à Bordeaux, La guerre 1939-40 vue du P.C. Weygand*****. Paris: Editions Berger-Levrault, 1946.** The memoirs of coronel Bourget constitute an interesting account of the military developments of the battles of Flanders and France from a very close aide of the *généralissime* Maxime Weygand. They also provide an account of the political discussions leading to the armistice but here Bourget is for the most part repeating what he has learned from Weygand himself as he was never party to the meetings of the Council of Ministers, nor to the *Comité de Guerre* nor the inter-allied meetings. It is in any case a sober account and published immediately after the war, where Bourget abstains from introducing his own notions or ideas.

Reynaud, Paul. ***La France a sauvé l'Europe*****. Paris: Flammarion, 1947**. Here we find a very rich and detailed text, carefully written and in impeccable chronological order by one of the main protagonists of this episode. It is of course a defense of his actions.

Baudouin, Paul. ***Neuf mois au government (avril-décembre 1940)*****. Paris: Éditions de la Table Ronde, 1948.** Baudouin's text is in the form of a day to day journal where he describes events, transcribes dialogues and gives context and his thoughts to the evolving situation. It is considered one of the most valuable (if not the most valuable) of published memoirs for the period except that some of his affirmations later raised controversy, for example, his insistence that Churchill at Tours (June 13th) signalled that Britain would not recriminate France were it to stop fighting (thereby accepting the principle of a separate armistice according to Baudouin) or the affirmation that Weygand's armistice proposal explicitly excluded the possibility of handing over the French fleet to the Germans. Reynaud, who initially promoted Baudouin as one of his aides, making him Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs (with access to the Council of Ministers), afterwards strongly resented his role and views and in later years accused him of having conspired with Weygand and Pétain. He is also author of a small booklet: ***Réponse à "La Vérité sur l'Armistice" de M.A. Kammerer par Paul Baudouin, Ancient Ministre, MCMXLV Vérités Francaises*** that is critical of Kammerer's version of events, attacking his lack of rigor.

Churchill, Sir Winston. ***The Second World War, Vol. II, Their Finest Hour (Book 1 The Fall of France).*** **Boston: Houghton Miffling Company, 1949.** Churchill gives his interpretation of events in France in two different chapters (Chapter IX: "The French Agony"; Chapter X "The Bordeaux Armistice"). He gives his own account of the June 13th Tours meeting (differing from Baudouin's). Of course, he had a working relationship with Reynaud and was informed of Reynaud's mood through the British Ambassador Sir Ronald Campbell, present at Bordeaux. This account is important as Churchill was feeding Reynaud with necessary answers to the queries of the French cabinet regarding an eventual armistice (Churchill presented, as approved by the British cabinet, a project of union between France and Great Britain which did little to help Reynaud with his Ministers). Weygand is presented as a seditious general, Pétain as the "the center of a band of defeatist Ministers", the Chautemps proposal as "insidious" and attractive to the "waverers". It is a very biased account by a statesman who interpreted his country's interest as the need to prolong this "French Agony" as long as possible, in preparation for the coming fight between Great Britain and Germany.

Weygand, *Mémoires. T. III, Rappelé au Service*. Paris: 1950. The memoirs of General Maxime Weygand, Commander in Chief of the French armies from May 20th, 1940, onward, are not as well documented as those of Reynaud (published in 1947), nor can they compare with the day by day account provided by Reynaud and Baudouin, for example, but they offer an interesting insight into his point of view which should also be understood as the point of view of his principal lieutenants. It is important to note that the "*considérations générales*" displayed by Weygand in his memoirs go directly to the subject of the legitimacy (or illegitimacy to some) of his actions and, consequently, to the issues at hand at the moment of the armistice. Though only partially admitted to some of the ministerial cabinets meetings where the decision around the armistice played itself out, Weygand was a first-class protagonist of this drama as his knowledge of France's military situation and prospects were unmatched and, from June 12th onward, he brought to bear the full weight of his prestige upon the Cabinet Ministers in favor of an armistice. He gives us a good overview of the reasons behind his actions.

Weygand, général Maxime. "SOUVENIRS: MAI-JUIN 1940" in *Revue des Deux Mondes* (1er JANVIER 1950), Paris, 1950, pp.3-46. Valuable recollections by the French *généralissime*, commander in chief and Chief of Staff of National Defense in June 1940 though, of course, they display his point of view and the arguments that suit his decisions at the time. They start with the *Comité de Guerre* of May 25th, then deals with other issues such as the efforts to obtain a stronger commitment from the British Air Force. Then Weygand gives his account of the events on June 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th and then gives his final ideas on the concept of capitulation and what it would have entailed for the honor of the Army (and the Government according to him) but also in more practical terms. Certain considerations are given to the consequences of such a policy for North Africa (not shared with the Ministers at the time). These *Remembrances* (*Souvenirs*) follow almost word for word what Weygand published in his memoirs.

Bouthillier, Yves. *Le Drame de Vichy T.1. Face à l'ennemi, face à l'allié*. Paris: Librairie Plon, 1950. The memoirs of Yves Bouthillier are a first rate a source for understanding the mechanics of this episode and the decision-making process leading to the armistice. He was a close aide of Reynaud, brought by him to the

government as Minister of Finance, at a very young age, but soon starts to sympathize with the partisans of an armistice. He makes no secret of the admiration that he felt for Pétain and Weygand, household names in France, and this permeates his version of events. Having said that, his descriptions of the cabinet meetings to which he was party are very detailed and very useful. He doesn't just transcribe the dialogues but tries to analyze the full complexity of the issues being fought over; weighing what was said and unsaid.

Herriot, Édouard. *Épisodes, 1940-1944*. Paris: Flammarion, 1950. Although an important figure of French politics and at the time President of the Chamber of Deputies of France, with regard to the issue of the armistice, these memoirs by Herriot are built on the information that he received from others regarding the main discussions. Only one episode is really relevant, and that has to do with his meeting with President Lebrun in the presence of the President of the Senate, Jeanneney and Reynaud, a meeting where both Herriot and Jeannenay claim to have recommended Lebrun to continue with Reynaud as *président du Conseil* (16.06.40). Unless one gives credit to the idea of a manoeuvre to eventually bring back Reynaud after Pétain's failure, it is difficult to understand why these four politicians, all in favor of continuing the war, did not rather favor the rise of Chautemps (who had explicitly declared his preference for continuing the fight) instead of allowing Pétain, one hundred per cent committed to the armistice, to take over the reins of government.

Marin, Louis. "Contribution à l'étude des prodromes de l'armistice" in *Revue d'histoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, 1ère Année, No. 3, Autour de l'Armistice de juin 1940 (juin 1951),* pp. 1-26. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France (PUF), 1951. This article represents the recollections of Louis Marin regarding the cabinet meetings from June 12th onward, when Weygand brought up the issue of the armistice to the Ministers. It also gives details regarding relevant episodes outside these meetings though Marin was not necessarily a witness to them. He gives his view of certain things that cannot be contested according to him (Churchill did not give France a free hand at the Briare meeting, Weygand did not give technical advice regarding North Africa, only political arguments, etc.). He accuses Reynaud and President Lebrun of having acted in an inconsequential manner and that their claim that the pro-armistice (or rather pro Chautemps proposal) constituted a majority on June 16th

was baseless (he uses the "count" provided by Pomaret). It is a very interesting testimony and a brave attempt at reaching a historical reconstruction by one of the anti-armistice Ministers. Its conclusions should be weighed alongside other testimonies and sources.

Reynaud, Paul. *Au Coeur de la Mêlée, 1930-1945*. Paris: Flammarion, 1951. Written after his memoirs (*La France a sauvé l'Europe,* 1947) and published before his second set of memoirs in 1963, this account of Reynaud's political action during the war years is a far more researched exercise. It makes extensive use of other memoirs and also of the testimonials given by the different actors at the parliamentary commission formed after the war. It is a testimony of his actions and motivations but also the work of a polemist that furnishes the student of the period with important elements of context.

Marin, Louis. "Gouvernement et commandement : conflits, différends, immixtions qui ont pesé sur l'armistice de juin 1940" I, *Revue d'histoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale*, 2e Année, No.8 (octobre 1952), pp. 1-28. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France (PUF), 1952 and "Gouvernement et commandement: conflits, différends, immixtions qui ont pesé sur l'armistice de juin 1940" II, *op.cit.*, 3e Année, No. 9 (Janvier 1953), pp.1-14. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France (PUF), 1953. The second part of this article deals more with issues after June 16th, but the first part is essential to the subject in question. Marin was a Cabinet Minister in the Reynaud Government and consequently an important actor in the discussions leading to the armistice. He also relies on the records of the Parliamentary commission where he participated after the war. The principal issue turns around Weygand's decision to remain in France in Mid-June, refusing to implement the cease-fire or capitulation desired by Reynaud. In Marin's view this attitude was grossly insubordinate and contrary to republican traditions that gave the government the sole right to decide over the overall conduct of a war – even if that decision meant abandoning the national territory and continuing the fight from the colonies-. Weygand agreed with this interpretation but considered that as commander in chief he had the right to refuse obeying if he considered it contrary to his conscience and to the honor of the army. Always according to Weygand, a commander in chief in that situation did not need to resign as he could be removed, even court-martialled by the government.

De Gaulle, Général Charles. ***Mémoires de Guerre, T.I, L'Appel, 1940-1942*****. Paris: Plon, 1954.** De Gaulle was called into the French Government as Under-Secretary for National Defense and War in the first days of June 1940. Among his stated missions was to prepare the so-called *réduit Breton* (or Brittany redoubt) and the transfer of men and *matériel* to North Africa. According to Bernard Destremeau, one of Weygand's biographers, his main (though unofficial) mission was probably to produce the resignation of Commander in Chief who by then had lost the confidence of Reynaud. As he was not a Cabinet Minister, he did not take part in the main discussions, though he was present at some of the inter-allied meetings. Many of De Gaulle affirmations provoked other actors to contest them, notably Weygand who published his *En Lisant les Mémoires de Guerre du Général De Gaulle*, Paris, 1955.

Spears, Edward Sir. ***Assignment to Catastrophe*****. V. II.** ***The Fall of France*****, 1940. London: Heinemann, 1954.** Spear was a military liaison officer attached to the French government and as such he had first class access to the relevant French statesmen and soldiers. He was an important element of Churchill's strategy towards France in the first half of June 1940, which consists in gaining as much time as possible before the final collapse of the ally. At the end of the day, his memoirs serve mainly for the sake of context as he was not party to the French decision-making process.

Bardoux, Jacques. ***Journal d'un témoin de la Troisième, 1er septembre 1939 – 15 juillet 1940*****. Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1957.** These memoirs are useful only for context as the author was not a party to the actual meetings where the decisions on the armistice were debated.

Reynaud, Paul. ***Mémoires, envers et contre tous*****, T. II., 7 mars 1936 – 16 juin 1940. Paris: Flammarion, 1963.** These abridged memoirs are a valuable source for understanding the events and decision-making process. At times, for certain episodes it draws upon other published memoirs and there is an effort at giving a chronologically synchronised vision of events and moods and positioning of the protagonists. Attacked from both sides, these memoirs are necessarily also a defense piece for Reynaud.

Chautemps, Camille. ***Cahiers secrets de l'Armistice (1939-1940).*** **Paris: Plon, 1963**. These are very interesting memoirs by one of the main actors of this

episode. The figure of Chautemps is a controversial one since he was central in creating a consensus in favor of asking Germany for its armistice conditions, with the intent, according to Chautemps, to prove to French public opinion that an agreement with Hitler was not possible, thus leaving the members of the French cabinet free to transfer themselves to France's African territories and continue the war.

Beaufre, General André. *The fall of France.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968. It is a memoir of the military collapse of France and as such serves only as context, though it does provide a description of the last Supreme Franco-British Council at the Muget Chateau. This work is very respectful and admiring of General Weygand but it is nevertheless a critical essay when it comes to his handling of the battles on the Somme and Aisne. The author admits himself he had no idea of Weygand's "battle for the Armistice", which took him as a surprise.

Pomaret, Charles. *Le dernier témoin fin d'une guerre, fin d'une république, juin et juillet 1940.* Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1968. This is a most interesting printed source of the period, by a Cabinet Minister who backed the armistice but who, not long after the events, prepared his own "count" of who was in favor of the armistice and who was against. He tries to play down the importance of the Chautemps proposal and is very critical of Reynaud's resignation.

Cadogan, Alexandre. *The diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan*, O.M., 1938-1945. London: Cassell, 1971. As Permanent Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, he participated in important meetings with the French in the last days of May and early days of June 1940. He gives us some insight into the "British side" by very frank, though not necessarily fair comments on the performance of the French ally (we should note that over 55,000 French soldiers, perhaps even 90,000, lost their lives during the battles of Flanders and France). The notes of the diary are sometimes very succinct, usually irreverent, but could just as well have been re-visited as any other diary or memoir in this review.

Bullitt, Orville H. (Editor). *For The President Personal Secret by Franklin D. Roosevelt and William C. Bullitt*. London: Andre Deutsch, 1973. The value of this book lies in the fact that it transcribes the telegrams exchanged between Ambassador Bullitt and the American President and the Department of State. Editor Orville H. Bullitt has added some back-up texts for context. As Ambassador Bullitt was

in constant contact with Reynaud and other leading French statesmen, his telegrams are valuable for the sake of context, but it should be noted that he chose to remain in Paris when the Germans entered the city and was consequently unable to communicate with the French Government during the days in which the discussions and decisions surrounding the armistice played themselves out.

De Villelume, Paul. *Journal d'une défaite, août 1939 – juin 1940*. Paris: Fayard, 1976. In the last days of May and early days of June 1940, Villelume, a French officer and a close aide of Reynaud, became convinced of the necessity of an armistice. His memoirs are not always central to the decision-making process though he tried to advise Reynaud and, as his military expert, he had access to the Inter-allied War Councils and also to the military information available at the Vincennes headquarters. He was an interesting witness to the moods and actions of Reynaud, but could not access the political debates within the Council of Ministers.

Leca, Dominique. *La rupture de 1940.* Paris: Fayard, 1978. Leca was one of the last participants of this episode to have published his memoires. They are written with a lot of detail; contain interesting descriptions of the different characters and his analysis of the situations at hand. He was a very close collaborator of Paul Reynaud whom he tried to advise (he was in favor of leaving for Africa or London even without a capitulation by the Army). He had no access to the main meetings where the decision around the armistice played itself out, though he pretended to have received first-hand accounts by Reynaud himself.

Reynaud, Paul. *Carnets de captivité 1941-1945*, présentés par Évelyne Demey. Paris: Fayard, 1997. In these « *Carnets* » Reynaud did not attempt to give a detailed account of the event that occurred in June and May of 1940: it is simply a journal of his war-time captivity, first under his Vichy jailors and, then, in the hands of the Germans. The allusions to the armistice and to its main characters are brief and sometimes written with a degree of resentment. Their value lies in their unedited nature, in contrast with his three different memoirs.

De Margerie, Roland. *Journal, 1939-1940*. Paris: Grasset, 2010. Though published only recently, posthumously and possibly corrected over the years, De Margerie's text is a journal and as such very valuable for a student of this period. As Chief of Reynaud's diplomatic Cabinet, he played a central role in many of the

managerial decisions and actions of Reynaud and was present at some of the inter-allied meetings.

- The Pétain Trial: another primary source is the testimonies given after the war, during the trial of Maréchal Philippe Pétain (though not recorded, we have the stenograph records of the trial). (*Le Procès du Maréchal Pétain, Compte Rendu Sténographique*, 2 Vols., Paris: Albin Michel, 1945/ HAUTE COUR DE JUSTICE, *Compte rendu in extenso transmis par le Secrétariat Général de la Haute Cour de Justice. Procès du Maréchal Pétain*. Paris: Imprimerie des Journaux Officiels, 1945).

- Parliamentary historical commission: Another published primary printed source is titled *Les évènements survenus en France de 1933 à 1945. Rapport de M. Charles Serre, député, au nom de la Commission d'enquête parlementaire. Témoignages et documents réunis par la Commission d'enquête parlementaire*. 12 vol. Paris: (Gallica, bnf.fr), s.d. It contains testimonies after the war from various former Ministers and protagonists.

- Another printed primary source, containing resumes and *procès-verbaux* (notably of the May 25th *Comité de Guerre*) is the ***Collection de documents inédits sur l'Histoire de France - Section d'Histoire et de Philologie des civilisations médiévales - Série in-8°- Vol. 47 -Gouvernement et Haut Commandement au déclin de la IIIe République, Édition critique et procès-verbaux du Comité de guerre, 1939-1940*.** **Paris: Éditions du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques. (Gallica, bnf.fr), 2009.**

1.5 Literary Review

The list of books dealing with the military aspects of the Fall of France is endless. Suffice to say that we have made a strict selection of a few titles, as the subject escapes the scope of this research. Nor do we intend to give an overview of the events of the Phoney War leading to the Battle of France or of later events. We have chosen to encompass this study within a very specific period of the war, in the days leading immediately to the political confrontation between Paul Reynaud, on the one side, and General Weygand and Marshal Pétain, on the other. We have chosen to end this research with the appointment of Pétain as President of the Council

(*président du Conseil*) on the 16th of June and France's decision to inquire Germany's conditions for an armistice.

It is important to point out that we have not treated any works relating to the actual negotiations of the Armistice or of the relations between France and Germany following Pétain's first June 16th, 1940, Cabinet meeting as *président du Conseil*, or the political developments following that date.

This part should naturally be divided between the works that somehow aspire to give an overall view and interpretation of the events leading to the armistice, and those that are more limited in scope. In turn, these two categories could be divided between those works that condemn the armistice and its artisans, those relatively sympathetic to this policy and its proponents and those that avoid "taking sides" (this is of course a personal interpretation of each author's vision, and as such is subject to error). We would try to follow a chronological order based on the date of the publications in question (This is not a complete review, and some titles might have to be added).

1.5.1 Comprehensive works on the armistice

1.5.1.1 Anti-armistice publications

PERTINAX (alias for André Géraud). *Les Fossoyeurs. Défaite militaire de la France, Armistice, Contre-Révolution*. New York: Éditions de la Maison Française, 1943. The author, a well-connected and informed journalist that worked for the *Écho de Paris* until his exile in the United States during the war, offers his own well-researched interpretation of the motivations of important protagonists of the Fall of France (Gamelin, Daladier, Reynaud, Pétain) through a series of political and literary sketches. The mini-biographies of Gamelin and Daladier, even that of Pétain (tome II), serve only for context, but his very critical and uncompromising portrait of Reynaud is a gold-mine for the genesis of the armistice as he dwells on the motivations, character and actions of the *président du Conseil* (and those of Weygand) but also on the circle around Reynaud: Hélène des Portes, Baudouin, Bouthillier, Leca, Devaux, Villelume, De Gaulle. He has some reflexions on the international context, but his focus is the mechanics of French politics.

Kammerer, Albert. *La vérité sur l'armistice*. Paris: Éditions Médici, 1944. Despite an impressive array of documents and its strict chronological order, Kammerer's work is more the work of a panegyrist by a pro-Gaullist diplomat than that of an intellectual. Some of his *comptes-rendus* are actually quite misleading. This publication led one of the protagonists, Paul Baudouin to publish a pamphlet titled *Réponse à La vérité sur l'armistice de M.A. Kammerer* Published by Vérités Françaises, 1945.

Cassius, (alias for Henri Guillemin). *La vérité sur l'affaire Pétain*. Genève: Éditions du Milieu du Monde, 1945. The idea behind this book is to prove that Pétain conspired with right-wing elements to make use of the war to reach power, even at the cost of favoring defeat. Although originally one of the acts of accusation (later lifted) against Pétain at his post-war trial turned around this idea, few French authors have followed this line of thought. He gives his own interpretation of the events leading to the armistice and of the roles of Pétain and Weygand but his interpretation suffers from having been produced so early-on even if the author was well-connected and had access to some of the protagonists.

Avantaggiato Puppo, Franca. *Gli armistizi francesi del 1940*. Milano: Dott. A. Giuffré Editore, 1963. Franca Avantaggiato's book is one of the most remarkable works on the armistice in terms of erudition. Her footnotes are a gold-mine of bibliographical references. Nevertheless, the author's conclusions are clearly marked by a strong ideological bias against the armistice. Like other authors, she puts great emphasis on the idea that the cabinet on the 16th of June still had a majority "against" the armistice and in favor of departing for North Africa when, for all practical purposes, what was important was the "positioning" (in the absence of a vote) of each member of the cabinet vis-à-vis the Chautemps proposal for enquiring from Germany what the armistice conditions would be. In our opinion, the author's narrative does not always give us the true measure of the variables which the decision-makers had to deal with.

Merglen, Albert. "La France pouvait continuer la guerre en Afrique française" http://www.creuse-resistance.fr/blog/public/La_France_ pouvait_ continuer_la_guerre_en_juin_1940.pdf Merglen's article argues that France was in condition to continue the war against Germany, in June 1940, from French North Africa

(AFN in French) and gives his arguments, expressing his own appreciation of the French forces in the North African theater, as well as his reasons to believe that Hitler did not want to attack French North Africa. This is an interesting article by the questions it raises, a complex one by its affirmations and the possible but unproven causalities it raises.

Bonnefous, Édouard. *Histoire politique de la Troisième République*, TVII, La course vers l'abime: La fin de la IIIe République (1938-1940). Paris: PUF, 1967. (See pages 200-234). Thirty-four pages of this book, written by a French politician and intellectual that lived through the war years, are dedicated to the French campaign, the events leading to the resignation of Reynaud and Pétain's government asking for armistice conditions. He gives an interesting and insightful view of the events leading to the armistice. In this essay, he insists on the theory of the armistice as a means for the military establishment to pass on the blame to the politicians.

Shirer, William. L. *La Chute de la IIIe République. Une enquête sur la défaite de 1940.* Paris: Stock, 1970 (translation of the 1969 edition: The Collapse of the Third Republic. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969). Shirer gives an interesting and well-documented vision of the different phases of the decision-making process within the French government and of the actions of what he calls the "plotters". A useful instrument for our thesis, but for such a vast picture of the end of the Third Republic and the Fall of France, one cannot but regret the lack of real conclusions (or real analysis regarding the international context), only a short epilogue with expressions of admiration for De Gaulle.

Horne, Alistair. *To lose a battle, France 1940.* Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1969. Roughly between pages 632 and 643, Alistair Horne gives his own view, counting mainly on Anglo-Saxon sources, the memoirs of Spears among them, of the debates between French politicians and soldiers around the issue of armistice versus continuing the fight. He sees it mainly as a contest between "softs" versus "hards" where the "softs" are tainted (by Horne) with "defeatism". We believe it is a biased account, one that follows the line of explaining things mainly through Reynaud's supposed mental and physical exhaustion.

Gates, Eleanor M. ***The End of the Affair. The Collapse of the Anglo-French Alliance, 1939-40.*** **Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981.** This is in many senses a reference book for the period based on an extensive research that builds on memoirs, varied unpublished sources and on literature from both sides of the Channel. It gives us an interesting interpretation of each of the phases of the fall of France, reconstructing the meetings and decision-making moments, with insightful interpretations of the issues involved. An interesting point that deserves mention is that according to Gates' research, from May 26th to May 29th, Reynaud´s ambition was not resistance to the utmost ("*à outrance*") but convincing Britain to engage down a path of a coordinated simultaneous armistice process by both allies: Gates argues that Reynaud's efforts to draw the British into concessions to Italy were at least perceived by the British as part of such a strategy, as trying to create the conditions for a new Munich. Gates seems to take for granted the practicality of Reynaud´s North African projects and refers to the proponents of the armistice as the "defeatists" throughout her book. Only briefly, and superficially in our view, does she evoke, in her closing arguments, the issue of Germany's dominance over Europe or Soviet Russia´s support to the Nazi war effort.

Longuechaud, Henri. ***"L'abominable" Armistice de Juin 1940*****. Paris: Plon, 1980.** Only the first 36 pages of the book are really dedicated to the subject, the remainder being dedicated to different aspects of the installation of Vichy and its actions under the conditions of the armistice. The book is an attack on the armistice which appears as a sort of original sin and the source of countless suffering and shame for France. Though evidently a partisan book, and one that develops the theory of a "complot" by the partisans of the armistice, it presents a sequence of events around the different councils and meetings that deserves close examination.

Duroselle, Jean-Baptiste. ***L'abîme: 1939-1945.*** **(Chapter VI** ***L'Éffondrement*****, pp. 159-181). Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1982.** This is an interesting interpretation of the events from the point of view of the *decision-making* process. Duroselle introduces a different concept to the debate, one that he calls *a unilateral cease-fire* different from that of a capitulation that he introduces into his version of events and discussions. Most of all, his version relies on the work of Franca Avantaggiato Poppu (itself based on the depositions of the Ministers in the

Parliamentarian Commission after the war) to stress the idea that even on June 16th, there was still a majority of Ministers in favor of resistance and contrary to asking an armistice from Germany.

Krakovitch, Raymond. ***Paul Reynaud dans la tragédie de l'histoire.*** **Paris: Tallendier, 1998**. Though the author seems to show a predilection for Reynaud's and De Gaulle's policy of continuing the fight from abroad, he avoids entering into the discussions of "armistice vs. capitulation" or "capitulation vs. continuation of the fight against Nazism" and concentrates his efforts in trying to show us a day by day and almost hour by hour vision of Reynaud's handling of the crisis. The motivations of Reynaud are carefully and convincingly analyzed by Krakovitch who also gives us a good idea of the men confronting him like Weygand (and Pétain), but also of the men around him (without forgetting his mistress Hélène des Portes), Baudouin, Mandel, De Gaulle, de Marjorie, Leca, Devaux and others.

Jackson, Julian. ***The fall of France: the Nazi invasion of 1940*****. Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.** Jackson's book is not easy to follow as he doesn't always follow a chronological order. He gives a military account the fall of France and, from p.124 to p.142, tries to follow the power struggles between the proponents of an armistice and those in favor of continuing the war. In so doing, he makes digressions into France's previous political history in search for possible deep causes of France's defeat and the choices of its elites in June 1940. As to his conclusions on the decision-making process leading to the armistice, they are a contradictory mixture between blaming Reynaud for lack of determination and noting the reality of the force represented by Pétain and Weygand on June 16th through the weight they carried with French public opinion. It should be noted that Jackson sees the armistice as only making sense in the event of a total German victory, with Britain also coming to terms with the Third Reich, a scenario that never materialized (we should note that the belief in a probable short-term British peace with Hitler may have animated some of the proponents of the armistice but, in our view, it was not the only variable in their decision-making baggage).

Boulanger, Gérard. ***À mort la Gueuse ! Comment Pétain liquida la République à Bordeaux, le 15, 16 et 17 juin 1940.*** **Paris: Calmann Levy, 2006**. Boulanger's book covers events leading up to and beyond the decision to ask for

armistice conditions and the motivations of the different protagonists. The avowed theme of the book is that the IIIe French Republic was toppled by a plot of high-ranking soldiers and statesmen that saw in the French political system the causes of France's apparent decay and that plotted to access power by using an arguably relative German victory on French metropolitan soil and turning it into a global defeat through cutting-off all chances of resistance from France's imperial domains. Thus, in the last feverish days and hours of the Reynaud government portrayed in this book, we witness consultations and coordination of actions between cabinet ministers (Pétain Baudouin, Bouthillier) and military figures (Weygand, Darlan) that apparently seem to break the rule of subordination of the military to the political authority. Whether this interpretation does credit to the motivations of the said protagonists, whether it interprets correctly where their real responsibilities lay and whether it convincingly proves causality between the political inclinations of the protagonists and their actions in this period are different matters.

Nord, Philip. *France 1940: Defending the Republic*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015 (We have only been able to access the French Edition through Kindle: **Nord, Philip. *France 1940: Défendre la République.* Paris: Éditions Perrin, 2017).** Professor Nord's book proposes his vision of the reasons and events leading to the armistice of 1940 in the 3rd part of his book, titled "Death comes to the Republic" (see pp. 139-167). Nord's theory on the whole explains the victory of the armistice faction as a faulty operating of human agency in the midst of a palace coup made possible because Reynaud chose the wrong men to serve him in this tragic hour. At times, he is very critical of Reynaud, at times understanding, but always in the context of a battle between progressive and righteous forces (Reynaud, De Gaulle, and Mandel) opposing defeatist reactionaries (Weygand, Pétain, and Baudouin). Some of the sequences he proposes deserve closer observation and some affirmations contrast with those of other sources.

Belle, Jacques. *La défaite française, un désastre évitable, Tome 2, le 16 juin 1940, NON À L'ARMISTICE !* Paris: ECONOMICA, 2009. As part of a two-volume saga designed to show that France's defeat could have been avoided through a more decisive military strategy, this second volume deals more with giving us a picture of the military potential (including its naval potential) of some of

the French imperial territories such as French North-Africa (AFN), French Western Africa (OAF) and French Equatorial Africa, or her mandates in Syria and Lebanon. There is also a description of the last resistance against the advancing Germans in France, in the first half of June 1940, and an attempt at estimating the forces of Italy and Spain, as well as their likely determination for offensive action (and that of Germany) in the Mediterranean and African theaters. He also attempts to give us an idea of the morale of French administrators, French troops –be they European or colonial – and that of the populations of these territories. Just as importantly, but very briefly, the author contests the notion that a military capitulation was necessarily a dishonorable course of action - he differentiates between an army that is cut-off and one that has access to orders from the civilian Government, giving the examples of the Dutch and of Leopold III of Belgium - as he considers that it could have permitted a continuation of the fight from France's imperial territories.

Delpla, François. "Le rôle de Paul Reynaud en 1940: l'éclairage de ses Carnets de captivité" in *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, No. 215, Juillet 2004. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France (PUF), 2004. This review by French historian François Delpla seeks to use the *Carnets* written by Paul Reynaud during his captivity to better understand his motivations, his views and his political action in May-June 1940 and not rely only on the Reynaud's different post war memoirs. Special importance is given to a meeting between Reynaud and Ambassador Campbell and General Spears on June 14th and, from there, Delpla tries to better understand Reynaud's motivations and actions. To this article should be added the repeated affirmation by Delpla in various video-interviews that Reynaud's preference at the end of May 1940 (perhaps even up to mid-June 1940) was for a simultaneous armistice by both France and Great Britain. This theory is also put forward by Eleanor M. Gates. *End of the Affair the Collapse of the Anglo-French Alliance, 1939 - 40*. California: University of California Press, 1981.

Delpla, François. *Churchill et les Français. Six homes dans la tourmente, septembre 1939-Juin 1940.* Paris: Éditions François-Xavier de Guibert, 2010. This is a very original book, at times very incisive, one that brings a new vision of the whole episode leading to the armistice and one that is very well documented and full of novel arguments, often convincing. One of the recurring ideas

of the book is that Paul Reynaud was in fact manoeuvring in search of a simultaneous and coordinated Franco-British settlement with Germany or even a combined armistice, though we believe the arguments, documents or testimonies invoked fail to convincingly support it: Reynaud played delaying tactics until the end and the armistice was a pressing matter, one with a time-frame after which it would have held no interest for the German side.

1.5.1.2 Pro-armistice publications

Benoist-Méchin, Jacques. *Soixante jours qui ébranlèrent l'occident.* Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1956. Part of a three-volume saga by an author who lived through the events as a drafted soldier and later-on met some of the actors on a regular basis as he joined the Vichy government. After the war, he was condemned to death for collaboration with the enemy, his life spared by the French President. The second volume gives a detailed reconstruction from June 4th to the signing of the armistice that passes back and forth from the military to the political situation. The end of volume one is also useful to the subject. Benoist-Méchin uses French, English and German sources and completed his picture by corresponding with or interviewing directly some of the actors after the war. Despite this masterpiece - considered a classic in France, even if it makes no secret of his admiration for Pétain and his role in favor of the armistice- we think that there is still ground for exploring the subject, especially considering some of the works published later on and the need for a deeper analysis of the international context from a neoclassical realist perspective.

Renouvin, Pierre. *Histoire des Relations Internationales, T. VIIIe, Les crises du XXe Siècle, II. De 1929 à 1945.* Paris: Hachette, 1958. Chapter IX of this tome, titled "*La défaite française*" deals with the subject of the armistice of 1940. It is a short essay that poses pertinent questions such as the military capacity of French North Africa in June 1940, the role of Franco's Spain and the potential for a German pursuit of the war into North Africa, the threat from Italy´s colonial armies, etc. This essay is quite clear in stating that these threats were very real and the conditions for a French resistance from the African possessions quite precarious. It also poses a difficult issue for my thesis: the fact that most of these issues were not really discussed amongst the French ministers during their deliberations: *In fact, the debate between supporters and opponents of the armistice seems to have been dominated not*

by an objective assessment of the possibilities, but by differing conceptions of the interest and the honor of the nation (…).

De Launay, Jacques. *Les grandes décisions de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale, I, 1939-1941* (collection Histoire Secrète de Notre Temps). Genève: Edito-Service S.A., 1973. De Launay is considered a specialist in International Relations rather than a historian. His book revolves around different "decisions" and "controversies", the June 1940 armistice being one of them. He gives a very interesting sequence of events and discussions by the decision makers. Still, he flatters De Gaulle and seems to blame Reynaud for the armistice, for not calling a vote directly on the issue of accepting or rejecting an armistice and also for resigning in favor of Pétain instead of forming a resistance cabinet and sacking Weygand. In so doing he seems to downplay the fact that the president of the Republic had a say in the matter and insisted on naming someone ready to follow the consensus around Chautemps's proposal for inquiring what the armistice conditions would be from Germany (asking Reynaud if he could be that man?). In the subsequent "controversies" section, he judges the chances for a resistance from French North Africa as derisory, thus giving away his true perception on the subject.

Amouroux, Henri. *Le peuple du désastre, 1939-1040*. Paris: Éditions du Club France Loisirs (avec l'autorisation des éditions Robert Laffont), 1976. This volume is part of a larger saga written by an acclaimed French journalist and historian, a saga that follows the trials of the French people from the start of the Second World War to the Libération. Although much of this volume is dedicated to giving an idea of how individual Frenchmen from different backgrounds faced the "*drôle de guerre*" and then the "*débâcle*", Amouroux also provides an interesting overall picture of the military and political aspects of the war and gives his own interpretation of events leading to the armistice.

Destremau, Bernard. *Weygand.* Paris: Perrin, 1989. A biography that not only gives us a very convincing portrait of Weygand the man and the soldier, but also offers very interesting and argued interpretations of the military and political contexts, including for May-June 1940. One of the interesting features of Detremau's interpretation of this period is that he presents De Gaulle as a sort of natural

opponent of Weygand since he is called into the Cabinet by Reynaud precisely with the mission of creating the conditions for a resistance from the French Empire.

Simonnot, Philippe. *Le secret de l'armistice, 1940*. Paris: Plon, 1990. Though his work is relatively recent (1990), Simonnot gives one of the most insightful looks into the armistice and its genesis and offers a fine interpretation of the motivation of the protagonists. His chapter on the Spanish "ramification" is especially interesting and is the reason why we included him – despite the authors evidently strong commitment to objectivity – among the defenders of the armistice as he shares some reflections with the readers on what could have happened if there had been no armistice (and believes Franco would have joined the war turning the power balance in the western Mediterranean), an interesting analysis that we believe could be further explored.

Pedroncini, Guy. *Pétain, la victoire perdue, novembre 1918 – juin 1940.* Paris: Perrin, 1995. Pedroncini is one of the great biographers of Pétain, having worked on the character for years. In this book, he covers the years between the two great wars and also deals with the role of Pétain during the Fall of France. It is a short essay as far as the subject of our thesis is concerned, but Pedroncini gives a useful analysis of the military and international situations and also of the possible scenarios with which the proponents of the armistice and those of resistance from France's imperial territories were confronted in June, 1940.

Legoux, Bernard. *France Juin 40, les vraies raisons de la défaite et de l'Armistice*. Paris: Editions Jourdan, 2020 (almost a réédition of another work by him, *17 Juin 1940, l'Armistice était indispensable, la fin d'un mythe*. Collection Histoire & Mémoires combattantes. Sceaux: Éditions L'esprit du Livre, 2010). As revealed in the titles in the two editions of his book, Legoux's work is a lawyer's plea (by an ex-officer of the post-war French Navy) in favor of the armistice of 1940. It is also an interesting historical reconstruction that combines military with political history and tries to provide a synchronized vision of events in Paris, London, the châteaux on the Loire and ultimately Bordeaux. It does not completely cover the subject of the thesis as his arguments relating to external factors, though insightful, it does not give a comprehensive view of the political climate in London and Washington D.C., of British resources, of Soviet support to Germany's war

effort, etc. He gives an interesting view of the situation in North-Africa though, at times, he is forced to work through conjecture.

1.5.1.3 Neither anti nor pro-armistice publications

Aron, Robert. *Histoire de Vichy, 1940-1944*. Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1954. Only the first 50 pages of this book are relevant for this thesis (Chapter 1, Cangé; Chapter 2, Bordeaux), but these pages constitute an excellent essay by one of the most renowned French intellectuals on the subject of Vichy, and his merit is to dissect minutely each episode, opposing the formal constitutional prerogatives of Reynaud against the reality of the moment and the contending forces.

John C. Cairns. "Great Britain and the Fall of France: A Study in Allied Disunity", in the *Journal of Modern History* 1955-12: Volume 27, Issue 4. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1955. This is an interesting study regarding the Franco-British alliance in 1940, dealing with the military aspects of France's collapse, and also with the military-political dialogue between the British and the French in the last few days prior to the Armistice. He lays the blame squarely on Reynaud, but also on Churchill for the lack of frank communication between the two, with fateful consequences. It is a very well researched article: for the purpose of this study, the article serves mainly for context, but at times goes into close details that can also further the understanding of the decision-making process within the French ranks.

Langer, William L. *Our Vichy Gamble.* New York: WW Norton and Company Inc., 1966. From page 3 to 41 (*The Collapse of France*), Langer gives his own interpretation of the events and forces leading to the armistice of 1940. One of these interpretations turns around the importance of the Chautemps proposal as an unavoidable element of the June 16th decision-making process. Together with his own analysis of this period, Langer also shows us the events as they unfolded through the eyes of American diplomats such as Ambassador Bullitt, State Department reports, etc. It is a useful book for the subject with insightful analysis, but one that cannot always be trusted for detail with respect to the topic in question.

Launay, Michel. *L'armistice de 1940*. Paris: Dossier Clio PUF, 1972. Launay's work is a brilliant essay contained in less than a hundred pages, in which he gives a detailed account of the events leading to the armistice, the

discussions at the different decision-making meetings, the interactions with the British allies, and the advance of the Germans. He condenses everything (events and issues) into three different acts, as if in a play. He also provides interesting annexes with the views of different players on some of the questions he raises. Unfortunately for us, conceived as an instrument for French students, this essay is very reserved in terms of conclusions.

Cartier, Raymond. ***La Seconde guerre mondiale. [1], 1939-1942, (*****"Chapitre VI: 5-24 juin 1940 L'agonie de la France" pp.127-154). Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1980.** Cartier provides us with a useful and honest resume of the events and decisions leading to the collapse of France and to the armistice that somehow manages to elevate itself from the French versus the Anglo-Saxon optic but remains a rather condensed analysis of events. Pétain's active role in Bordeaux is particularly highlighted and deserves noting.

1.5.2 Specialized studies related to the armistice

1.5.2.1 Anti-armistice publications

Vexin (pseudonym for Roger Giron). ***L'Armistice (12-16 juin 1940)*****. Paris: Les éditions de Minuit, 1944.** Although very clearly written and portraying a condensed account – June 12th -16th 1940 - of the events leading to the armistice decision, it should be remembered that this is a political brochure by a journalist who at one time was director of Reynaud's civil cabinet (and later joined the Provisional Government under de Gaulle in 1944-45, as head of parliamentary services).

Truché, André. ***L'armistice de 1940 et l'Afrique du Nord*****. Paris: PUF, 1955**. This is an ambitious piece of work by an officer who was actually working in Morocco (under French protectorate) in June 1940 and who after the war published a veritable treatise on the conditions in North Africa that according to him should have permitted a strong resistance to the Axis powers from the French Empire. He deals with the earliest manifestations of the issue (North Africa as a possible second line of defense), with the spirit among the top French soldiers and administrators on North Africa (but also the AOF (French West Africa) and the Middle Eastern mandates of Syria and Lebanon), among the French colonists and local populations, the reality of

French military resources, the logistics and potential of her African possessions. It also includes important chapters on his views regarding the attitudes of Spain, the capacities of Italy, the intentions and strategic thinking of Hitler and his top military planners. It should be noted that an important part of his essay deals with the temptation felt by top French military commanders in North Africa to resist, from the moment Marshal Pétain announced that he has asked for armistice terms from Germany, up to the actual conclusion of the armistice, an intense period where North Africa was in the spotlight, but an episode outside the scope of our thesis.

Bankwitz, Philip Charles Farwell. ***Maxime Weygand and Civil-Military relations in Modern France.*** **Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967** (mostly chapter 8, 1940 from p. 290 onward). As the title suggests, this is not an attempt at explaining the events and circumstances leading to the June 1940 Armistice, but rather an essay on French military-civilian relations through the career of Weygand. Even so, in his essay, Bankwitz proposes a bold interpretation whereby the military strategy adopted by Weygand on May 25th, 1940, deliberately excluded the eventuality of a continuation of the war from North Africa, with Weygand thus encroaching on Reynaud's prerogatives (the overall conduct of the war). Bankwitz says that within 5 days of assuming command, Weygand "confined" the battle within the traditional continental theater, implying that he thus killed the only possibility of making contingency plans for a resistance in North Africa. According to Bankwitz, Reynaud did not respond, thereby losing control of the overall conduction of the war, a control he was not able to reassert later-on. He also highlights Weygand's so-called unconstitutional disobedience in the face of Reynaud's efforts to impose a so-called Dutch solution.

Demey, Evelyne. ***Paul Reynaud, mon père*****. Paris: Plon, 1980**. This is not a book about the armistice, rather a collection of souvenirs of Reynaud's daughter and interpretations of his conduct as a politician through the study of his papers and correspondence. However, the issue of the genesis of the armistice is treated in chapter 4 "*Le Déchirement*". It is not an easy read as it does not always follow a chronological order but, through the author's determination to counter the accusations of irresolution aimed at her father, we can see a "historical" reconstruction that brings

to the forefront some of the issues confronting Reynaud and the correlation of forces at play.

1.5.2.2 Pro-armistice publications

Chandelier, Pierre. *La défaite de 1940 et l'armistice, une approche de la vérité.* Paris: Éditions Lettres du Monde, 1996. For the most part, this book, written by a French jurist who lived through the war years, dwells on other issues of the armistice different than those treated in our projected thesis, such as the Mers-el-Kébir drama, or the Riom trials, or the powers given to Pétain in July 1940. Only a few pages are relevant to the subject, but they are important and deal with the different meanings of armistice and capitulation and the implications of following one policy rather than the other.

John C. Cairns. "Great Britain and the Fall of France: A Study in Allied Disunity", in *The Journal of Modern History* 1955-12: Volume 27, Issue 4. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1955. This is not an essay on the French decision to ask for an armistice in 1940. It is a study on the last months of the Franco-British alliance, as seen through the eyes of an Anglo-Saxon author: where British preoccupations like the fate of the French fleet take centrepiece. Having said this, the information it contains is very valuable and it gives us some different angles into Reynaud's actions and *états d'âmes*.

Weygand, Général Maxime. *En lisant les mémoires de guerre du général De Gaulle*, Paris: Flammarion, 1955. Although written by one of the protagonists of the armistice, this book must be treated as a polemist's *plaidoyer* rather than as a testimonial memoir. This is why we have inserted it into this literature review: it is a direct reaction to the tergiversations and falsifications of History contained in De Gaulle's memoirs according to Weygand. The two most important chapters for the subject deal with Weygand's differentiation between "armistice" and "capitulation", a differentiation commonly accepted by French historians, but rejected by Reynaud, De Gaulle and their defenders, who give a synonymous value to both, using one or the other, indiscriminately. The other relevant chapter has to do with Weygand's vision of the potential for resistance of France's North African possessions and leadership in June 1940, the vision of France's top soldier at the time, a man who had held the military governorship in Syria before the war and who was later Vichy's

proconsul in North-Africa, though evidently a man determined to justify his actions before History.

1.5.2.3 Neither anti nor pro-armistice publications

Vidalenc, Jean. *L'exode de mai-juin 1940.* Paris: PUF, 1957. Vidalenc paints a vast canvas retracing the different phases of the *Exode*. He makes no effort at treating the issue of the armistice or how the *Exode* impacted the French decision-makers, rather, from time to time he looks for how the decisions of those same decision-makers impacted this great migration. As regards the subject of the armistice, this great book is only useful for context.

Bell, P. M. H. (Philip Michael Hett). *A certain eventuality: Britain and the fall of France.* New York: Saxon House, 1974. This book deals with the period before and after France's decision to ask for armistice terms, viewing events as they unfold through British eyes and taking into account British interests. It gives an interesting description of Reynaud's "conciliating Italy" *démarche* at the end of May, and shows that the British position was not monolithic; rather Halifax was in favor of exploring possibilities if British independence were not at stake. It deals also with the interactions between British and French statesmen during and after the Battle of France and is very critical of the French and British "Union" proposal, described as a grave loss of time that impeded a frank discussion around the future of the French fleet.

Ferro, Marc. *Pétain*. Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1987. A brilliant biography by one of France's great historians, a man who lived through the war years and served with the *Résistance*. He treats the subject in the first 85 pages of the book, starting with Reynaud's call to Pétain, Ambassador to Spain, to join the government and help him achieve victory. Ferro offers a detailed reconstruction, day by day, that gives us the "pulse" of Pétain's leanings and his rapprochement with Weygand and, finally, his rebellion vis-à-vis Reynaud's resistance policy. He does not offer an international picture to contextualize his sketch of Pétain and his role in those fateful days.

Esnouf, Guy Nicholas. *British Government War Aims and Attitudes towards a Negotiated Peace, Sept. 1939 to July 1940*. London: King's College Ph.D. thesis, June 30, 1988. Esnouf's thesis is particularly relevant when studying the views and intentions of France's British ally, of Churchill, Halifax and

other British statesmen. The critical analysis of the different documents and testimonies available for the period make Esnouf's work essential, even if his work is not particularly aimed at studying the French armistice.

Miquel, Pierre. *L'Exode, 10 mai – 20 juin 1940.* Paris: Plon, 2003. A splendid and well-documented interpretation of the movement that throws millions of Dutch, Belgians, French and other nationals on the roads of France, fleeing from the advancing German forces. For the purposes of our thesis, we would have liked a closer look at the impact of this migration on the French decision-makers.

Decomble, T. (2018). *Le général Maxime Weygand face à la guerre (mai 1940-septembre 1940)*. Histoire. (2018. ffdumas-02087919f) https:// dumas.ccsd.cnrs.fr/dumas-02087919/document. Decombe's study is very relevant for this thesis since an important part of it is dedicated to Weygand's fight in favor of an armistice (roughly from pages 132 to 225) and tries to provide us with a thought-over interpretation, built through a day-to-day study of Weygand's statements and actions and interactions with the French government, but also taking into account what we know of his ideological, social and cultural baggage. Having said this, at the end of the day, Decombe's interpretation seems to join those authors who have stressed Reynaud's supposed weakness, presenting us with a supposedly irresolute *président du Conseil* losing ground to a combination of Pétain's political measure and sobriety allied to Weygand's somewhat spiteful and aggressive determination.

1.6 Theoretical and Conceptual Approach

The theoretical and conceptual framework is the neo-classical realist approach, because it privileges the idea that a state's principal aim in the international arena is its survival. This conceptual framework also gives importance to the systemic-international factors and also, in a subsidiary form, to state-domestic variables: in this case a growing discontent of the French population with the war, a French army *ad portas* of a collapse, but that was still fighting on, an exodus of millions of refugees on the routes of France, a growing dissatisfaction from the French with the deliberately moderate war contribution of its British ally.

In his now famous article "Neoclassical realism and theories of foreign policy", Gideon Rose reviews a series of authors that he catalogues as "neoclassical

realists" and analyzes and resumes the essentials of this school of thought: "policy formulation is the result of systemic and domestic realities, where the systemic pressures are read and interpreted through independent variables (relative power) and there is also scope for intervening variables such as decision-makers' perceptions and domestic politics".[2] Jalal Dehghani Firoozabadi and Mojtaba Zare Ashkezari have explained it as follows: *neo-classic realism pays attention the most to power and defines it according to capabilities just like neo-realists. In contrast to neo-realists, neo-classic realists does not focus just on systemic levels, but on subjective and domestic structures of states and believe that different levels of analysis are as important as anarchical structure of international system. Neo-classic realist thinkers argue that internal and local factors are intervening variables that play the role of string between independent variable (relative power) and dependent variable (foreign policy outcomes).*"[3]

For his part, S.E. Lobell, in his essay on "Threat assessment, the state, and foreign policy: a neoclassical realist model" has elaborated on this theory of foreign policy formulation where the systemic and the domestic elements are present. For Lobell, standing between these two worlds, you find the FPE, or Foreign Policy Executive, a priori more inclined to watch the international field, but at a certain point, necessarily responsive to the pressures of societal leaders and of the domestic forces they represent.[4] For his part, M.R. Brawly also takes up the notion of the state with a unique position as a "mediator between the two realms of politics – domestic and international -".[5]

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[2] Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics* 51, no. 1 (1998): 144-172, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887100007814.

[3] Jalal Dehghani Firoozabadi and Mojtaba Zare Ashkezari, "Neo-Classical Realism in International Relations," *Asian Social Science* 12, no. 6 (2016): 96, https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v12n6p95.

[4] Steven E. Lobell, "Threat Assessment, the State, and Foreign Policy: A Neoclassical Realist Model," in *Neoclassical Realism, the State and Foreign Policy*, eds. Steven E. Lobell, Norring M. Ripsman and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 42-74.

[5]. Mark R. Brawley, "Neoclassical Realism and Strategic Calculations: Explaining Divergent British, French, and Soviet Strategies toward Germany between the World Wars (1919–1939)," in *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics,* eds. Steven E. Lobell, Norring M. Ripsman and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 97.

For the purposes of this thesis proposal, the FPE is none other than Paul Reynaud, who from the moment he assumes power, although careful to obtain a majority through a near national coalition, as the French Third Republic is a parliamentarian regime, once installed in power, carries on more or less his own policy with respect to the war, although at first hampered by the incrusted power of his defense minister Edouard Daladier and the Head of the Army, General Gamelin. In mid-May 1940, he had Daladier relegated to the post of Foreign Minister and Gamelin removed, only to discover that soon he needed to contend with his new Army Chief general Maxim Weygand for control over the overall strategy of the war. As time passes (and passes very quickly), Reynaud -who had behind him a group of elected politicians in key positions and external "political" allies such as Britain and the neutral USA, and was moved by what we could call an international agenda- would find himself in open dispute with Weygand and one of his *vice-présidents du Conseil*, Marshal Philippe Pétain, as the two soldiers pushed for an armistice supported by internal elements - the Army in Weygand's case; the "potential" backing of French public opinion in Pétain's -. Reynaud, for his part, tried to maneuver in order to prepare for a departure to Algiers or London, with a view to continuing the war.

In my view, central to understanding the period and the dispute around the issue of the armistice versus continuation of the war from abroad, or armistice versus capitulation, is the fact that as an FPE or as the most powerful figure within the French parliamentarian system in his role as *président du Conseil*, Reynaud failed to act as a mediator or arbitrator between the systemic and domestic forces, the role set forth by Lobell, Brawly and others, and rather followed a course of action more in harmony with his political survival and personal inclinations (his belief that no honorable or workable solution could be found with the modern Genghis Khan behind Britain's back was no doubt sincere). One could argue that in many respects his actions, at some point, went directly counter to both systemic and domestic realities and forces in his desire to maintain France as a belligerent. This does not run counter to the neoclassical realist viewpoint; rather the neoclassical realist perspective can help explain his downfall.

Central to Lobell's and Brawly's essays are notions of successful or failed balancing and counterbalancing of external threats in the now traditional models of UK and France versus the rise of Nazi Germany, or the USA versus communist expansion

and other such models taken from History, none of which really fit the "France, June 1940" model, a condensed decision-making exercise, where external and internal factors would seem to go hand-in-hand at an accelerated pace to defeat Reynaud's aloof policy of continuing the war from the "Empire". One element taken from Lobell that fits our project: the idea that in normal circumstances, the FPE, is allowed a certain measure of latitude in his policy decisions (but latitudes that narrow rapidly in times of national catastrophe when the survival of a state is at stake or so perceived by the general public and when the actions of the Leader or FPE, naturally, become prone to very close scrutiny).

If we start with the systemic pressures as read though independent variables (relative power), we must first of all mention the consequences of the military situation and of military developments themselves, such as victories or defeats, as they affect the power capabilities of the contending States and thus shape the international system. By mid-June 1940, following the piercing by the Germans of the Somme and Aisne river defenses, and also following Weygand's military briefing (and direct call for an armistice) at Cabinet Meeting in Cangé, on June 12th, there could be no doubt in the minds of the French Cabinet Ministers as to the incapacity of the French Army to efficiently defend Metropolitan France and avoid, through military means, a complete German occupation.

In terms of trying to save French Metropolitan territory, the complete inadequacy of British military support and the unlikeliness of an immediate American military intervention were also elements grasped by the "decision-makers". One of the issues subjacent to these discussions if seen from a military perspective (a debate that continues even today) turns around France's capability or incapability of defending French North Africa at this time, which opens the question of German's war plans in 1940, Italy's military capacity and Spain's intentions. Other elements, such as the solidity of the USSR's unnatural and uneasy alliance with Nazi Germany, seemed too distant to the French decision-makers of June 1940. But if we are analyzing a decision-making process, it is important to insert these elements in the way they presented themselves to the decision-makers themselves, or to those directly influencing them.

Then, we must examine the intervening variables or decision-makers. In a sense, Lobell's essay has helped me to understand that the decision-making process

chosen in this case should not be strictly limited to the discussions and results of a couple of cabinet meetings, but should take into account all the “players”, as in this case we have “decision-makers”, but also “decision-influencers” who, at the end of the day, limit the margins of maneuver of the “decision-makers” or Cabinet Ministers:

a. The President of the Republic Albert Lebrun, who presided over the Council of Ministers, in a certain sense was also a decision-maker, especially as he acted decisively as Arbitrator on June 16th;

b. The *président du Conseil* Paul Reynaud, by a series of delaying tactics, was a decision-maker on his own, independent of his central role in the deliberations and decisions of the Council of Ministers itself where he represented a force in favor of maintaining the alliance with Britain at all costs;

c. Weygand and the Army: General Weygand, who declared to have the support of all the Commanders of Armies in the French Army, managed to transform himself and the Army into one the main co-decision-influencing if not co-decision-making elements. He could only participate partially in the meetings of the Council of Ministers and was not a party to its decisions behind closed doors but, by stating his position inside and outside the cabinet meetings, he made the Ministers understand that he and the generals that supported him would not be a party to a "Dutch solution". No face-saving was forthcoming from the Army had the Ministers chosen to leave Metropolitan France (hypothetically, Reynaud could have dismissed or destituted Weygand, in reality, the move would have been bold beyond imagination unless he could have counted on a "*général d'armée*" willing to associate himself with a "*capitulation en rase-campagne*" which was never the case whatever De Gaulle might have pretended regarding general Huntzinger);

d. Pétain and French public opinion**:** Marshal Pétain was a power onto himself (and had a role in the Cabinet councils as one of the *vice-présidents du Conseil*) but at a given moment he further dangled in front of the Ministers the prospect of having to explain their actions individually to the French public (by his threat to resign or separate himself from the Government);

e. Darlan and the Fleet**:** towards the end, Darlan made known his decision in favor of the armistice. This meant that if the Ministers had chosen to continue the

fight from French North Africa, for example, they would not have been able to count on the support of the French fleet.

The role of these last three players greatly limited the scope of the decision-making by the Council of Ministers. It could choose a "middle course" of enquiring German conditions for an armistice as suggested by Chautemps. But was this really a "middle course"? In any case, if the conditions were moderate and permitted face-saving and the survival of the French State (and did not imply handing over the Navy) then the Ministers would have had no other option than to accept them. Otherwise, the French Cabinet could play for time, as Reynaud had been doing for some time, hoping that with the inevitable deterioration of the military situation, so too would a departure of the government for North Africa or Britain become more palatable to the French public opinion and with that, some measure of legitimacy could have been salvaged by an exiled government.

Consequently, and although at times the discussion turned around the continuation of the war versus the armistice, it was never really within the Council of Minister's power to "impose" a military capitulation, the most that the partisans of continuing the war could hope for was stalling for time.

Reynaud tried to reshuffle his cabinet late on the 16th, but President Lebrun would only have backed him if he had accepted to apply Chautemps proposed policy of asking Germany for armistice conditions. Had he tried to reshuffle his cabinet a few days earlier, excluding Pétain and strengthening the anti-armistice group, this could have led to the transfer of the debate from the closed-door Council of Ministers meeting-room discussions to a bitter nation-wide contest with the hero of Verdun that the anti-armistice group dreaded, not to mention the opposition of the French Army (in this sense we believe that a whole mass of literature has unjustly criticized Reynaud for lack of energy in his "decision-making" and for his pseudo-tolerance of dissent). Indeed, a word should be said about the domestic element and about "public opinion". After the war, some authors contested, in one way or another, that there was such a thing as a majority leaning French public opinion in favor of an armistice solution in the weeks leading to the Armistice. To try and assign a political will to a mass of 40 million Frenchmen, or to a mass of millions of refugees on the routes of France, a proportion of whom may have been ignorant of the real scope of France's defeat, posed

a significant challenge. The same can be said of the political inclinations of the French infantryman. But it is important to note that whatever they might have later pretended in their memoirs, the Ministers and politicians that were partisans of continuing the fight, Reynaud foremost among them, always dreaded the thought of a "show-down" with Pétain, synonymous to some with a show-down with French public opinion.

1.7 Research Methods, Methodology and Research Procedures

1.7.1 Research methods

The research method used is the analytical approach:

The events will be analyzed by breaking them down into all their parts in order to weigh their political, military, economic and social implications. To do this we can try and concentrate on certain angles at a time, for example the military angle at a given moment, the evolution of the international situation, and particularly the relations between the two allies, France and the United Kingdom, all as seen through the prism of the French Cabinet ministers and using a three layered approach in order to ascertain the impacts of the international-systemic, state-domestic and individual actor factors. Based on this analysis, we intend to produce a synthesis that reconstructs and explains the power relations between the protagonists, beyond the formal attributes of their respective positions within the institutional framework of the Third Republic. Through the three-layered analytical method, we must gauge the real power and motivations behind Reynaud, Weygand, Pétain and others.

1.7.2 Research methodology

- Qualitative approach. After selecting the research topic, we established the hypothesis. Then, we collected the bibliography formed out of primary and secondary sources (some of them digitalized). Substantial differences appear when approaching these sources (all these memoirs have a dose of self-justification).

- No stenographic records exist for *Conseils des Ministres* held between May 25th and June 16th, 1940, though some *comptes-rendus* have survived of some meetings of the Inter-allied War Council and the *Comité de Guerre*. Consequently, the memoirs, diaries and depositions must be weighed against each other, compared to later depositions, and we must seek to determine when these testimonials appear

plausible in the face of conflicting versions and, most of all, when weighed against an international, domestic and personal context that we must seek to reconstruct as objectively and as loyally as possible.

- The hypothesis of this qualitative thesis turns around the idea of the somewhat forced nature of Paul Reynaud's policy inducing the capitulation of the metropolitan French Army and continuation of the war from abroad: consequently, the hypothesis is that ***the French Cabinet's decision (16.06.40) to ask armistice conditions from Germany was an expression of France's interests at the time*.**

1.7.3 Research procedures

A meticulous study of the sources, primary and secondary, should permit us to classify and condense into different episodes the information, be it from systemic-international or domestic angles, be it military, geo-strategic or political, that was available to the French decision-makers in late May and early June 1940. Reynaud, Weygand, Baudouin and others have tried to do similar exercises in their memoirs. As we mentioned, a brilliant synchronization of the military and political developments is offered in Jacques Benoist-Méchin's masterpiece. We propose to do the same, but using the three-layered approach (systemic, state-level domestic, individual) thus analyzing the impacts and challenges of the systemic-international environment and domestic context that the French decision-makers had to face, while at same time studying the role of the individual principal decision-makers, as well as making use of important bibliographic contributions, not available sixty years ago.

1.7.4 Final considerations

In later years, the defenders of General De Gaulle, in many respects Reynaud's continuator, who called Frenchmen to arms in June 18th, 1940, refusing to accept the Armistice and the Vichy regime born from it, have more and more felt the need to look to the international arena in order to defend De Gaulle's decisions in June 1940. In the early 1980's, the book by Maurice Schumann, went along these lines, trying, through a lively and anecdotal format, to give a sense of the international correlation of forces, unconsciously sensed, so to speak, by De Gaulle. More recently, a title by Jacques Belle *La défaite francaise, un désastre évitable*, T. I, Paris: 2007, tries to describe the more positive potentialities of France in the Mediterranean in the days

preceding the armistice. In our view, this goes to show that the subject is very much alive and deserves treatment with an international relations perspective.

In so doing we believe that three elements should be kept in mind:

a) A near-scientific and truly academic approach to this issue requires one to free one's self from certain elements brought to bear by what we know of later developments during the course of WWII: it is the elements available at the time to the decision-makers that matter and their appreciation of the situation in which France found itself in. Like-wise, we believe that moral appreciations and ethics are legitimate elements of analysis from a neoclassical realist approach, as long as it is the morals and ethics of the players and decision-makers themselves at the time and not a transposition of what we may consider "politically correct" in hindsight.

b) Some have interpreted the genesis of the armistice as a sort of coup d'état by military and reactionary forces and a defeat of the representatives of democratic forces and there are elements that could be construed to support this opinion. However, we believe that through a neoclassical realist approach (and by isolating the genesis of the armistice from later developments) this same episode can also be interpreted as an example of the functioning of the Third Republic's institutions, notably the Council of Ministers. The story of the genesis of the armistice of June 1940 is one of a power struggle between two very distinct groups, where at first the pro-armistice faction is clearly the weaker element but where its adherents started growing as the military situation deteriorated. Thus, the debates inside the *Conseil des Ministres* that at first could be brushed aside with calls to fulfill France's obligations towards her ally and defend "France's honor", or by speculating on the harshness of the German conditions, after a certain point led to a face to face between the contending factions where the main arguments of each band had

to be weighed. Those in favor of continuing the war simply considered that the nature of the Nazi regime made it impossible to submit to an unequal relationship with it: those in favor of the armistice considered that the greater the German menace, the greater the responsibility not to leave France's Metropolitan population and Army unprotected.

c) Lastly, some consideration must be given to the semantics of the armistice. Reynaud, De Gaulle and other proponents of the continuation of the war from Algiers, the colonies or from exile in London, always used the terms "armistice" and "capitulation" indistinctively, as a way of signaling that the issue was between surrender or continuation of the war. On the other hand, the proponents of the armistice always differentiated between an armistice that entailed a suspension of hostilities through a political agreement as opposed to a capitulation that was a purely military arrangement and one considered dishonorable by Weygand and others (*capitulation en rase campagne*). The academic seeking to capture the truth of the matter should of course try to avoid taking sides, but cannot avoid reconstituting the chain of events and contests as they presented themselves: a departure from French soil of the French Ministers in Mid-June 1940 required as a face-saving screen the prior (or simultaneous) capitulation of the Armies in France (what Reynaud called the "Dutch solution") a scenario rejected by Weygand and the leading generals. For days Reynaud had toyed with the idea of a Cabinet reshuffle and forming a cabinet of pro-resistance ministers, but on the 16th he failed to win over President Lebrun who considered the Chautemps proposal of asking Germany what would be its conditions for an armistice, as having a majority backing (even though no vote was called).

CHAPTER 2
PRELUDE TO THE ARMISTICE (MAY 16TH-JUNE 13TH, 1940)

2.1 The Systemic Level

The signature of the German-Soviet Pact in September 1939 assured Berlin of Moscow's conditional goodwill and a steady supply of essential materials for the prosecution of its war while the Pact of Steel would eventually lead to Italy's military intervention on June 10th, 1940. The fall of Poland, Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg and Belgium form another element of German dominance in Europe. As to the allied expedition to Narvik to cut off the "Route of the Iron Ore", by the end of May 1940, Churchill and Reynaud had decided they had to abandon the adventure all together and repatriate the troops and *matériel* engaged there. Then, we must consider a series of countries that at this stage must already be considered if not allies, at the very least accommodated - some of them client states such as Slovakia - to German hegemony in Europe - Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, even Yugoslavia under Stojadinović, who strengthened ties with Italy and let the Petite Entente decay -.

Then, there is the case of Spain, at the time ideologically sympathetic to Germany and Italy, after their help in the Spanish Civil war.[1] Though at the start of the

[1] On assuming his position as *Secrétaire Général* of the Quai d'Orsay around May 21st, 1940, this is the international context as described by F. Charles-Roux: *Italy would infallibly attack us if the fate of the battles remained against us. Spain's neutrality was questionable; Portugal's own neutrality could help stabilize hers (Spain's), could help that of Portugal, which, although a centuries-old ally of Great Britain, was and would remain neutral. Russia (sic), linked to Germany by a non-aggression pact that dated back less than a year, still based its policy on this insecure contract. Its extension into Poland, its push towards the Baltic, had created between it and Hitler's Reich a complicity from which all confidence was absent, but the end of which was not for the following day. Turkey had interpreted its agreements with London and Paris as not obliging it to make common cause with us. Would she judge otherwise on the day when Italy opened hostilities? It was unlikely. Nothing could be expected from the Balkans in this conjuncture. Bulgaria had played its game with our adversaries. Rumania, after having compromised herself in our favor, was slipping into circumspection. Yugoslavia, for whom we had so often exposed ourselves to the wrath of the Italians, came to a standstill in prudent abstention. Greece was complacent to us, but could do nothing alone. For the latent goodwill in the Balkans and the Levant to take shape, we would have had to have in Syria, at the very least, half a million soldiers: and we only had about sixty thousand (.. .) Remained last but not least, the United States; virtual allies, they were not yet ready, either morally or materially, to become effective allies* (...).

war Spain declared its neutrality, and at the start of 1940 even signed commercial agreements with Britain and France, between June 10th and June 12th, after Italy's participation in the war, Madrid changed its status to that of a *non-belligerent*, thus positioning itself in Germany's favor.[2] Furthermore, on June 14th, Spain's colonial troops marched into the international zone of Tangier.[3] The Spanish case was particularly relevant for French statesmen in May and early June 1940, as in the probable case of a resounding defeat on French metropolitan soil, a pro-German Spain could eventually deliver to Hitler the keys to French North Africa. The French writer Philippe Simonnot, in *Les Secrets de l'armistice*, Paris, 1940, developed the theory that in view of Spain's obvious leanings towards Nazi Germany, the armistice itself could be interpreted not just as an effort to halt hostilities with Germany but also as a way of avoiding Spain's entry into the conflict and that this also could have helped Pétain's choice to use Spain as a diplomatic facilitator to secure the said armistice.[4]

Thus, on the eve of the Battle of France on the Somme and Aisne rivers (roughly from June 5th to June 10th, 1940) Germany, with its 80 million inhabitants, its roughly 130 to 150 divisions and Europe's most modern Air Force, could rely on a subservient European continent for raw materials and was poised to take over the greater Paris region, containing more than seventy percent of France's war production.

(See François Charles-Roux, *Cinq mois tragiques aux Affaires Étrangères (21 mai- 1 novembre 1940)*(Paris: Plon, 1949), 5 (Translated from French for this Indepedent Study (IS)).

[2] See Charles-Roux, *tragiques*, 38: *On the other hand, the news from Spain was troubling. The government of Madrid had declared to pass from neutrality to non-belligerence: it was to take in June 1940, the position that Italy had taken in September 1939. It reinforced considerably its garrisons of Spanish Morocco. What were the intentions of this attitude and these precautions? Judging was difficult. But one fact was indisputable: it was that the Germanophile and Hitlerophile party was powerful beyond the Pyrenees, and that it was represented in Franco's ministerial team, very close to him* (...). (Translated from French for this IS).

[3] Stanley G. Payne, *Franco and Hitler, Spain, Germany and World War II* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 66. Payne gives June 12th as the date of Spain's non-belligerency declaration; Charles-Roux, *tragiques*, 22, says it was June 10th.

[4] Philippe Simonnot, *Le secret de l'armistice, 1940* (Paris: Plon, 1990), 216: (…) *In view of this data, which is too often overlooked, we cannot avoid asking this question: was Spain chosen as an intermediary in the armistice request because it was neutral or because it was a non- belligerent country about-to-go-to-war and endowed with an enormous capacity to harm what was left of France.* (Translated from French for this IS).

Facing this German ascendency, Great Britain and France continued to struggle along, with the moral support of a number of exiled governments from Poland, Norway, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Czechoslovakia and Belgium. The United States government under Roosevelt clearly sympathised with the belligerent Western Democracies, but could only supply limited quantities of warplanes and weapons as long as they were paid for in advance. Once left to fight on its own, Britain would have to wait until March 1941 for the *Lend Lease Act* to be passed by the United States Congress, authorizing the President to sell, transfer, exchange or loan war material and goods to States whose defense was considered "vital to the defense of the United States". No one doubts the sympathies of the American government and of the American people, nor of the immense potential of America's industrial power. In the summer of 1940, American public opinion became even more apprehensive in the face of Axis victories. But at the end of May and beginning of June 1940, an isolationist feeling in the United States was still a force to be respected and American support to the Western Democracies was conditioned by the Fourth Neutrality Act (1939), which allowed Washington to sell arms to belligerents as long as they retrieved the weapons in America and paid them in cash ("*Cash and Carry*").

In November 1939, Paul Reynaud, at the time Minister of Finance, launched a set of war bonds with the catch phrase ***We will win because we are the strongest*** ("*Nous vaincrons parce que nous sommes les plus forts*") and a poster to promote them showing in black the German Reich in contrast with the world-wide span of France and Britain with their respective colonial empires (in red). In 1939, Britain still had the largest colonial empire in the World, an empire on which the sun never set, protected by the world's largest Navy. It could count on the support of prosperous dominions such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa to boost its military presence world-wide, and also colonies such as India that could provide large colonial armies for the King-Emperor. These dominions and colonies also contributed financially to the war effort. Although the mobilization efforts of 1939 and early 1940 could not compare with the armies that Britain poured into France in 1914, the British had one of the best air forces, the Royal Air Force (RAF), though their selective use in France would soon become a bone of contention with its French Ally.

For its part, France entered the war with the second-best Navy in Europe, one with particularly modern ships, and a combined Army, Navy and Air force that surpassed 4 million men if we count different colonial contingents and militias that scattered over the planet. A lot of ink has spent over this Navy and France's colonial possessions, especially North Africa (including Algeria which was considered an integral part of France) and Western Africa, when dealing with the issue of the armistice of 1940. The classic essay of André Truchet, *L'armistice de 1940 et l'Afrique du Nord*, Paris, 1955, that highlights the relative strengths of these territories vis-à-vis the Axis forces and the positive predisposition of the native populations and colonial elites.

These relative strengths must be considered alongside the offensive capacity of Germany, the pro German sympathies of Spain and Italy's navy and also her colonial armies based in Libya. Also**,** these North-African territories were not high in the minds of the French generals when considering their military options, even if at times the French President of the council Paul Reynaud, mentioned them as an option for continuing the struggle on Britain's side.[5] Rather, throughout the month of May, the French military was more interested in transporting troops from North Africa to the *métropole*, than vice-versa.[6] The French journalist and historian Henri Amouroux

[5] As we will see further on, Reynaud mentioned North-Africa in two communications to Weygand, and also held conversations regarding the re-supply of North-Africa with General Colson.

[6] Paul De Villelume, *Journal d'une défaite, août 1939- juin 1940* (Paris: A. Fayard, 1976), 358-359. *Thursday, May 30, the president (Reynaud) would like to have the new class incorporated in North Africa so that he can continue the fight there if all French territory were invaded. I am trying to show him that this project of resistance is chimerical. There, there are no arsenals, no war factories, no equipment. As for the troops which have not yet been sent to France, they are far too weak to be able to resist a serious attack coming out of Spanish Morocco or Libya for long., to these objections of a military nature are added others of a political nature. As shown in a report by Captain Guérin, whom I had instructed to study the question, the sending of recruits to our overseas territories is nevertheless desirable, but for two other reasons. First of all, it would decongest the depots of the metropolis, which the invasion is causing to fall back on each other. Then, we would have, in doing so, in our North African possessions contingents likely, are a slight roughing, to ensure the maintenance of order and thus to release combat units. I would add for my part, that these young people would thus find themselves withdrawn from the concentration camps and that, however one sees the future, it is obviously advantageous for the greatest possible number of French is not directly under the German boot. This project is however conditioned by various easements. Transport difficulties first. We can only send over the Atlantic twenty thousand men a week. Supply difficulties afterwards. If it is true that the troops currently present in North Africa absorb each month only two thousand eight hundred and fifty tons of food and*

mentions the post-war testimony of Reynaud's Minister of the Merchant Marine, an adversary of Weygand but who quite honestly, when asked if it was possible to evacuate important forces towards North Africa, answered: *Theoretically yes, but in practical terms, when the question arose, the Germans were in Tours. They had nothing in front of them. They could be in Marseilles the next day. All the same, I had nearly 600,000 tons of ships ready to depart in all the ports of the South. But evacuate who, what? Disbanded troops? It was impossible and we would have run out of time.*[7]

Finally, we must come to the German offensive in the West launched on May 10th, 1940, one of the most dramatic moments in Western history. By May 15th, the French front had been pierced at Sedan, the Germans had crossed the Meuse and, in the North, a mass of forty or so French, British, Dutch and Belgium divisions were in the process of being cut off from the bulk of the allied forces and subdued. In the following ten days, the French would desperately try to reverse the course of events through counteroffensives that simply lacked the required strength and momentum. By May 25th-26th, the British forces were retreating toward Dunkirk, and by midnight**,** May 27th, the Belgium army, through the person of King Leopold III had capitulated (the Dutch had capitulated a few days earlier, but the Dutch Queen had joined London).

From the French perspective, the consequences of these fighting days were resumed by the commander in Chief Weygand during a meeting of the War Committee

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two thousand one hundred tons of gasoline purchased abroad, the total monthly imports reach 325,000 tons. (...). However, the port of Casablanca only debits one hundred and fifty thousand tons per month and the Casablanca-Algiers railway line one hundred and thirty-five thousand tons. See also de Villelume*, Journal,* 381*: "(...) Mardi 4 juin (...) In response to a question put to him on June 1, General Noguès yesterday telegraphed his objections to the incorporation of the contingent in North Africa: lack of barracks, clothing, armaments, instructors and serious health inconveniences. He admits, however, the sending of twenty thousand men. General Colson sent me, also yesterday, a "note verbale" in which he declared "desirable that the contingent not be incorporated in North Africa". To the objections of the Resident General he adds the fact that we could only transport twenty thousand men a week." In any case, it is important to recall that until May 23rd Reynaud was in favor of thinning out French troops in North Africa in order to reinforce the metropolis* (Paul Baudouin, Neuf mois au Gouvernement, Avril-Décembre 1940 (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1948), p. 71).

*In the event of war with Italy, supply would therefore present great difficulties, which the presence of additional troops would further increase [...].(*Translated from French for this IS).

[7] Henri Amouroux, *Le peuple du désastre, 1939-1940* (Paris: Editions Club France Loisirs, 1976), 447.

(*Comité de Guerre)* on May 25th: A force of fifty or so French divisions would have to face one hundred and thirty to one hundred and fifty German divisions, nine of which were armoured divisions, outnumbering French forces 3 to 1: *we must hold on to the current Somme-Aisne position, defend ourselves there until the last extremity (...) Each of the parts of the army will have to fight until exhaustion to save the honor of the country. The general goes on to say that France made the huge mistake of going to war having neither the necessary equipment nor the necessary military doctrine. It is probable that she will have to pay dearly for this imprudence.*[8]

2.2 The Domestic Level

The loss of the battle of Flanders, the desegregation of the allied front and the panic it created inside France all deserve mention since they all played their influence on French statesmen. One of the most anecdotic episodes is no doubt the burning of archives at the Quai d'Orsay that so impressed Churchill and lead, quite unjustly, to the dismissal of Alexis Léger as *Secrétaire Général* of the Quai d'Orsay. But the great episode that comes to mind is the start of the migration that has come to be called the Exodus of May-June 1940, already creating headaches for the French General Staff by mid-May 1940, and wreathing havoc on the routes so necessary for the manoeuvres of France's armies.

Some authors have hesitated to give this amorphous human mass of more than 8 million refugees (almost one in every four or five Frenchmen, but also composed of Dutch and Belgian refugees) a single-track political mind: *In 1940 everything liquefied and became elusive, when minds were at the height of confusion and when, in the country, the sources of information were reduced to the sycophancy of a rampant press or the most implausible rumours.*[9]

Jean Vidalenc, in his study *L'Exode de mai-juin 1940*, explains that in the beginning, the first (after the German crossing of the Meuse) and second wave of the

[8] Paul Reynaud. *Au cœur de la mélée: 1930-1945* (Paris: Flammarion, 1951), 586-587.

[9] Pierre Laborrie, "Quarante millions de pétainistes?," L'Histoire, last modified January 1990, https://www.lhistoire.fr/%C2%AB%C2%A0quarante-millions-de-p%C3%A9tainistes%C2%A0%C2%BB%C2%A0

Exodus (after the piercing of the front on the Somme and the Aisne, and with the fall of Paris), this great movement must foremost be interpreted as a rejection of the occupier, as a decision not to submit to German domination and to seek refuge behind the lines of the French army.[10] But what of their opinions or feelings towards the middle of June 1940, after experiencing countless air raids and constantly hiding from enemy planes? Vidalenc describes the war psychology that set in among the populations on the road: "*In these conditions, one cannot underestimate the role of systematic machine-gunning or of the simple low-altitude flight over the roads where the refugees were thronging*".[11] He then cites the work of the writer Alfred Fabre-Luce, *Journal de la France, (1941 édition): These fifteen days of useless suffering prepare France for her destiny. By running the roads, millions of uprooted people become aware of the deep bond that binds them to their land, to their work. The political ideologies, the philias and the phobias that had been forced on them fell from them like parasites cut off from the nourishing sap. They have more precious treasures whose conservation is linked to the end of the fight. Peace, order, such is the great aspiration which arises from the people of the roads. The terrible exodus laid the moral foundation for the armistice.*[12]

For the French historian and journalist Henri Amouroux, **this "crowd",** this gigantic mass of French refugees, constantly submitted to thirst, hunger, and at times to the bombardment of the enemy planes, could only wish ardently for peace, wish for the hell to stop and would consequently join the ranks of the "forty million pétainistes" in late June 1940. It was the "crowd" that would weigh heavily on the Ministers-decision-makers in Bordeaux: *What matters is that they are the impressive, anonymous, upset CROWD, no longer controlling their actions, escaped from all reason. Prisoner of all the follies, intoxicated with false rumours and true terrors, jostling on the roads of hope, all social classes combined, (...) The crowd suddenly brought back to the essential and the elementary: bread, the roof. Saving one's life. (...) Crowd that from June 5 onward weighs on all political and military decisions. Influencing them, then in Bordeaux, dictating them, at least as much as the defeat of the troops will dictate. A*

[10] Jean Vidalenc, *L'Exode de Mai-Juin 1940* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957).
[11] Ibid., 385.
[12] Ibid.

crowd present at the very heart of these feverish councils of ministers which lead to the armistice. Crowd whose disorder and terror largely explain the armistice. Even if it does not legitimize it in the eyes of those to whom the harshness of times leaves a roof, a table, money, a car or a plane. Crowd that plays a crucial role in the French tragedy.[13]

But for this crowd to really have its say at the Council of Ministers, it needed tribunes that could take up their cause. Weygand, for example, on June 12th introduced the idea that the ministers would have to survive public scrutiny and that if they abandoned the country they would not be seen as combatants but rather as deserters. He mentions the plight of the refugees on the routes of France: *he (Weygand) spoke of the flow of refugees blocking the roads, without gasoline to continue their movement, without shelter to sleep and sometimes without food to subsist.*[14] On that day, another voice spoke out for the millions of civilian refugees, that of Philippe Pétain.[15] Later on, Camille Chautemps would become famous for his description of the hardships the French families on the routes of France. On June 13th, this mass of abandoned human beings found in Philippe Pétain, Marshal of France, a leader to express their need for a swift solution and a return to peace: (…) *it is impossible for the government, without emigrating, without deserting, to abandon French territory. The duty of the government is, whatever happens, to remain in the country, under penalty of no longer being recognized as such. To deprive France of its natural defenders in a period of general disarray is to turn it over to the enemy.*[16]

There is of course another strong domestic force that needs to be respected and heard, and that is the Army. No one can claim to speak for the feelings of the soldiers in the ranks. But the *généralissime* Maxime Weygand would make sure that his leadership was not a contested one and that the Army stood firmly behind him. In contrast to Maurice Gamelin's aloof policy of leaving General Alphonse Georges in charge of operations in the North, Weygand would partner completely with Georges

[13] Amouroux, *Le peuple,* 437-438.

[14] Pierre-André Bourget, *De Beyrouth à Bordeaux: La Guerre de 1939-40 vue du P.C. Weygand* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1946), 113-114.

[15] Baudouin, *Neuf*, 149-150.

[16] Robert Aaron, *Histoire de Vichy, 1940-1944* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1954), 21.

and managed to personally visit **some** of the army commanders. Ultimately, when on June 12th at Cangé, Weygand presented himself to the Council of Ministers and pressed its members to ask Germany for armistice conditions, he was speaking in the name of the top army generals. He had transformed the Army, if not into a *decision-maker,* at the very least into a *decision-influencer*. At a later stage, in Bordeaux, Reynaud tried to induce Weygand: the *généralissime* would refuse considering it dishonorable for France's army. In so doing, Weygand and the Army were limiting Reynaud's scope of action to asking for an armistice, or leaving for Africa but with the Army fighting on to the end, "for honor's sake". This latter course seemed unreasonable and was politically suicidal for Reynaud and the ministers behind him.

2.3 The Individual Actors

2.3.1 Reynaud played for time

The main actor whose actions we must analyze here is Paul Reynaud, President of the Council, Minister of Defense and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Reynaud was a rather solitary figure in French politics, a center-right deputy who had been Minister of Finance and Minister of Colonies under different governments. Under the influence of Colonel Charles de Gaulle, he had been promoting for years the creation of armoured divisions to counter the German armored formations. He was also known for his ties with Winston Churchill. He was sixty-two when he became President of the Council in March 1940. He formed a near-national coalition of a few center-right wing and mostly radical and socialist ministers.[17] At first, he had to contend with Édouard Daladier who had behind him the radical party and chose to remain as Minister of Defense, bolstering the Commander-in-Chief General Gamelin who Reynaud considered a liability. After the shock produced by the German breakthrough at Sedan, Reynaud managed to replace Gamelin by general Maxime Weygand (May 19th, 1940), bringing in Marshal Philippe Pétain as one of the Government's *vice-présidents du Conseil*, while Daladier was relegated to Minister of Foreign Affairs and Reynaud himself assumed the portfolio of Defense (May 19th, 1940).

[17] William L. Shirer, *La Chute de la IIIe République, Une Enquête sur la Défaite de 1940* (Paris: Le Club Français du Livre, 1970), 576-577.

In mid-May 1940, Reynaud found himself forced to deal with the realities of the defeat of France's armies. In his memoirs he later blamed generals Gamelin, Georges, and Weygand of concealing the extent of this defeat, thus impeding an ascertainment that he claims would have permitted to sort out a clear strategy for preparing a continuation of the fight from North Africa.[18] At the War Committee *(Comité de Guerre)* on May 25th, Weygand made it clear that if the defensive positions on the Somme and Aisne were broken by the German forces that outnumbered the French at the scale of 3 to 1, France would no longer have the means for a coordinated defense of its metropolitan territory. Without actually using the word "armistice", the Commander-in-Chief invited the government to consider with the British allies the implications of a possible (even probably) piercing by Germany of France's defensive positions. The implication according to some of the following discussions on that day - even comments by the French President Lebrun- was that France should consider (with her British ally) the possibility of a separate armistice.[19]

Here we come to one of the characteristics of Reynaud's way of conducting France's overall war strategy. During this period the Council of Ministers met on a number of occasions, while Reynaud held daily military meetings in the presence of Weygand, Pétain, general Vuillemin, the head of the Air Force, and sometimes Baudouin. But on the whole, he was the sole interpreter of the decisions emanating from those meetings with regards to the overall strategy of the war and, as we shall see, interpreted them in a very personal way, never really questioning his premise that France could not negotiate a separate peace or armistice with Germany because of its March 28th, 1940, commitment to Britain. Vice-President of the Council Camille Chautemps in later years denounced how these daily military conferences monopolized the essential decision-making process of the war, leaving the cabinet ministers devoid of information or of a real grip on events: *During this time, the*

[18] Reynaud, *Au cœur*, 549-550.

[19] For the text of what was said at the *Comité de Guerre* see *Collection de documents inédits sur l'Histoire de France - Section d'Histoire et de Philologie des civilisations médiévales - Série in-8°- Vol. 47 -Gouvernement et Haut Commandement au déclin de la IIIe République, Édition critique et procès-verbaux du Comité de guerre, 1939-1940* (Paris: Éditions du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques (Gallica, bnf.fr), 2009).

ministers, who, however, were soon to be made to assume the heaviest responsibilities at the supreme moment, were kept completely away from any action, and even from any information, about the essential facts of national life (...).[20] Chautemps adds that these daily military conferences had another defect: "*Every day, the three men (Reynaud, Pétain, Weygand) met at the Ministry of War in conferences where all the important decisions relating to the conduct of the war were taken. By force of circumstance, such an organization was bound to lead to a disastrous confusion of powers. Just as the day-to-day direction of military operations should have been left to the general-in-chief, without interference from the Prime Minister, so the general should have remained absolutely aloof from any concern relating to the political direction of the war.*[21]

Reynaud for his part interpreted the May 25th "mandate" as an occasion to explore with the British the possibility of promising concessions to Benito Mussolini in the hope of prolonging Italy's non-belligerency or even avoiding her entry into the war altogether. In her famous essay *End of the Affair*, Eleanor M. Gates has developed the idea that during his trip to London on May 26th, Reynaud tried in fact to lead both allies towards some form of a new Munich peace with the Axis. She cites the declaration of Reynaud's military advisor colonel Villelume to a post-war parliamentary commission, and also Lord Halifax's summary of a meeting with Reynaud, on May 26th, where according to the British Foreign Secretary, the Frenchman wanted to ask Mussolini to cooperate in "obtaining a settlement of all European questions."[22]

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[20] Camile Chautemps, *Cahiers Secrets de L'armistice (1939-1940)* (Paris: Plon 1968), 95.

[21] Ibid. 94-95.

[22] Eleanor M. Gates *End of the Affair: The Collapse of the Anglo-French Alliance, 1939-40* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), 146. As an example of Reynaud's supposed armistice leanings on May 26th, Gates cites William L. Langer, *Our Vichy Gamble* (New York: Knopf, 1947), 17-18 who claimed that the Frenchman in London asked Churchill whether *it might not be in the common interest for France to conclude an armistice before Germany seized the entire Channel coast area*, Langer himself cited Albert Kammerer, *La Vérité sur l'Armistice* (Paris: Édition Médicis, 1944), 41 : *He fulfils his mandate which was to make known to the British Prime Minister that because our forces were worn out (en raison de l'usure de nos forces), it would be prudent to take now into consideration the hypothesis where France would be reduced to the need to lay down her arms and maybe to seek a solution through negotiations*. (Translated from French for this IS). French historian François Delpla, *Churchill et les Français, Six homes dans la tourmente, septembre 1939-juin 1940* (Paris:

In fact, by limiting his interventions to the issue of eventual concessions to Italy (probably neutralization of Gibraltar and Suez, demilitarisation of Malta, limitation of naval forces in the Mediterranean, some alterations to the status of Tunis)[23] and to transmitting to the British ministers that the armistice faction was gathering adherents under figures such as Pétain and could eventually overthrow him, Reynaud was wasting the opportunity for a frank discussion with the British over what steps could be taken, a discussion that Churchill had in fact anticipated.[24] Paul Baudouin records in his Journal (*Neuf mois au gouvernment*) the following dialogue: *I ask Mr. Paul Reynaud: "What did you say about the need where we may soon be to stop the battle? Under what conditions will the English release us from our word (engagement)? - I could not ask that question, he replied. I tell him that he was wrong, that he did not fulfil the mission entrusted to him by the War Committee, and that the longer we wait to settle this question, the more difficult it will be to find a solution.*[25] The impressions of another aide of Reynaud, Colonel Paul de Villelume, are in many ways concordant with Baudouin's testimony: *I ask the president if he threatened to make a separate peace. He replies in the affirmative, but adds that it was useless. I have the impression that Paul Reynaud only raised this threat in the event that Italy, for lack of English concessions, would in turn launch itself into the arena. It seems, moreover, that his only objective in all this negotiation was the search for means likely to prevent Mussolini from declaring war on us. Mine, moreover, coextensive with his, has been, I fear, totally lost sight of* (...).[26]

François-Xavier de Guibert, 2010), 406-407, also develops this idea of a Reynaud pushing forward for a political solution during his visit to London on the 26 of May 1940, but does not present new elements to back up his interpretation.

[23] Guy Nicholas Esnouf, "British Government War Aims and Attitudes towards a Negotiated Peace, Sept. 1939 to July 1940" (Ph.D. thesis, King's College, London, 1988), 212, King's College London Research Portal (on the basis of the British Cabinet minutes: Cab 65/13, WM(40)140, May 26th).

[24] Ibid. 210.

[25] Baudouin, *Neuf*, 92.

[26] Villelume. *Journal*, 356. This must have been a strong disappointment for Villelume as immediately previous to the voyage to London, he had tried to convince Reynaud of the necessity of obtaining an Italian mediation (Ibid., 354). He concludes that his chief must have "lost sight of" the objective.

There is every reason to believe that the idea of seeking Mussolini's intervention for a new Munich was in fact Halifax's and not Reynaud's[27] as Halifax had in fact been exploring such a European settlement with the Italian Ambassador Bastianini. Finding himself caught up in the political duel between Churchill and Halifax[28] over the possibility of peace overtures through Italy, Reynaud may have been even further dissuaded to bring forth the issue of peace or armistice proposals, so as not to prejudice Churchill who was in many respects his mentor and with whom he had met prior to his meetings with Halifax and other British Ministers on the 26th.

As to the idea of buying off Italy to keep her out of the war, Reynaud said it sprung from reports, late May 1940, by the French Ambassador to Rome, André Francois-Poncet. Yet Francois-Poncet himself, according to Reynaud, had also reported the apparent Italian interest in a European peace initiative: *(...) they realize in Rome that there can be no question of detaching France from her ally, and they have come to the idea of a general peace with a view to the reconstruction of Europe. The Duce, receiving satisfactions in the Mediterranean, would endeavour, says our ambassador, to moderate Hitler.*[29]

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[27] Esnouf, "British," 212-214. Esnouf does not believe Halifax's version of a Reynaud plan for a European conference through Mussolini.

[28] On this episode please see also the book by John Lukacs, *Five Days in London: May 1940* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999) but also the recent film directed by Joe Wright (written by Anthony McCarten) *Darkest Hour* (2017). We only had the opportunity to consult a portuguese translation: John Lukas, *Cinco Dias em Londres: Negociações que Mudaram o Rumo da II Guerra* (Rio de Janeiro: J. Zahar, 2001). In pages 105-117 the issue of Reynaud's visit to London on the 26 of May 1940 is treated. Lukas, on the basis of the existing minutes of the meetings of the British War Council, gives an idea of the fight between Churchill and Halifax over the latter's project to propose to Mussolini to help secure a European agreement on all European issues (in other words a peace arrangement with Germany). Lukas mentions that Halifax later presented his project as a product of the views of Reynaud, but Lukas does not give credit to this interpretation (116). The issue is also treated by Philip Bell who seems to give credit to Halifax's memorandum pointing to an initiative by Reynaud (see Philip Michael Hett Bell, *A Certain Eventuality: Britain and the Fall of France* (New York: Saxon House, 1974), 40-41). As mentioned, another author that treats the subject and credits Reynaud for a conference proposal to Mussolini is François Delpla, *Churchill,* 406-407. For their part, Cadogan's diaries provide no real insight: *W.S.C gave us account of his conversation with Reynaud at lunch. R. doesn't say that France will captulate, but all his conversation goes to show that he sees no alternative* (Alexandre Cadogan, *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, O.M., 1938-1945* (London: Cassell, 1971), 290).

[29] Reynaud. *Au cœur*, 600.

In any case, Reynaud would not seek to exploit this option despite France's predicament, focussing instead on the issue of eventual concessions and leaving the *Conseil des Ministres* to embark on a wide debate around these concessions though knowing full well that that the British will not follow suit. Again, we are given an example of deliberation by the Ministers that were of little consequence, since Reynaud chose to pursue his policy based on the advice of a few aides (in this case Charles-Roux, and also Pétain and Weygand) and of his own perception of the British mood. With the help of the Quai d'Orsay's *Secrétaire Général* Charles-Roux and the backing of Pétain and Weygand and ultimately of the British Cabinet, Reynaud, through a drafting exercise, diluted all the efforts of Foreign Minister Daladier, of Camille Chautemps and another minister, Anatole de Monzie, to produce a note capable of creating a dialogue with the Italians. Both Daladier and Monzie wanted to provoke a European peace conference through their approach towards Mussolini.[30] A few days later, Reynaud reshuffled the Cabinet, excluding Daladier and Monzie.

It is important to consider this cabinet reshuffle and its implications from the point of view of the process leading to the crisis that finally led France to ask for armistice conditions from Germany, and also by looking at the way French institutions functioned. According to Raymond Krakovitch, this cabinet reshuffle, meant to strengthen the "resistance" element in Reynaud's view, as his memoirs attest, in fact reinforced the armistice elements within the cabinet.[31] It is important to note that, in his memoirs, Reynaud sustained later that the cabinet reshuffle was in preparation of a duel of forces between himself and Pétain and Weygand, men he knew to be in favor of an armistice, but whom he did want to discard for fear of the effect on the moral of the nation.[32]

The most outstanding change was the ouster of Daladier and Monzie, as we mentioned, not necessarily armistice seekers even if they held on to the hope of an Italian mediation. But Daladier had always been his adversary, the man standing

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[30] Paul Reynaud, *La France a Sauvé l'Europe*, 2 Vols. (Paris: Flammarion, 1947), 245-246.

[31] Raymond Krakovitch, *Paul Reynaud dans la Tragédie de l'Histoire* (Paris: Taillendier, 1998), 299-302.

[32] Reynaud, *Au cœur*, 701 ; Paul Reynaud, *Mémoires, T.2. Envers et Contre Tous (7 Mars 1936-16 Juin 1940)* (Paris: Flammarion, 1963), 377.

between Reynaud and his destiny. In any case, Daladier had provoked the utter rejection of the Senate's Foreign Affairs committee who refused to work with him, no minor issue under a parliamentary regime like the Third Republic. Then there was the incorporation of De Gaulle as Under-secretary for War and National Defense, but as such he had no access to the deliberation of the *Council of Ministers*. Apparently, his functions seemed limited to trying to speed up preparations for the "Breton redoubt" and a resistance from North Africa, and very quickly, in any case by June 8th, he took it upon himself to try and move Reynaud to replace Weygand's as Commander-in-Chief.[33]

Then, there were other changes. For example, the replacement of Marcel Heraud as Minister of Public Health, a firm defender of a strong stance against Germany, was difficult to understand. Then, there were the designations of Prouvost to the Information Ministry and Chichery, a radical, to the Ministry of Trade and Industry, both men that ultimately favoured the armistice. And there was also the nomination of Yves Bouthillier as Minister of Finance, a close aide of Reynaud who had been previously *Secrétaire Général* of the Ministry Finance thanks to him, but who would play a non-negligible role in favor of the armistice, as would Paul Baudouin, another close aide who by that time had leanings towards a negotiated solution with the Axis powers, and whom Reynaud named as Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs. Krakovitch has explained these nominations in part as consequence of an incomplete knowledge from Reynaud's part regarding the true feelings of some of his associates, and also through the contrary influences of his inner-circle,[34] most of all Reynaud's mistress the countess Hélène des Portes. One survivor of this cabinet reshuffle was Camille Chautemps, a decision that would have fateful consequences for Reynaud.

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[33] Bernard Destremau, *Weygand* (Paris: Perrin, 1989), 497-498. A close aide of Reynaud's, Dominique Leca, in *La Rupture de 1940* (Paris: Fayard, 1978), 166, advances the following idea: *Unfortunately, however pathetic and well-intentioned it was, this unfortunate idea of the Breton redoubt, on the ground, did not hold water. Technically indefensible, it was for Reynaud a real way of the cross to support it, in the various councils where it was mentioned, pushed into this by de Gaulle who, in the last days, could no longer believe in it himself, I imagine, except as an opportunity for a violent break with Weygand*. (Translated from French for this thesis).

[34] Krabkovitch, *Paul Reynaud*, 301.

Another chapter that deserves mention revolves around Reynaud's answers to the notes presented by Weygand on the military situation, on May 29th and June 10th: the *président du Conseil* Reynaud reacted by stating his unswerving determination to continue the war even in case of a breakdown of the front, be it through a redoubt in Brittany, be it in North Africa. We will develop this issue further on, suffice for now to mention that although Reynaud effectively instructed Weygand to prepare a Breton redoubt from May 29th onwards, his dossier of concrete steps towards a resistance in North Africa are difficult to produce.[35]

A lot has been written around the influences (and wearing down pressures) exercised on Reynaud by his inner circle, his mistress, his three ultimately pro-armistice advisors Baudouin, Bouthillier and Villelume, and also by other advisors like De Margerie, De Gaulle, Leca and Devaud. We shall treat them later on, but for now suffice to treat two very determining episodes in the French decision-making process leading up to the French request for armistice conditions, both of them revealing Reynaud's character and style: the first Cangé meeting of the *Conseil des Ministres* on June 12th, where Weygand was allowed to participate and requested the government to ask for armistice conditions from Germany - Reynaud knowing this request to be a possibility since he had stopped Weygand from presenting a similar request to the allied Supreme allied War Council the day before- and his deliberate failure to produce a meeting between Churchill and the French Ministers on June 13th.

One of the most damning reflexions around the June 12th *Conseil des Ministres* at Cangé was put forward by the *vice-président du Conseil* Camille Chautemps and it turns around the idea of the dubious legality of Weygand's intervention, permitted by Reynaud. In Chautemps's view, after having kept the *Conseil des Ministres,* up to then out of the decision-making process and with scant information

[35] In *Au cœur de la mêlé,* pages 686-688*,* Reynaud mentions his May 29 communication to Weygand (one where he expresses his "intention" to call up two classes of recruits and send them to Algeria, and also alludes to his conversation with the *Chef d'état-major général de l'Armée* General Colson, to whom he also confides his "intention" to call up these two classes and send them to North Africa, but is met with a negative answer: *Useless! You won't have riffles to give them!* On June 3rd, Colson put his objections in writing. Reynaud called Colson to his office to insist on his decision to go ahead with this plan, regardless of the objections, but we should mention *en passant* that Reynaud was not in a position to give out direct orders over the head of the *généralissime*.

as to the on-going situation, suddenly forces the issue on the *Conseil* so as to avoid personally confronting his Commander-in-Chief whom he knew to be in favor of an armistice: *General Weygand, however high his personality, was his direct subordinate. Why didn't Reynaud take the responsibility to reject himself, immediately, the idea of the armistice, and to nip in the bud the Generalissimo's attempt at a time when he probably still could without danger? The answer to this crucial question seems to me to be the following: Reynaud had known for a long time, as I have already had occasion to note, the general's ideas (...) But he had not taken there seriously enough what I will call the "Weygand threat" as long as it was only manifested by inclinations, revealing, as he said, political ulterior motives. On the other hand, in this agonizing hour of defeat, he suddenly felt intimidated by this threat, when the general, faced with the gravity of the circumstances, discovered himself and made demands. Instead of standing up firmly against him and fulfilling his role as leader, he hid and took shelter behind the Council of Ministers, until he had so often forgotten it, in order to dilute responsibilities and avoid a personal conflict that he dreaded. During the discussions which will follow, in Tours and in Bordeaux, we will see Reynaud constantly dominated by this fear, timid, hesitant, and contradictory. Naturally weak under a haughty exterior, torn by the quarrels and intrigues of those around him, exhausted by the nervous tension in which he had been forced to live for two months, he would never dare to rise up head-on, personally, against military chiefs he knew were resolute.*[36] Of course, Chautemps's wisely crafted account smacks a little of what we could call "being a general after the battle". Suffice to say that: Reynaud was not presiding these councils, they were presided by the President of the Republic and that excluding Weygand from them required coordination with him; that France's military predicament made it difficult for Reynaud to exclude the *Généralissime* from access to the Council meetings, and that, as Reynaud explains in his memoirs, a point conceded by Chautemps, for reasons of national morale, Reynaud's demotion of the Commander-in-Chief would have brought about a major political crisis with Pétain intervening in favor of what in fact was the Army's position, not just Weygand's.

[36] Chautemps, *Cahiers*, 122-124.

Another episode that deserves to be mentioned occurs in Tours, on the 13th of June, during a meeting of the Supreme Inter-allied War Council, when Reynaud asked Churchill what would be Great Britain's attitude if France were forced to seek a separate peace. Churchill gave the following account in his memoirs: *(Reynaud asks) will you acknowledge that France has given her best, her youth and life-blood; that she can do no more; that she is entitled, having nothing further to contribute to the common cause, to enter into a separate peace while maintaining the solidarity implicit in the solemn agreement entered into three months previously? Mr. Churchill said that in no case would Britain waste time and energy in reproaches or recriminations. That did not mean she would consent to action contrary to the recent agreement. The first step ought to be Reynaud's further message putting the present position squarely to President Roosevelt. Let them await the answer before considering anything else. If England won the war, France would be restored in her dignity*.[37] This version was corroborated later by the notes taken by De Margerie[38] but it should be noted that Paul Baudouin, also present at the Supreme Franco-British Council, interpreted Churchill's answer in a completely different light and registered the following words of the British statesman: *that in this hypothesis Great Britain will not exhaust itself in vain recriminations, that it will continue to cherish France and that, if she is victorious, it undertakes to restore France in all cases to its power and its greatness, whatever the attitude of France after her defeat.*[39] Churchill, De Margerie's and Baudouin's accounts all deserve to be analyzed with a fair degree of caution. Churchill and De Margerie seem to be condensing two different interventions into one, while Baudouin seems to be "cherry picking" from Churchill's answers. In his memoirs

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[37] Sir Winston Churchill, *The Second World War, Vol. II, Their Finest Hour (Book 1 The Fall of France)* (Boston: Houghton Miffling Company, 1949), 181-182.

[38] See Roland de Margerie, *Journal, 1939-1940* (Paris: Grasset, 2010), 319: *Mr Winston Churchill: In any case we will not waste our strength in reproaches and recriminations. But that is a different thing from becoming a willing party to a separate peace concluded contrary to the commitments made. We think that the first thing to do is to explain the situation to President Roosevelt as it currently stands (...) Before asking ourselves decisive questions, we must appeal to Roosevelt. the French government will take care of it, and we will support it by telegram. This is the first thing to do before answering the very serious question which was asked by Mr. P. Reynaud. I have already replied that we will refrain from reproaches and recriminations. the cause of France will always remain dear to us, and we will restore he in "in all her power and dignity".*

[39] Baudouin, *Neuf*, 154.

De Margerie stresses Baudouin's strong pro-armistice bias and his rudimentary command of the English language. What seems evident is that at some point Churchill seemed to waiver in his answer and that the opportunity was lost by Reynaud, reinforcing Baudouin's resentment and sense of being betrayed by his Head of Government.

And now we must come to one of Reynaud's biggest *gaffes*: his failure to produce a meeting between Churchill and the cabinet ministers, despite the *Conseil's* mandate that he should do so and his commitment to this end. Chautemps has thus recounted the episode: *On June 13th, at the appointed time, the President of the Republic, Marshal Pétain, General Weygand and the ministers were present at the meeting assigned to them to welcome their English colleagues. They waited for hours (...) Finally Reynaud arrived with Mandel and made it known that Mr. Churchill had come to Tours, at his call, accompanied by two of his colleagues from the British Cabinet, Lord Hallifax and Lord Beaverbrook, but that he had not considered it appropriate to talk with other French ministers than the President of the Council (...) We saw indeed, when he (Reynaud) reported on his interview that he had completely distorted my proposal , It appears from his statement that, while I had wanted a joint examination of the whole situation, he had confined himself to submitting to the English ministers a dry account of General Weygand's proposal* (...).[40]

We should also analyze Bouthillier's version, which highlights the reaction to Reynaud statement that he communicated to Churchill the so-called government decision to reject Weygand's armistice proposal: *Mr. Bouthillier, Minister of Finance, and Mr. Chautemps, Vice-President of the Council, then protested on the two points which were the subject of the debate. With five years of interval, on August 26th, 1940 in the proceedings leading to the Riom trial, and on July 31, 1945, at the trial of Marshal Pétain, General Weygand testified in almost the same terms on this important part of the session and summed it up exactly. Here is his deposition of 1945: Two ministers, Mr. Bouthillier and Mr. Chautemps, successively note two facts: The first is that Mr. President of the Council having promised to have Mr. Winston Churchill heard by the Council, Mr. Churchill left without being heard. The second,*

[40] Baudouin, *Neuf*, 130-131.

much more important, is that the President of the Council told Mr. Winston Churchill that the government had taken the decision not to conclude an armistice and to continue the war, whereas the day before the government said he was not making any decisions.[41]

By the end of the June 13th *Conseil des Ministres*, Pétain brought to bear the full weight of his prestige in favor of an armistice and with the warning he would not leave France (with similar declarations by Weygand and Bouthillier) and a faction of six ministers (including Pétain) declared themselves in favor of an armistice. Though maintaining a strong majority of Ministers behind him, as well as the backing of President Lebrun, Reynaud decided not to press for a decision; invoking Roosevelt's pending answer to the simultaneous French and British appeals for help, and no doubt fearing the impact on French public opinion of a showdown with Weygand and Pétain.

2.3.2 Weygand sets the stage for a stalemate on the Somme or an armistice, then pushes for the latter

General Maxime Weygand, once Chief of Staff to General Foch during the Great War, had a brilliant military career behind him. In 1920, he participated as head of the military branch of the Inter-allied mission to Poland, serving as advisor to Marshall Pilsudski in his war against the Soviet Union, then was named High Commissioner in Syria and Lebanon in 1923. Chief of the General Staff of the Army in 1930, later vice-president of the Superior Council of War (*Conseil supérieur de la guerre)* and Inspector General of the Army. Weygand had been called back to service and placed in command of the Middle East Theater of Operations (TOMO) making him in effect French Pro Consul for the Levant, until he was called to Paris in May 1940 to assume as *généralissime* of the land, sea and air forces of France.

No one can doubt the sincerity of his efforts at trying to cut off the advancing panzer formations from the bulk of the German forces in a bid to save 40 or so French, British and Belgian divisions in the North from isolation and destruction in the feverish days following his nomination (he assumed command on May 20th). He quickly realized that he could neither cut-off the advancing German panzers, save the

[41] Bouthillier, Yves. *Le drame de Vichy, T. I: Face à l'Ennemi, Face à l'Allié* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1950), 66-67.

allied formations in Flanders or create a fighting bridgehead around Dunkirk, Boulogne and Calais (27-28 May), the Belgian capitulation and British determination to re-embark soon putting an end to these hopes. In any case, at the War Committee (*Comité d Guerre)* on May 25th, Weygand laid out the strategy for the next phase of the war, soon to be called the Battle of France: the defense of a line from the Channel, following the Somme, the Crozat and Ailette canals, the Aisne river and reaching Montmédy to link-up with the fortifications of the Maginot line, all the way to the Swiss border.

According to Philip C. F. Bankwitz, the military strategy adopted by Weygand on May 25th, 1940, deliberately excluded the eventuality of a continuation of the war from North Africa, with Weygand thereby encroaching on Reynaud's prerogatives (the overall conduct of the war). According to Bankwitz, within 5 days of assuming command, Weygand "confined" the battle within the traditional continental theater, thus killing the only possibility of making contingency plans for a resistance in North Africa.[42] A similar theory is developed by Eleanor M. Gates, who claims that *the truth was that in the disadvantageous conditions in which they would now have to face a major German offensive there was no solid line of resistance left in France. Weygand knew it, but nevertheless could not admit the alternative – the necessity of abandoning the national territory* (…).[43]

Reynaud himself advanced along these lines in his memoirs *Au Cœur de la Mêlée* by stating that Weygand, like generals Gamelin and Georges, had not informed him the true dimensions of France's military defeat, and admission that, if it had been made, it would have permitted the establishment of a policy prioritizing the reinforcement of French defenses in North Africa[44]. For his part, Jean-Louis Crémieux-Brilhac, in *Les Francais de l'an 40,* contends that from May 25th onward, Weygand was totally committed to the armistice.[45]

The French academic Thibauld Decomble, on the other hand, offers us a different view, one he has called *the progressive reduction of the scope of*

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[42] Philip Charles Farwell Bankwitz, *Maxime Weygand and Civil-Military Relations in Modern France* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), 290-292.

[43] Gates, *End of the Affairs*, 137-138.

[44] Reynaud. *Au Cœur*, 549-550.

[45] Jean-Louis Crémieux-Brilhac, *Les Francais de l'An 40, T. II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 605.

possibilities to the single solution of the armistice, delineating this evolution in the following manner: *The question is to know what hypotheses he successively engaged, before lining up in favor of the armistice. First of all, we will see that the armistice was quickly considered as a possible solution, but among other options. This is what we will call Weygand's wavering moment, from May 20th to 25th, 1940. Then, we will look at the period from May 25th to June 10th, 1940, which is when he considers that France was facing a single alternative: winning the Battle of the Somme or ceasing hostilities. Finally, from June 11th to 24th, General Weygand saw in the armistice the necessary solution to military defeat, even if it meant going beyond his powers by publicly campaigning in favor of this way out.*[46] Later on, Decomble refines this schematization by adding that though sincere in his hope for some form of stalemate along the Somme-Aisne up to the first days of June, from June 8th onward, after the piercing of the French defenses, Weygand's words when optimistic were *nothing more than classic exhortations which have a single goal: that the army does not lose itself in a retreat turning into a debacle.*[47] We should add that an important element of Weygand's faith in the possibilities offered by his upcoming defensive battle on the Somme lied in the fact that at the end of May and beginning of June 1940, Britain still had a sizeable Air Force that in his view could and should have been decisively used on the French theater.[48] No one can deny the many efforts made by Weygand and Reynaud with a view to securing a greater commitment in terms of troops and aircraft from Great Britain.

As to the evaluation of an alternative strategy such as the Breton redoubt (advanced by Paul Reynaud from May 29-30 onward), in later years Weygand clearly stated its chimerical character, most notably during his intervention at the trial of Philippe Pétain: *(...) it requires to have made a plan for the defense of the territory months in advance of which this is a part, then we can execute it, without that they are*

[46] Thibault Decomble, *Le Général Maxime Weygand Face à la Guerre (Mai 1940-Septembre 1940)* (dumas-02087919f), Historie, 2018. https://dumas.ccsd.cnrs.fr/dumas-02087919/document.

[47] Ibid., 161.

[48] Maxime Weygand, *Mémoirs, T. III: Rapelé au Service.* See also Bouthillier, *Le Drame*, 56.

des jeux de l'esprit (games of the mind) and war does not accommodate itself to games of the mind, war is a matter of strength.[49]

As to the transfer of the fight to North Africa, he gave his ideas at Pétain's trial, in his memoirs and also in a book published as a direct challenge to the memoirs of Charles de Gaulle: *En lisant les mémoires du géneral De Gaulle*: *Had we also possessed, immediately available, all the manpower to be sent to Africa, which was not the case; the ships necessary for their transport, which was not the case; the means of receiving and instructing them in North Africa, which was not the case; massive embarkations in the port of Bordeaux, or in those of the Mediterranean, and the exit of these ports would have been rendered almost impossible by the intervention of the German and Italian air forces, masters of the skies of France.*[50]

We should add that in the period between May 25th and June 11th, Weygand was never ordered by Reynaud to make preparations for a transfer of troops to North Africa, as the *président du Conseil* Reynaud kept insisting on the Breton redoubt. According to Weygand, he received only two "indications" with respect to continuing the war in North Africa, one in answer to his May 29th note: *I add that my intention is to raise two classes and send them to North Africa, to make them contribute to its defense with weapons purchased abroad*; the other in answer to his note of June 10th. In this last answer, Reynaud said: *if we failed, we had to install and organize means of struggle in our Empire using the freedom of the seas*. Weygand concluded by saying: *These were projects at the first stage of the conception, without order, without a measure, to prepare the realization.*[51]

We believe that the secret to Weygand's role in the period spanning roughly from May 25th to June 13th does not lie so much in what he failed to do with respect to Brittany or North Africa, but in his perception of the military situation and of his own responsibilities towards the armed forces and the Nation. Although not a member of the French government and only punctually and partially invited to the deliberations of the *Counseil des Ministres*, Maxime Weygand played a first-hand role

[49] See documentary Les chemins de l'histoire, "1945 Juger Pétain 3|4," February 16, 2021, YouTube Video, 58:56, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QwHxJ3BHTFY.

[50] Maxime Weygand, *En lisant les Mémoires de Guerre du Général De Gaulle* (Paris: Flammarion, 1955), 86-87.

[51] Ibid., 77-78.

on the decision leading to the armistice of 1940: first he would feel that in his capacity as Commander in Chief of the Army it was his responsibility to interpret the state of the military situation – as military developments impact directly on the systemic element - and to inform to the political establishment the moment *when a coordinated military resistance will no longer be possible*. Then, always in his capacity as Commander-in-Chief, he would play a role as the representative of a strong, decisive domestic element: France's army, as he was careful to speak in the name of all the top French commanders (having first made sure to personally visit some of them).

For some time and in a rather disciplined and contained fashion, he tried and played both functions by advising the *président du Conseil* Reynaud, with whom he would act in unison in trying to obtain a greater commitment to the battle from the British. Thus, together with making preparations to contain the Germans on the Somme and Aisne, he would also try to "prepare" the political establishment for the decisions that belonged to said establishment in case of defeat and which, in his view, entailed an armistice with Germany if the same could be honorably achieved. Having failed to produce, through his intervention on May 25th at the *Comité de Guerre*, a serious discussion with the British as to the futility of a continued French resistance if his defensive line were broken, on May 29th, Weygand prepared a note for Reynaud stating: *It also seems equally necessary for the British government to know that there may come a time when France will find itself, despite its will, unable to continue a militarily effective struggle to protect its soil. This moment would be marked by the definitive rupture of the positions on which the French armies had received the order to fight without the spirit of retreat.*[52]

It should be noted that according to Reynaud, this note was accompanied by *comments of Pétain and Weygand on the necessity of asking for an armistice in this hypothesis, which I considered contrary, at the same time, to the honor and to the interest of France.*[53] Reynaud's answered by a note also dated May 29th and delivered on the 30th: *the fact that, in the hypothesis considered, the whole of the national territory could no longer be defended does not have the necessary consequence that we could suspend hostilities under conditions compatible with the*

[52] Weygand, *Mémoires,* 151; Reynaud, *Au Cœur*, 685-686.
[53] Reynaud, *Au Cœur*, 686-687.

honor and the vital interest of France. Also, since, in the hypothesis considered, the enemy would be able to carry out rapid raids over the entire extent of the territory, I ask you to kindly study the state of defense of a national redoubt around a port of war allowing us to use the freedom of the seas and in particular to communicate with our allies. This national redoubt should be fitted out and supplied - notably with explosives - like a veritable fortress. It would include the Breton peninsula. Thus the government would remain fixed in the metropolis and would continue the war by using our naval armies and our air force, which would be used in North Africa. I add that my intention is to raise two classes (of conscripts) and send them to North Africa to make them contribute to its defense with weapons purchased abroad.[54]

Bernard Destremau gives us the following description of the situation around June 10th: *The last great battle lasted five days. From June 5th to 10th. Beyond this date, we will only see split fights, delivered outside of any overall manoeuvre. The defenders often fought without the (high) command being able to coordinate their actions. Alongside those who fled on the sly, slipping into the columns of refugees or putting on civilian clothes to join their family or their mistress, there were brave men, many brave men. They did not know which army they belonged to, sometimes even which regiment. They fired, clung to the trigger of a machine gun, armed their canon to face the more pressing danger. All this in an irremediable disorder, often unable to report, while their leaders deprived of any means of transmission lost contact with the (high) command.*[55] On June 10th, when the outcome of the Battle of France could no longer be in doubt as the Germans had already pierced the French defenses on the Somme and Aisne and were in the process of overwhelming new defensive positions on the Seine, threatening Paris, Weygand handed Reynaud a second Note stating: *I am far from having lost all hope of stopping the enemy, as evidenced by my order of yesterday. Our armies are fighting and their manoeuvres are still coordinated. But the events of the last two days of battle make it my duty to warn Mr. President of the Council that the definitive rupture of our lines of defense may occur at any moment, whether the adversary succeeds in to seize the passages of the lower Seine and to approach the Paris region from the south, either that he manages, in Champagne, to push another*

[54] Reynaud, *Au Cœur*.
[55] Destremau, *Weygand*, 485.

deep incursion of armoured vehicles, or, finally, that our divisions, recruits from fatigue and diminished by the losses, be powerless, under the pressure of an enemy three times stronger, to re-establish solidly on the lower Seine line, position of Paris, Marne. If such an eventuality occurred, our armies would continue to fight until the exhaustion of their means and their forces. But their dissociation would only be a matter of time.[56]

On June 10th, he notified Reynaud of his decision to declare Paris an open city. On the 11th, made impatient by Reynaud's refusal to act on his previous warnings, during a meeting of the *Supreme Inter-allied Council* at Briare, in the presence of Churchill, Weygand declared that "*If it is necessary to envisage the complete occupation of the Métropole, one has to ask one's self how France would be able to continue the war*?"[57] Reynaud cut him off stating that the problem of the continuation of the war was a political one, a sphere that depended on the government's decisions. No doubt offended by the interruption, Weygand offered his resignation on the spot, saying he would be only too happy to serve under the orders of *whoever could find the means of avoiding the consequences of the situation at hand*![58]

Having been silenced at the Inter-allied Supreme Council, Weygand made up his mind to intervene at the Council of Ministers at the Chateau of Cangé on the 12th. Here is his own version of that fateful intervention: *Since then, the situation had worsened still further: the Seine more widely crossed, the advance of the Panzer Divisionnen in Champagne, Paris overwhelmed, all the reserves spent. I conclude that only the cessation of hostilities could save an important part of the national territory from invasion and maintain order and cohesion among our decimated and harassed troops. If the battle were to continue it would be the severing of the forces, rout and disorder. To this military disorder will be added the general disorder due to the influx and the misery of the refugees mixed with the troops and without food. I asked in*

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[56]Reynaud, *Au Cœur,* 728-729; Baudouin, *Neuf*, 140-142; Louis-Georges Planes and Robert Dufourg, *Bordeaux Capitale Tragique, Mai-Juin 1940* (Paris: Éditions Médicins, 1956), 69.

[57] Destremau, *Weygand*, 513-514.

[58] Ibid. In his memoirs, Weygand gives a very sober version of this inter-allied meeting, and omits his offer of resignation: Weygand, *Mémoires*, 205. See also Reynaud, *Au Cœur*, 743, which includes De Margeries "process verbal" that also contains Weygand's offer of resignation.

conclusion that the French government send the German government a request for an armistice.[59] Only two ministers support Weygand's intervention, one of them being Marshal Pétain, who in a short intervention, tried to convey the sense of urgency of the matter: *We have waited long enough* (*Nous n'avons déjà que trop attend).*[60] The other was Jean Prouvost, minister of Information, who warned that if the government abandoned France, the country could choose to constitute another government: *We have lived too long under the influence of foreigners. Let us seek only a national solution.*[61]

As to Reynaud's answer, let us cite his own version, as given in *Au cœur de la mêlée*: *I mention the need for France, if she wants to safeguard her independence, to remain united to the Anglo-Saxon world. I also mention the impossibility of rebuilding our country after the war without the help of America (...) I say, finally, to Pétain and to Weygand: "You take Hitler for William I, old gentleman who took from us Alsace-Lorraine, and all was said. But Hitler is Genghis-Khan!*[62]

Robert Aaron, perhaps France's most reputed intellectual on the period in question, has contrasted the two Council of Ministers at Cangé, the first on June 12th, when Weygand for the first time called for an armistice, but where the Ministers only half reacted under the shock of the realities they were being fed, and the second, on June 13th, that according to Aaron marks the start of the ministerial crisis and of the split inside the government.[63] But even if the Ministers had only half reacted when faced with Weygand's revelations, even if the debates had been inconclusive and the apparent mood of the assembled statesmen still seemed to show a majority hope for some form of honorable combative exile, the fact remains that Maxime Weygand managed to play his cards, staking his military reputation and the fate of the Army he commanded by seizing of the matter an organ that up to that moment at best had decided on secondary issues during the war, had never challenged Reynaud's attributions regarding the overall conduct of the war, and that from then onward could no longer choose to avoid the responsibility that laid on its shoulders.

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[59] Weygand. *Mémoires,* 211-212.
[60] Baudouin, *Neuf,* 150.
[61] Jacques de Launay, *Les Grande Decisions de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale, Tome I, 1939-1941* (Genève: Édito-Service S.A., 1973), 176-177.
[62] Reynaud. *Au Cœur,* 760.
[63] Aaron, *Histoire*, 19-23.

Another thing should be added, and it is well expressed by the young Bouthillier: at the June 12th meeting, Weygand presented the issues in all their crudeness but also, all their simplicity, as the continuation of the struggle on French soil, from a military point of view, simply didn't make sense: *The general only posed the problem in its complete and concrete data. A problem posed exactly determines its solution ineluctably. Whether or not one is aware of the deep reasons for his reflex, the choice follows: supreme power over the ephemeral being that we are of true realities. What General Weygand expressed at the Council of Cangé accorded so perfectly with the facts, that from that hour, and unless there was a veto from England, which the situation hardly allowed morally to pose, the demand for the terms of an armistice was certain.*[64]

2.3.2 The hour of Philippe Pétain

In his memoirs au *Au Cœur de la Mêlé*, Reynaud recounts how on May 18th, 1940, together with announcing the nomination of Weygand as *Généralissime* and his own assumption of the portfolio of Defense and Mandel's designation as minister of Interior, he also announced to the French public that Marshal Philippe Pétain, the Hero of Verdun, would join the Cabinet as *Vice-président du Conseil* and Minister of State. He describes how the French newspapers rejoiced in unison and felt an invigorating effect with the mere mention of Pétain's name.[65]

No other French soldier of the Great War was the subject of such devotion from the French public, a fascination that would endure throughout the nineteen twenties, thirties and the war years. Pétain struck out as a rather stubborn genius, very conscious of his intellectual and moral superiority. Through the study of then recent conflicts such as the Russo-Japanese War or the Boer War, he came to understand how fire-power would revolutionize modern warfare and one of his catch phrases was that "*fire kills"* ("*le feu tue*"), placing a new importance on the defense. As his theories were not liked by the High Command, at the eve of the First World War Pétain was still a colonel, two years from retirement and with no prospect of promotion. He made matters worse through his biting irony and was knick-named "*Précis-le-sec*"

[64] Bouthillier, *Le Drame*, 63-64.
[65] Reynaud, *Au Cœur*, 491-494.

by his fellow officers. The First World War would radically change his career prospects as he climbed quickly from colonel to general of brigade (August 1914), then general of division (September 1914), commander of an Army Corps (October 1914) and then effectively becoming *général d'armée* (June 1915).

In France, there is today a whole historical current set on minimizing his role as the defender of Verdun, recalling that the initial and essential first hours of defense are the work of general Édouard de Castelnau, while for months, general Robert Nivelle took over the defense of Verdun from Pétain and managed progress, aided by general Charles Mangin, in retaking Douamont. A few years ago, French historian Marc Ferro resumed it nicely by saying there were two different traditions, that of the political and military leaders who credited Nivelle, and that of the *combatants* who only knew Pétain.[66]

In any case, there is no doubting Pétain's genius in organizing this resistance, notably by a system of rotation, the so-called *Noria* of men and *matériel* that went through the *Voie sacrée* that made it possible to replace infantrymen after 3 days of fighting, with a rule of removing units from the battlefield if they lost more than a given percentage of their fighting strength. The narration from the recent documentary *Juger Pétain* has described it thus: *At Verdun, Pétain had ordered that the men stay as little as possible on the front line, not more than three days, that the relief forces arrive quickly, through a permanent rotation, At this rhythm, in five months of battle, more than a million men experienced successively the "Hell of Verdun" and lived there a personal and collective experience under the conduction of the future Marshal. When the peace came back, fathers talked to their sons, husbands to their wives, brothers to their brothers, a whole people of Anciens combattants that recognized each other and over whom hovered the shadow of general Pétain.*[67]

At least two other important episodes of the Great War deserve mention: the *Mutinies of 1917*, repressed by Philippe Pétain, commander in Chief of the French Army, with a firm hand (more than 500 death sentences were handed down,

[66] Marc Ferro, *Pétain* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1987), 678.

[67] Les chemins de l'histoire, "1945 Juger Pétain 1|4," February 16, 2021, YouTube Video, 55:54, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kgvD-HiI9kM (Translated from French for this thesis).

and fifty or so soldiers were executed) but also through numerous ameliorations of home leaves and things that mattered to the soldier in the trenches. This "humanity" and his evident preoccupation with the conditions of the French *poilu,* helped to consolidate his prestige among the French soldiers. Perhaps more important than this was an unwritten pact, made palpable through Pétain's record, whereby the new Commander-in-Chief would not permit unnecessary and suicidal offensives. In his book *Reputations, Ten Years After*, Boston, 1928, Captain B.H. Liddel Hart, handed down one of the greatest praises to Pétain's perseverance and organizational genius: *It is almost certain that the French army would not have recovered if Pétain had not been called to command in 1917. He made victory possible. If Foch, for all his great qualities, or any other offensive inspired general had been appointed instead, the war would have been lost, for France at least.*[68]

Another important episode has to do with the Armistice of 1918, bitterly resented by Pétain who had patiently prepared his army for an important offensive on the Lorraine front with a view to crossing the Rhine and advancing into Germany. The French historian Marc Ferro has developed the idea that Pétain felt robbed of his victory in 1918, and in later years wanted, in turn, to rob the Germans of their victory, through an armistice.

It is important to note, that whereas Reynaud, through Pétain's nomination, intended to galvanize French resistance, Pétain, on the other hand, from the *Comité de Guerre* of May 25th onward, felt that defeat was at hand.[69] While Reynaud thought of boosting French morale and his own standing through two national figures such as Weygand and Pétain, the Marshal was waiting for his moment in order to serve France in her distress and what he considered an inevitable defeat. This dichotomy of purposes would inevitably lead to a confrontation. How soon did Reynaud realize Pétain's pro-armistice leanings? We know that by May 26th he was warning Churchill and the British ministers that a new government under Pétain might decide to ask for armistice conditions from Germany. How soon did Pétain realize that Reynaud was

[68] B. H. Liddel Hart, *Reputations: Ten Years After* (Boston: Little Brown & Co, 1928), 230.

[69] Baudouin, *Neuf*, 91; Bénédicte Vergez-Chaignon, *Pétain* (Paris: Perrin, 2018), 394; Ferro, *Pétain*, 35.

laying the groundwork for an intended capitulation of the Army and a continuation of the war from North Africa or elsewhere? We know from Baudouin that by the end of May, the Marshal had his forebodings. On May 26th he declared to Baudouin, who noted it in his diary, that he was not in favour of pursuing the fight to the end and that he was in favour of saving at least part of the Army, as without an army grouped around some leaders, there was no prospect of a true peace and France's reconstruction.[70] Another thing that must be mentioned is how much Pétain resented the way Reynaud was laying all the blame for the disaster at Sedan on the shoulders of the military commanders on the spot, through a communiqué on the 26th mentioning that 15 generals had been changed: *I cannot allow political errors to be blamed on the army*.[71] We understand from Reynaud that Weygand's May 29th note was accompanied with comments by Weygand and Pétain that in the case of a definitive rupture of the French positions (on the Somme and Aisne), then they would consider asking armistice conditions from Germany to be a necessity.[72] In any case, we must mention that his ministerial position had been offered to Pétain during a meeting in Paris with Reynaud, previous to the German attack that started on May 10th[73].

Pétain was by no means a rebellious or uncomfortable minister and for some time participated quite positively at the daily military briefings with Reynaud and Weygand, taking care not to infringe on Weygand's prerogatives. That being said, at the *Comité de Guerre* on May 25th, he chose to relativize the value of British military contribution to the war effort and consequently relativize the importance of France's duties and commitments towards her ally under the circumstances France was facing.[74]

We should also note that during one of the daily military briefings with Reynaud and Weygand, on June 5th, the battle on the Somme having started, when the Reynaud asked Weygand his opinion regarding the Breton redoubt and when

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[70] Baudouin, *Neuf*, 91.
[71] Ibid., 90.
[72] Reynaud, *Au Cœur*, 686.
[73] Vergez-Chaignon, *Pétain,* 387.
[74] Baudouin, *Neuf*, 86: "*Marshal Pétain wonders if there is complete reciprocity of duties between France and England. Each nation has duties towards the other in proportion to the aid which the other has given it. However, currently, England threw in the fight only 10 divisions whereas 80 French divisions are fighting. The comparison must not only be made between the military efforts of two countries but also between the sufferings which awaits them.*" (Translated from French for this IS).

Weygand answered that the redoubt had no military value in his eyes and that he would not have the means to defend Brittany, Pétain supported the declarations of the *généralissime* (it should be added that before this briefing, Pétain had been offered in Reynaud's name, and declined the portfolio of Foreign Affairs, no doubt in order to more freely follow the military developments). The day before, on June 4th, and expecting the German attack on the Somme in a matter of days, Pétain had told the American Ambassador Willima C. Bullitt, with the request that he transmit it to Washington D.C., that if the British did not engage its air force and reserve divisions in the battle that was imminent, the French government would do its utmost to come to terms immediately with Germany, whatever might happen to England: *He added that it was not fair for any French government to permit the British to behave in a totally callous and selfish manner while demanding the sacrifice of every able-bodied Frenchman*.[75] He added that he would make a statement in that sense the next day, at the meeting of the War Cabinet (Reynaud, Weygand and himself).[76]

We should then mention another important intervention by Pétain at one of these meeting, noted in Baudouin's journal on June 9th, at a time when the battle of France could be considered lost: *Marshal Pétain read a note he had written and which he did not send to Mr. Paul Reynaud because it had not yet found its final form.(...) The note ends with the need to request an armistice intended to end hostilities if, of course, the terms of the armistice, although inevitably harsh, are acceptable. The salvation and the future of the country require that we proceed in this way with courage. Mr. Paul Reynaud declares that it is not possible to ask for an armistice, because no honorable armistice is to be expected from Hitler. A request for an armistice would not change Hitler's plans, which are to annihilate France. Moreover, it would be an immense imprudence to separate us from our allies. The Marshal believes that the interests of France must come before those of England "England put us in this situation. Let's not just suffer it, try to get out of it*.[77]

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[75] William C. Bullitt, *For the President, Personal & Secret; Correspondence between Franklin D. Roosevelt and William C. Bullitt* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), 449-451.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Baudouin, *Neuf*, 135-136.

On June 11th at Briare, at the inter-allied Supreme War Council he opposed the ideas of Winston Churchill regarding the organization of a guerrilla war on French soil while waiting for an American intervention. According to Pétain, such a course of action would only lead to the destruction of the country.[78] He also contradicted Churchill's analogy regarding the situation at hand and the 1918 crisis: *Marshal Pétain confirms, with the help of his memories, that the analogy between 1918 and current events cannot be pushed very far. When General Gough's army was broken down, the commander-in-chief of the French army (Pétain) was able to immediately place 20 infantry divisions at his disposal, and, a few days later (…) send 20 more, for a total of 40, taken all over the reserve*.[79]

Then there is his intervention in support of Weygand, on June 12th, at the first Conseil des Ministres at Cangé and then, his even more capital intervention at the second Cangé meeting, on June 13th. We have already described the tense ambiance at this second Cangé Council of Ministers, a meeting that should have brought together Winston Churchill and the French Ministers according to plan, thus permitting the Ministers to decide on a course of action in the face of France's on-going military collapse. Instead, Reynaud arrived alone, said that in Churchill's view it was not correct for him to participate in the deliberation of a French council, and added that he had told his British counterpart of the French Government's decision not to accept an armistice formula. He explained that both he and Churchill would address messages to Roosevelt asking for America's active participation in the war. There ensued a strong debate with heated interventions by Chautemps and Bouthillier, who considered that Reynaud had misrepresented the government's views in his discussions with Churchill. Even President Lebrun in his memoirs criticized Reynaud for not having brought Churchill: *A great embarrassment manifests itself in the Council. M. Chautemps utters bitter words; ministers echo him. They would have been happy to make contact with British statesmen at this critical moment when France was in peril of death. Perhaps their presence would have strengthened a resistance to which they attached so much value.*[80]

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[78] Vergez-Chaignon, *Pétain*, 402.

[79] Reynaud, *La France*, 308; Reynaud, *Au Cœur*, 752 (Minute of the Briare inter-allied Supreme Council by De Margerie).

[80] Albert Lebrun, *Témoignage* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1945), 77.

Then Pétain intervened and read a text he had prepared: (…) *It is impossible for the Government to abandon French soil without emigrating, without deserting. The duty of the Government is, come what may, to remain in the country, or it could no longer be regarded as the Government. To deprive France of her natural defenders in a period of general confusion is to deliver her to the enemy. It is to kill France's soul, and to make any renascence impossible. We must wait for the French revival by remaining on the spot, rather than reconquering our territory with allied guns, in conditions, and after a period of time, which it is impossible to foresee. The question at hand is not about knowing whether the government will ask for an armistice, but rather if it accepts to leave the metropolitan soil. I am thus determined not to leave French soil, and to accept the suffering which will be imposed on la Patrie and her sons. The French renascence will be the fruit of this suffering... I declare, so far as I am concerned, that, if need be, outside the Government, I will refuse to leave the home soil, I will remain amid the French people, to share its afflictions and its miseries. The armistice is, in my eyes, the necessary condition for the continued existence of eternal France*.

This is definitely the moment of truth for Philippe Pétain as he had burnt his ships behind him so to speak. Philippe Simonnot in *Les secrets de l'armistice* describes the scene in the following manner: *He dissociates himself in advance from the members of the Council who plan to leave France. In short, he seceded. This is not a Cagoule-style putsch. It is a soft coup. From now on, alongside the Reynaud government, a Pétain government is formed*.[81]

For her part, Eleanor M. Gates describes this moment in her thesis: *Thus began the campaign of intimidation waged by the Commander-in-Chief and the most prestigious member of the cabinet to link a cessation of hostilities in French soil with the much profounder decision to retain the government in France. In effect, in an attempt to impose their wills, Weygand now refused to obey the government should it command the continuation of the struggle from North Africa and Pétain threatened to*

[81] Philippe Simonnot, *Le Secret de l'Armistice, 1940* (Paris: Plon, 1990), 155-156; see also Vergez-Chaignon, *Pétain*, 405: "*Pétain's statement suggests a risk of resignation, the effect of which would perhaps be devastating for public opinion and would in any case demonstrate the reality of a split within the government, or even secession, in the midst of a military débâcle* (…)."

resign rather than leave metropolitan soil.[82] Here we should ask ourselves whether the fact of linking the issue of the cessation of hostilities with the important questions of what would happen to the French government, to the French people, to the French armed forces still not prisoners of the Germans – even to the North African territories themselves if the war were thrust upon them- was not in fact a legitimate approach, indeed perhaps an obligatory one from the point of view of the statesman be he a politician or a soldier, or an artificial one as Gates seems to suggest. As to trying to impose one's will in a time of crisis and threatening resignation, one could argue that it is part of the "rules of the game" of political *decision-making*, especially when a government is so divided on so capital an issue!

Benoist-Méchin in his book *Soixante jours qui ébralèrent l'occident,* has tried to describe the impact of Pétain's intervention on Reynaud's plans: Reynaud was frightened by the veiled threat contained in the peroration: *Outside the government, if necessary, I will refuse to leave metropolitan soil. If the government goes to Africa, does the Marshal plan to stay behind? And if he stays in France with General Weygand, is it not because they intend to deal with the enemy? This unexpected prospect digs like a chasm under the feet of the President of the Council. The declaration of the Marshal risks undermining at the base his project of "African withdrawal.*[83] For her part, Franca Avantaggiato Puppo has explained it in this manner: *This note by Marshal Pétain was of great interest because for the first time he was expressing officially his opinion and noting his determination never to abandon France. Indeed, this point was reinforced by a veiled threat, contained in the words "outside the government, if necessary*. Indeed, he well knew that Reynaud would have done anything to prevent the marshal from leaving his government and this, as has been said, to avoid a cabinet crisis. And with Reynaud's exclamation: *What you are proposing is contrary to the honor of France! ended the session, without any decision having yet been taken (...).*[84] Avantaggiato Puppo adds that the session at least managed some agreements: the French fleet would

[82] Gates, *The End of the Affair*, 203-204.

[83] Jacques Benoist-Mechin, *Soixante Jours qui ébranlèrent l'Occident, 10 Mai-10 Uuillet 1940* (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1956), 182.

[84] Franca Avantaggiato Puppo, *Gli Armistizi Franceses di 1940* (Milano: Edittore Dott, 1963), 120-123.

never be handed over to Germany, the ministers would wait for Roosevelt's reply to the message that Reynaud was to send him before making a decision regarding the armistice and the government would be transferred to Bordeaux.[85]

Then we have the vision of Robert Aaron in his *Histoire de Vichy*: *The Council had not resolved anything: no decision is taken. But more serious and more definitive than if it had been adopted, the meeting of Ministers consecrated the irreparable: it caused the rupture of governmental unity, which in this hour of catastrophes presages and renders fatal a dissension deep between French people*.[86] Here we must pause: clearly if the Government before the June 13th Cangé Council meeting appeared "united" on the issue of measures to adopt in the face of a defeat of French forces in metropolitan France, it was a unity of façade as only one view had been able to express itself publicly and that had been Reynaud's through diverse messages to the French people – messages which in any case did not convey to the French people all the implied consequences of this policy- or through his messages to Churchill and Roosevelt. The views of Pétain and others had not had their say, only through a brief debate the day before provoked by Weygand's intervention. As to the profound dissention among Frenchmen, it would exist anyway and could not cause greater disarray than the havoc provoked by the advancing German armies and the retreating French ones. The problem was not disunity in itself, but the evident lack of a consensual mandate for a revolutionary policy of abandoning the French people to foreign occupation and the bulk of the French army to prisoner of war camps, so as to pursue from abroad what to some appeared as a war whose final outcome was uncertain.

2.4 Conclusion to Chapter 2

If we look at this episode from a neo-classical realist perspective at the systemic level, then we are truck by two main elements, the first being the dominance of Germany over the European continent in June 1940, even if Britain was still fighting on, and even if America with her gigantic industrial power is clearly sympathetic of the belligerent Western Democracies and very suspicious of Nazism. Then, if we follow

[85] Puppo, *Gli Armistizi*, 120-123.
[86] Aaron, *Histoire,* 23.

the neo-classical realist doctrine, it seems almost a foregone conclusion that a state would normally look to obtaining the best possible conditions for its survival on the international stage, in the sense of retaining control of her Navy and Empire and over part of her Metropolitan territory - at the cost of abandoning the conflict be it on a temporary or more permanent basis - instead of joining the plethora of totally occupied European nations with exiled governments in London. Having said that, we must not forget that, in the neo-classical realist model, the signs of the systemic system are read through the prism of a state's leader and his aides.

If we look at the domestic level and at the interaction between the main players, the picture becomes more difficult to read, the need to boost morale of the men under arms and of the country as a whole, the outward displays of loyalties toward one's allies, feelings of national pride and war propaganda, censorship itself, all play a role in making it difficult for us to get a perfect understanding, 84 years later, of the pulse of French public opinion and the real positioning of France's elites and masses in the face of the country's evident downfall. But some elements cannot be overlooked and need no interpretation: 8 to 10 million refugees on the roads exposed to constant danger through the action of the German Lutfwaffe, an Army that was retreating, an administration that was no longer functioning and a government that was wandering between different chateaux in the old province of Touraine.

We have mentioned before that one of the country's most vital institutions in this context, the Army, from June 12th, 1940, through the leadership of Weygand, who claimed to have the backing of the top army generals, was presenting a united domestic front, was acting as a *decision-influencer* on the process and asking for an armistice, and in the next chapter we will see how it laid its red-lines through its Commander-in-Chief's rejection of the notion of a capitulation of its metropolitan forces. How monolithic is the French High Command and would it not be possible to destitute Weygand and name a younger general in his place? It is conceivable, but the candidate would have to be found, and designated under such conditions, it was unlikely that such a figure would carry much credit with the French army.[87]

[87] Claude Paillat, *Le Désastre de 1940, T. III*, *La Guerre éclair, 10 Mai-24 Juin,* 1940 (Paris: Editions Robert Lafont, 1985), 519, based on the *Cahier quotidian personnel du*

This leads us to the question of how time played out for these actors and for the policies they were defending. As we have seen, Reynaud, from the moment that France's military disaster became more and more evident, started to play for time. In so doing, he worked in unison with Churchill who considered that every day that France remained in the conflict was an extra day won for Britain's war preparations in view of the coming German onslaught on the British Isles. Then there is the issue of the self-exile of a government in times of war. Can a government abandon the nation's territory while her sons are still fighting-on, without fear of its members being branded as deserters (the word used, deliberately, by Pétain in his June 13th intervention at Cangé)? Viewed from this perspective, there was certain logic to Reynaud's playing for time, the un-avowed logic being that as the collapse of France entered into a more advanced stage, then the departure of the government would become more palatable to French public opinion (and maybe a capitulation more palatable to the army).

Reynaud put it more elegantly, though perhaps also pathetically, during the June 12th *Conseil des Ministres* at Cangé when he said: *Gentlemen, we are going to withdraw to the Breton redoubt. When all resistance will have become impossible, we will be obliged to embark on a cruiser. We will embark under the bombs and, if some of us are killed, so much the better! This will prove that we only left the soil of the country when we could no longer do otherwise.*[88]

A more cynic calculation can be made in the sense that as days went by, the German interest for an armistice would probably wane and the German conditions would probably become harsher. Past a certain point, the leaders of the pro-armistice faction themselves would have to give up hope of an "honorable" arrangement with Hitler's Germany, though we cannot tell if Reynaud thought as much, as he seemed convinced that honorable armistice conditions from Germany were never in the cards.

But if we are to properly analyze the issue of how time played-out in this crisis, then we cannot but notice that as the days passed, Reynaud's pro-resistance consensus started showing signs of dissent, from June 12th, and especially from June

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general George, June 15th, 1940: meeting on June 15th, with generals Huntziger, Réquin, Frère, Touchon, Héring, Besson: "All consider it (the situation) extremely serious. The armies are truncated. In their unanimous opinion, it follows that the hostilities should be stopped as soon as possible."

[88] Reynaud, *Au Coeur*, 761.

13th onward. Furthermore, we cannot fail to notice that until that date the *Conseil des Ministres* had not had access to the kind of military information it was given by Weygand on the 12th, nor had it really debated the arguments in favor or against what in the end crystallized into a bitter fight over whether the departure of the government, to North Africa or elsewhere, was a legitimate course of action under the circumstances.

This leads us to question Robert Aaron's regret regarding the breaking of the unity of the government on June 13th, with the intervention of Pétain and the positioning of the as yet modest but growing pro-armistice ministers. A government's unity is of course an essential asset in times of war, but the unity of Reynaud's government had been maintained, up until then, through an absence of meaningful debates and by stripping the ministers of any role in the decision-making process (with the exception of the decision to move to Bordeaux). Most of all, Reynaud's avowed policy of *résistance à outrance* and complete loyalty towards Britain had never meant, in the eyes of French public opinion, for the Government to abandon the *Métropole* to a German occupation army in order to seek refuge in Algiers or in London.

This detachment of Reynaud's policy from the realities of the moment can be perfectly understood if seen through a neoclassical realist prism, as Reynaud's had purposely chained his political survival to the British alliance throughout the crisis. As Devlen and Özdamar have expressed it *the fundamental concern for every political leader is to survive in office, or at least in a comparable position of power and status* and *the systemic factors filter through the belief system of the political leader and through domestic political calculations aimed at staying in office.*[89] This in normal times implies a certain community of feelings between the leader and his elites and the country's population, but one of the less uplifting aspects of Reynaud's policy was that it implied abandoning the French to their fate and taking the road to exile (even if he could claim that Algeria was, administratively speaking, an integral part of France).

In this sense, what moved Reynaud's actions was not the immediacy of defeat or concerns for the fate of France's soldiers or refugees along the routes of France, but his conviction that the allied cause, through the intervention of the United

[89] Balkan Devlen and Özgür Özdamar, "Neoclassical Realism and Foreign Policy Crisis," in *Rethinking Realism in International Relations*, edited by Annette Freyberg-Inan, Ewan Harrison and Patrick James (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

States, would ultimately prevail. As to the responsibilities of a government towards its countrymen, they were shrugged off with the idea that no workable arrangement could be reached, in defeat, with a modern Genghis Khan like Hitler. Why ask for armistice conditions when they were sure to be dishonorable and useless was what Reynaud asked on June 11th at Cangé? Weygand answered saying that it was necessary to clarify the issue by asking Germany (for the armistice conditions), then wait and see what the answer would be. If the German conditions proved unacceptable, then the government would have done its duty.[90] As to using the nature of the Nazi regime as an argument for not negotiating with it, Yves Bouthillier explains how this argument, if followed through, could turn against its promoters, as the need to protect France's population would only be more pressing.[91]

And here we must come back to an idea treated in chapter I, the idea that the state, or rather those at the head of the state normally play a role as mediator between the two realms of politics – domestic and international.[92] S.E. Lobell has mentioned the figure of what he calls the Foreign Policy Executive, FPE, standing between these two worlds, *a priori* more permeable to the imperatives of the international field, but at some point, responsive to the pressures of domestic forces.[93] But Reynaud failed to act as a mediator between the systemic and domestic forces; in fact, we can say that at some point his policy of all-out resistance to Nazi Germany defied both the systemic and domestic interests of France in his drive to keep going an alliance that for many Frenchmen had lost all sense.

[90] Baudoiuin, *Neuf*, 149.

[91] Bouthillier, *Le Drame*, 57.

[92] Mark R. Brawly, "Neoclassical and Strategic Calculations: Explaining Divergent British, French, and Soviet Strategies toward Germany between the World Wars (1919-1939)," In *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*, eds. Steven E. Lobell, Norring M. Ripsman and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 97.

[93] Steven E. Lobell, "Threat Assessment, the State, and Foreign Policy: A Neo Classical Realist Model," in *Neoclassical Realism, the State and Foreign Policy*, eds. Steven E. Lobell, Norring M. Ripsman, and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 47.

CHAPTER 3
(JUNE 14TH-15TH-16TH, 1940)

3.1 Systemic-International Level and Power Capabilities

On June 15th and 16th, dates at which the decision around the armistice plays itself out, the conditions at the systemic level were not fundamentally different from those studied in the previous chapter, although the military situation did seem to unravel at an accelerated pace. There was an on-going written request by Paul Reynaud for the United States to join the war (sent on the early morning of June 14th, 1940): a stratagem used by Winston Churchill and Reynaud so as not to address the issue of France's imminent collapse. It was also a strategy used, in turn, by Reynaud on his fellow ministers to gain time. It changed nothing to America's true status: that of a neutral power which, under certain conditions, could provide aircraft, arms, and munitions, because the American Congress opposed military involvement at the time. By the 16th, Roosevelt's answer arrived and reiterated this stark reality.

Britain, of course, was fighting on and the "miracle of Dunkirk"[1] had reinforced Churchill's position vis-à-vis those favouring some accommodation with Nazi Germany. But was his authority absolute and his policy backed by all without

[1] According to Jacques de Launay, 338, 226 allied soldiers were evacuated from Dunkirk (including 139,911 French soldiers) (Jacques de Launay, *Les grandes décisions de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale, tome I, 1939-1940* (Geneva: Edito-Service S.A., 1973), 147-153) before the French port fell to the hands of the Germans (on 4 June 1940) and despite heavy *Luftwaffe* bombardments (see also Paul Reynaud, *Au Cœur de la Mêlée, 1930-1945* (Paris: Flammarion, 1951), 700). An interruption of the German advanced through a direct Fürher order that puzzles historians to this day, an amazing rescue operation by allied navies and also the intervention of private yachtsmen have made Dunkirk something of a legend. The absolute priority given to British soldiers of the British Expeditionary Force BEF over their French comrades in the first days of evacuation, the disparity between the number of British evacuees and that of the French, and the fact that for some time the French Generalissimo Weygand had hoped to maintain an allied enclave at Boulogne-Calais-Dunkirk that could help him divert German energies while he consolidated his defenses along the Somme, while the British had already opted for evacuation and were withdrawing, were all elements that played their part in the events and decisions leading to the French armistice. For Britain, on the other hand, the "Miracle of Dunkirk" made possible a continuation of the war, by saving fighting forces that would have been irreplaceable in the short term had they been captured or destroyed.

reservations? As General Weygand informed the Council of Ministers, on June 15th, 1940, actual military cooperation between the French and British forces had, for all practical purposes, come to an end on French soil.

As we saw, on June 10th, 1940, Italy entered the war, mounting an unsuccessful attack on France's South-eastern frontier, while France's divisions were dwindling under the strain of the German onslaught. Italy's impressive colonial armies and its Air-Force and Navy that counted on the Mediterranean theater must be taken into account. The partnership between Nazi Germany and the USSR, at this stage, still seemed to be going strong.[2] Finally, as has been seen, Spain had changed its status to that of a "non-belligerent" power. After years of civil war, Franco's Spain was desirous to avoid entanglement in the war, but it was pressured to join the war by Berlin and was not totally indifferent to the opportunities for expansion in North Africa, at the cost of France, in case the war shifted to that theater.

As relates to the military situation in France, on June 12th, Weygand authorized a retreat. On June 13th, the French center in Champagne was pierced by the Germans. On June 14th, a day of national mourning, the Germans entered Paris and the next day saw a complete rupture of the French center under the advancing Germans forces. On the 15th, General Weygand informed the Ministers: "*The vast encirclement movement of our right-wing armies continues. All of Normandy is invaded. Franco-British military cooperation has come to an end on the battlefields (...)*.[3] On June 16th, at 17:00, General Georges telegraphed General Weygand with the words: *Situation again aggravated, serious question of supplying troops and civilian population...absolute necessity to take a decision*.[4]

According to historian Jacques Benoist-Méchin, by nightfall, on June 16th "*the confusion reigning on the north bank of the Loire became indescribable. The roads were lined with burnt out cars and carcasses of trucks torn apart by shells. From here and there, a tank burns in a field. In the midst of this chaos, hundreds of thousands of*

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[2] Guy Pedroncini, *Pétain*, *la Victoire Perdue, Novembre 1918-Juin 1940* (Paris: Perrin, 1995), 267-268.

[3] Yves Bouthillier, *Le Drame de Vichy*, *T. I.* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1950), 76.

[4] Commandant Pierre Lyet, *La Bataille de France (Mai-Juin 1940)* (Paris: Payot, 1947), 140.

refugees rush forward, rush back, or swirl in place, some mute with horror, others screaming in panic. In the middle of the night, through this crowd composed mainly of women and children, our exhausted regiments painfully tried to open a road. No one knows where our units are, nor where the Germans are, so some of our batteries, believing themselves to be surrounded, open fire on our own troops by mistake (…).[5]

The need to "decide" under the pressure of these systemic conditions was by then obvious to the French ministers, but the issue lay in deciding whether to continue the struggle against Germany by seeking refuge in North Africa or London, and for that some form of capitulation by the French army in Metropolitan France was necessary, or to ask Nazi Germany for armistice conditions as Weygand, Pétain and others were calling for. To better understand the decision-making process that led to this decision, we should describe the internal debate among French decision-makers.

3.2 Domestic and Institutional Factors at Play

3.2.1 The armistice seen through the prism of civil-military relations ("armistice" or "capitulation")

Before examining the clash between Reynaud and Weygand that can partly be interpreted as a collision between the French political and military worlds, during June 15th and 16th, 1940, we should say a few words about the political developments on June 14th and the morning of June 15th, 1940. In the first hours of the 14th, Reynaud appealed to President Roosevelt to declare war on Germany or to give some "light at the end of the tunnel" through positive assurances of America's entry into the war in the short term.[6]

That same day, Weygand received a note from Marshal Pétain asking him to participate in a meeting of the Council of Ministers set for the end of the morning of the 15th (Weygand only arrived in Bordeaux in the afternoon) and further asking him to present himself at Baudouin's quarters at Bordeaux, for a meeting involving Pétain, Baudouin, Bouthillier, Darlan and Weygand and that ultimately materialized in the

[5] Jacques Benois-Méchin, *Soixante Jours qui ébranlèrent l'Occident: Deuxième Phase, La Bataille de France (4 Juin-25 Juin 1940)* (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1956), 239 (Translated from French for this Independent Study IS).

[6] Ibid., 196-197.

early afternoon of the 15th.[7] The said meeting has been interpreted by many authors as the manifestation of a sort of "conspiracy" against the government. Was it so? Could it be considered a legitimate coordination between a political faction within the rules of French parliamentary life? In any case, Weygand informed Reynaud of Pétain's message and also asked to participate in the next Council of Ministers, to which Reynaud agreed.

Another episode that deserves mentioning has to do with Admiral Darlan. First, his summons to Bordeaux by Reynaud, which provoked his resentment as he was, at the time, at Rochefort, busy overseeing matters related to the fleet.[8] On the next day, Darlan had a meeting with Reynaud who asked him to transfer 900,000 men to North Africa within 10 days. The Admiral answered that it was impossible as he could not concentrate the necessary vessels in such short notice, but offered to embark 30,000 men that very day if they presented themselves in Bordeaux.[9] Incapable of taking up this challenge, Reynaud must have felt that the Admiral was slipping into the armistice camp.[10] Darlan's change of heart was not without consequences for the anti-armistice camp. Historian Raymond Cartier has explained that the spectacular departure of the fleet (to join the allies) would have made the armistice impossible,

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[7] Ibid., 200-201.

[8] Benois-Méchin, *Soixante*. According to Boulanger the summons is communicated to Darlan by De Gaulle, according to Reynaud, he charged De Margerie with the summons. According to De Margerie he passed on the message by phone through the French Admiralty on June 14th (Roland de Margerie, *Journal, 1939-1940* (Paris: Éditions Grasset et Fasquelle, 2010), 339). See also Benoist-Méchin, *Soixante,* 207-208. Benoist-Méchin transcribes Admiral Darlan's account of the interview: *M. Paul Reynaud, writes the admiral, tells me with thoughtlessness that the delay of forty five days indicated to me by General De Gaulle (for the transfer of 900 000 men to North Africa) was reduced to ten days! – Mr. President, I answer, it is materially impossible to gather in ten days two hundred ships that are today dispersed in the oceans. But I have ten transports in the port of Bordeaux. Each one of them can transport 3.000 people. 30.000 men will consequently leave this afternoon, if they are ready to embark. The President of the Council then tells him that he doesn't know where the men destined for Africa are (at present) and that he ignores how they could rally Bordeaux. – Then how can you ask me, under these conditions, to evacuate 900.000 men in ten days? asks the admiral*.

[9] Benois-Méchin, *Soixante*, 208.

[10] Reynaud, *Au Coeur,* 796. Reynaud's account is quite short, but in his notes he develops the theory that by this time, Darlan had already slipped into the pro-armistice camp. Louis-Georges Planes and Robert Dufour, *Bordeaux Capitale Tragique ! et la Base Navale de Bordeaux-le Verdon, Mai-Juin 1940* (Paris : Éditions Médicis, 1956), 89, also talk of 100.000 tons of war material to transport to North Africa under Reynaud's last-minute instructions.

dragged the adhesion of the French empire to the allied cause and changed the course of the war.[11]

Shortly after, Pétain demanded that a Council of Ministers was held at 16:00, declaring he would resign if the decision to ask for an armistice was once again delayed.[12] Charles-Roux left an account of Marshal Pétain's intervention in Reynaud's office (wrongly placing it on June 16th): *the Marshal, after having turned the conversation to the alternative which divided the ministers, took a note from his pocket which he read. He stated the reasons why he was opposed to leaving for Africa and, in any case, would personally refrain from being associated with it. These reasons were summarized thus: the duty of the government was to remain with the population of the invaded "métropole"*[13]*, to share their trials and alleviate them (...)". A government which withdrew from metropolitan territory would be accused by the French of having abandoned them to their suffering and would, upon its return, have lost its authority; what's more, it would no longer be able to find France as it was, because in the meantime its character would have been altered by the occupier. His reading completed, the Marshal declared that, if departure for Africa were again proposed to the Council of the day, he would read this note*.[14] According to Marshal Pétain, a government that withdrew from metropolitan territory would be accused by the people of abandoning them. He threatened to read this note (to the Council of Ministers) if the departure for Africa were again proposed to the Council of Ministers.[15]

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[11] Raymond Cartier, *Histoire de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale, 1939-1942* (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1980), 144. Reynaud's version of this encounter in his different memoirs is very parsimonious, but Spears version, based on Reynaud's account, tells of a 6 pm. meeting of the Council of Ministers changed to 4 pm. and that Marshal Pétain *had evidently made up his mind to resign unless an armistice was asked for or the United States declared war* (Edward L. Spears, *Assignment to Catastrophe* (London: William Heinemann, 1954), 255).

[12] Ibid.

[13] The French term "*Métropole*" was the common appellation at the time, and even today, to differentiate between France's European territories (that incorporate Corsica) and France's then imperial possessions and today's ultramarine territories. The distinction was made necessary at the time because Algeria was technically French territory (3 French Departments) and not an imperial possession or protectorate. The distinction is maintained nowadays as France has many ultramarine territories scattered around the earth that are considered an integral part of France, but that are not part of the "*Hexagon*".

[14] Francois Charles-Roux, *Cinq Mois Tragiques aux Affaires étrangères, 21 Mai - 1er Novembre 1940* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1949), 41.

[15] Ibid.

In the previous chapter, we explained how General Weygand had been an advocate of the armistice within the Council of Ministers. He had intervened because he felt responsible to interpret the military situation and to warn the politicians when a coordinated military resistance would no longer be possible.[16] But of course, he had stepped further and pressed the Ministers for an armistice. In so doing, he clashed with Reynaud, even if it was Reynaud himself who had offered Weygand the floor of the Council. During the two fateful days of June 15th and 16th, Weygand and Reynaud came to a head-on collision on three different occasions, as the latter, repeatedly tried, without success, to convince him to order a capitulation (or order a cease-fire or a set of cease-fires) for the troops fighting on French metropolitan soil.

Several years after, Weygand would explain the reasons for his refusal in a small book published in 1955, titled *En lisant les mémoires du Général De Gaulle*, Paris, 1955. He addressed the legal, ideological, moral, and also material issues in play as he viewed them, and, we should add, also as seen by the upper echelons of the French Army: ***The armistice is a convention of a political as well as a military nature by virtue of which belligerents convene to suspend hostilities. With the signature of an armistice, the state of war subsists. It is a question between governments who, alone, have the power to put an end to hostilities, as they alone have the faculty to decide to open hostilities. The military or civil authorities called upon to sign an armistice convention, can only do so equipped with special powers from their governments***.[17] Recalling Reynaud's words at Cangé in the sense that the problem of the continuation of the war was *of a political nature and depends on government decisions,* Weygand went on to explain the nature of a capitulation*:* ***The capitulation, on the contrary, is a strictly military matter. It is the surrender, after a convention concluded with the enemy by the governor of a military stronghold, or by the commander of troops that put down their arms in open country ("rase champagne"). Capitulation in open country is punished by death or destitution* (…).**[18] French jurist Pierre Chandelier in *La défaite de 1940 et l'armistice: une autre approche*

[16] Maxime Weygand, *Mémoires, T. III. Rappelé au Service* (Paris: Flammarion, 1950), 211-212.

[17] Maxime Weygand, *En Lisant les Mémoires de Guerre du Général De Gaulle* (Paris: Flammarion, 1955), 63-64.

[18] Ibid.

de la vérité, Paris, 1996, has left the following explanation of the terms in question and their significance: ***The general and unconditional capitulation desired by Paul Reynaud was not provided for by the Hague Conventions and it resulted in "debellatio" which is the brutal disappearance of the vanquished who, after the total collapse of his armies, submits entirely to the demands of the victor while the armistice is a negotiated agreement which allows them to be limited***.[19]

In other words, whereas the armistice offered France some form of political negotiation that could in the best case scenario lead to a political agreement with Germany for the suspension of hostilities, ideally leaving the defeated party with important assets, a capitulation on the other hand was a purely military convention (dealing with basic things such as the timing of a cease-fire), entailing in this case total military occupation of Metropolitan France by the German forces and total subjection of the country, its people and resources, to the wishes and whims of the Third Reich.

Two important questions arise naturally from the choice of one formula versus the other. One has to do with the notion of national interest and its interpretation in a case like this: an army that accepts a capitulation is normally one that has no other option, because the military situation imposes it - this can happen to an particular army cut off from support and supplies as was the case of the French armies in the North in May 1940 – and/or also because the country's defeat is so overwhelming that the Government and State that army serves does not have the means to enter into a negotiated process with the victor. The principal objective in this case is to avoid further bloodshed and principally to preserve the life of one's soldiers and of the populations affected by the fighting, all this through a military convention. Under certain circumstances, facilitating the exile of a government and the formal continuation of the war can become also a "subsidiary objective" of a capitulation: it was, in any case, the objective pursued by Reynaud, with a view to Germany's ultimate defeat. As we will see later on, Reynaud certainly did not assume politically that the capitulation he proposed had as one of its objectives to politically cover the transfer of government outside France's metropolitan territory. The reasons he invoked were the need to avoid unnecessary bloodshed and an alleged German intransigence and the impossibility of

[19] Pierre Chandelier, *La Défaite de 1940 et l'Armistice: Une Autre Approche de la Vérité* (Paris: Éditions Lettres du Monde, 1996), 53.

trusting a modern Attila in the person of Hitler. Weygand, skilfully, inside the Council of Ministers, pointed out that it was up to the government to investigate armistice conditions and that if they later turned out to be dishonorable, at least the government would have fulfilled its duty. As we shall see, unfortunately for Reynaud's policy, on June 16 (and already on the afternoon of the 15th) a majority of ministers, certainly not all pro-armistice, were convinced that duty and political common sense demanded a *démarche* in the sense of inquiring said armistice conditions from Germany.

To this we must add a second question or issue: who is to be held accountable, who will take the blame for the defeat? Through an armistice, the political establishment necessarily assumes a substantial part of the responsibility, even if the military also participate in certain aspects of an armistice – indeed in France's case, the French delegation that signed the armistice was headed by an active general and the Government that mandated it was one where the military element was at first predominant -. Through a military capitulation, the military establishment necessarily assumes a large part of responsibility for the defeat, through the absence of the political establishment and through the highlighting of the military aspects of the defeat.

As to the use of the term "cease-fire" instead of capitulation by Reynaud, it is a game of semantics destined to create confusion as a militarily negotiated cease-fire between two warring parties – where the troops of the losing side are generally confined to POW camps - is, in effect, a capitulation. A unilateral cease-fire can be distinguished from a capitulation as only one side unilaterally stops firing: such a formula, in the French scenario of June 1940 involving such large armies, was not really contemplated by the French military. Furthermore, long after the war, Reynaud, de Gaulle and other proponents of the resistance faction would continue, for ideological reasons, to use the terms "capitulation" and "armistice" as synonymous, as a way of creating confusion in people's minds and because they never personally appreciated the advantages of an "armistice" as they weighed them against their primary objective of victory over Hitler's Germany.

But coming back to the Reynaud-Weygand showdown, we should say that the first of these collisions materialized in Bordeaux, on the 15th, at

approximately 15:45, when Reynaud asked Weygand to follow the Dutch model[20] of a cease-fire for the troops in Metropolitan France, to be backed by a written order from the Government, and permitting the Government to embark for Algiers. Weygand refused claiming it was against military honor.

In any case, by referring to the "Dutch model", Reynaud was comparing two completely different situations. On the one hand, there was the example of the Netherlands, where a swift seizure of Dutch territory and military positions by the Germans forces had left no option for the Dutch commander but to capitulate with his troops before they were overwhelmed. On the other hand, in France, a sizeable French army was still technically fighting the Germans, albeit in an uncoordinated manner, for control of most of France's metropolitan territory. To this must be added the strategic importance of France's colonial Empire for the Mediterranean and Atlantic theaters, and not to mention her sizeable and undefeated Navy, elements that could be dangled as bargaining arguments in front of the Germans. With a respectable but smaller Navy and a more distant colonial Empire in the East and West Indies, the Dutch had no prospect of negotiating an armistice with the Germans, even had they desired it.

Before the beginning of the Council of Ministers, Weygand informed Baudouin of the conversation he had with Reynaud and gave the reasons for his refusal: beyond the shame of a capitulation that would fall on the Army, a military capitulation would not avoid all the army from falling into German captivity and the total occupation of French (metropolitan) territory. It would not avoid an attack on (French) North Africa and would leave the country without a government, under the direct authority of the German army.[21] In 1945, in a booklet titled *Réponse à "La Vérité sur l'Armistice"*

[20] The expression "Dutch Model" was coined by Reynaud to try and use the Dutch example, where the Dutch Commander-in-Chief General Henri Winkelman signed a military capitulation on May 15th, 1940, surrendering armed forces inside the Netherlands, but without implicating the Dutch Government or the Dutch royal family, thus allowing a continuation of the war by an exiled Dutch Government. The argument was manifestly a weak one to dangle in front of Weygand's eyes: the Dutch did not have such a large army as the French and most of all lacked the assets that France still possessed in June 1940 that could make an armistice attractive to the Germans and therefore worthy of concessions to the vanquished from the point of view of the victor.

[21] Bernard Legoux, *France Juin 40, les Vraies Raisons de la Défaite…et de l'Armistice* (Paris: Éditions Jourdan, 2020), 235.

de M. A. Kammerer (...), Baudouin estimated the number of potential French prisoners of war (had the Armistice not intervened) at 3,500,000 men.[22] Bernard Legoux has developed this issue to explain the possible consequences of such a large force of prisoners of war, especially had they followed the model of the Dutch, Belgian and Polish prisoners of war who did not have the backing of a "protector State", in the French case the USA in the beginning, followed by Vichy, to look after their interests.[23]

At 16:00, of June 15th, 1940, the Council of Ministers started deliberating. Both Darlan and Weygand gave military briefings, then left the room. Before doing so, Weygand informed the end of military cooperation on French soil between Britain and France (he read a telegram from Sir John Dill). Before both men left the room, the Commander of the 18th military region also intervened with a message from General Georges, saying that the military situation had worsened and that a political decision was urgently needed. By arguing that a military cease-fire would be the quickest way to end hostilities in metropolitan France and thus the best way to limit the Army's casualties - whereas an armistice required a number of days before knowing the enemy's conditions – Reynaud actually managed, for a brief moment, to obtain the backing of the whole Cabinet, apparently including Marshal Pétain, who agreed to convince Weygand in an adjacent room. After a few moments, the Marshal came back and declared that it was the Government's responsibility to conclude an armistice. Following this, Frossard and especially Camille Chautemps offered a transactional solution: **let the Government – with British consent - ask Germany for her armistice condition and, since these will no doubt be dishonorable, then the Government would be justified, vis-à-vis French public**

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[22] Paul Baudouin, *Réponse à "La Vérité sur l'Armistice" de M. A. Kammerer par Paul Baudouin* (n.p.: Vérités Françaises, 1945), 19-20: *Among the many reasons which make the armistice, in the immense misfortune which overwhelmed France, the lesser evil, two are crucial: only the armistice could prevent the entire French army, that is to say i.e. 3,500,000 men, from being taken prisoner. (Only the Armistice) could prevent the invasion of North Africa. On the first fact, no discussion is possible. What would have become of France, how would it have lived from 1940 onward if the entire army had been taken to Germany? (...).*

[23] Ibid., 414-417. According to Legoux, around 30.000 Frenchmen (out of a total number that oscillated between 1 million to 2 million) died as prisoners of war in the German camps, a figure that cannot compare with the death rates of the Russian prisoners, of whom roughly 3,3 million out of 5 million lost their lives in the German camps.

opinion, in embarking for Algiers to continue the war. At the end of the session, Reynaud continued as President of the Council, having threatened to resign, but was tasked by the French President Albert Lebrun to carry-out the first part of the Chautemps proposal seemed to gain a majority support within the Council, and ask for Britain's acceptance of this formula.

Later that same night, through the British ambassador and General Spears, Reynaud transmitted a message to Churchill, asking Britain to allow France to enquire what would be Germany's conditions for an armistice, adding that if the British Government did not give its consent to this request, he would probably be forced to resign as President of the Council.[24]

Before that and immediately after the closing of this Council of Ministers on the evening of the 15th, according to Weygand's account, Reynaud went to an adjacent room and asked the Generalissimo to materialize the Army's capitulation "as convened". Weygand made a scene as he claimed he had never convened anything. Deliberately speaking louder for everyone to hear, Weygand replied: *(...) Let me be dismissed if necessary, but never would I inflict such a shame on our banners. The President of the Council was mistaken if, in making me come from so far to assume command, he believed he could find in me a man ready to accept any task. And in any case the cessation of hostilities like the entry into war belonged to the general conduct of the war that is a task of the government*.[25] He moved to the room where the President of the Republic was conferring with ministers and took the discussion to him, exasperated that at first President Lebrun should refuse to engage the conversation in the absence of Reynaud, as Lebrun judged it "unconstitutional". When the discussion reassumed in the presence of Reynaud, Weygand attacked Lebrun reminding him of his attitude a few years back when the issue of dismissing 5,000 officers and depriving the army of credits worth hundreds of millions of francs of war *matériel* was in the balance. Turning back to Reynaud, Weygand ended this confrontation saying: *You will send me your orders in writing; but I will not capitulate. You will ask for an armistice or I will fight until the end*.[26]

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[24] Legoux, *17 Juin*, 201-202.
[25] Weygand, *Mémoires*, 227-228.
[26] Bernard Destremau, *Weygand* (Paris: Perrin, 1989), 543.

In his memoirs, Camille Chautemps contends that from this stage onward, Reynaud "gives up" the idea of pushing Weygand to capitulate, limiting the debate within the Council of Ministers to the formula of accepting or simply refusing an armistice, a shaky shift of the debate, according to Chautemps, as the debates on the 15th and Reynaud's own admissions had laid bare the absolute necessity of some formula to avoid the continuation of senseless bloodshed[27] (and potential starvation) in Metropolitan France: *He (Reynaud) had recognized the moral impossibility for the government to allow the fight to continue with all the tragic consequences of this measure. He had himself proposed to put an end to it. And now, by posing the problem in the form of the acceptance or the pure and simple refusal of the armistice he asked his colleagues to abandon to their terrible fate all the human beings whom he had, the moment before, recognized necessary to save*.[28]

Reynaud mentioned a last attempt by himself and President Lebrun at convincing Weygand to capitulate around noon on June 16th[29], but Weygand, in his account of this meeting, talked only of the aggravation of the military situation and his transmitting the unanimous opinion of France's military chiefs rejecting the idea of a capitulation.[30]

Chautemp's arguments, though attractive in their simplicity, should be treated with circumspection since they tend to accuse Reynaud as a form of discreet self-justification. We should note that he obviates Marshal Pétain's apparent volte-face, which annulled *ipso-facto* what he wrongly called the Councils "unanimity", and we should remember that Reynaud did try his best to obtain Weygand's compliance after the Council's meeting, although, to be fair to Chautemps, he was referring to the debates within the Council of Ministers where, if we follow his reasoning, the issue of a military capitulation no longer came up as such.

Admittedly, Reynaud's formal prerogatives in principle included the right to replace Weygand with another general and even further dismissing other of the

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[27] Camile Chautemps, *Cahiers Secrets de l'Armistice: 1939-40* (Paris: Plon, 1963), 150-152.

[28] Ibid., 152.

[29] Paul Reynaud, *La France a Sauvé L'Europe, 2 Vols* (Paris: Flammarion, 1947), 344-345; Reynaud, *Au Coeur*, 820-821.

[30] Weygand, *Mémoires*, 232-233.

Army's top generals if they stood in his way. But we must look at the actual context of a military defeat in the process of producing a disaggregation of French forces. We must think of the consequences on the moral of the French Army and of the French nation, not to mention the opposition of Pétain.

Misleadingly, Chautemps confuses the formality of power with the reality of that same power.[31] Robert Aron resumes it nicely when he says: *This conflict between Reynaud on the one hand, and Pétain and Weygand on the other hand, will be resolved in the first days in Bordeaux. Constitutionally, Reynaud should win: he is the President of the Council. Pétain is only vice-president. It was Reynaud who appointed the generalissimo: if the military power is opposed to the civil power, why shouldn't he designate another? In addition, he has on his side, as we shall see, the majority of Parliament - or at least those who officially are supposed to represent it. In fact, it is quite otherwise. On June 15th at 4:15 p.m., when the first Council of Ministers of Bordeaux opens, Reynaud has already, virtually, lost the game*.[32]

But before examining the capital issue of real power versus the formality power evoked by Aron, we should look closely at how this formal power plays out during this crisis and at the issue of the legitimacy of Reynaud's policy.

A lot has been written around what some authors have termed Weygand's "disobedience" and how it entailed an encroachment, by the military, into the prerogatives of the French Executive, notably the overall conduct of the war. But this argument leads to the question of whether Reynaud's order to Weygand to order a "cease fire" following the Dutch model was, in this case, a "legitimate order".

Philip Bankwitz has highlighted Weygand's "disobedience": *But whatever Weygand's emotions, ideas, motives and attitudes were in this crisis, the brutal fact remains that he broke the two fundamental laws of the old civil-military relationship. Those two rules, enshrined in all the constitutions from 1791 to 1875 forbade the military power to deliberate politically and to disobey the civilian authority*

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[31] Albert Kammerer, *La Vérité sur l'Armistice* (Paris: Éditions Médicis, 1944), 114.

[32] Robert Aron, *Histoire de Vichy, 1940-1944* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1954), 41.

even if the orders involved were, allegedly, "Illegal.[33] Bankwitz suggested idea that Weygand not only considered himself the representative of the Army and Armed Forces as *généralissime,* but by extension also saw himself as the representative of the nation, as he considered the Army as the embodiment of the nation in arms.[34] Eleonor Gates follows along these lines when she says, relating to this episode, that *Weygand had rebelled against both Reynaud's and President Lebrun's authority* and that "*Reynaud for his own survival, should have summarily fired Weygand for his flagrant insubordination*.[35]

This perception is by no means limited to Anglo-Saxon protagonists or later Anglo-Saxon academics. Reynaud himself, for one, defended this view. Louis Marin, who integrated the "*Commission d'Enquête*" of the French Chamber of Deputies, also saw the fight between the partisans of an armistice or those of a capitulation as laying bare (an old) rivalry between government and the military forces. To Marin, this conflict was evident from the moment Pétain intervened on the 13th of June 1940, threatening the ministers with the epitaph of deserters in case they left France.[36]

By going back to Bankwitz's analysis, we must first mention that the 1875 constitution did not touch on the issue of "allegedly illegal" orders or of orders that could be considered illegal in effect, a phenomenon that can arise in times of peace or war.[37] The 1875 constitution stated that the President of the Republic had control

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[33] Cited textually from Philip Charles Farwell Bankwitz, *Maxime Weygand and Civil-Military Relations in Modern France* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), 323. See also, Philipp C. F. Bankwitz, "Maxime Weygand and the Fall of France: A Study in Civil-Military Relations," *The Journal of Modern History* 31, no. 3 (September 1959): 225-242.

[34] Bankwitz, *Civil-Military*, 318. Bankwitz cites Weygand's own *Mémoirs,* T. III, 213*: "(And yet) this army was nothing else but the Nation directed by a reduced proportion of career officers (cadres de carrière)".*

[35] Weygand, *Mémoirs,* 213.

[36] Louis Marin, "Gouvernement et Commandement: Conflits, Différends, Immixtions qui ont Pesé sur l'Armistice de Juin 1940," *Revue d'Histoire de la Deuxieme Guerre Mondiale*, 2e Année, No.8 (Octobre 1952): 8. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France (PUF), 1952, p.8. See also Serge Bernstein, "Le Gouvernement Pétain du 16 Juin au 10 Juillet 1940," in *Le Moment 1940. Effondrement National et Réalités Locales*, eds. Pierre Allorant, Noëlline Castagnez and Antoine Prost (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012), 79.

[37] The issue of the legality or legitimacy of certain orders cannot be obviated when examining any example of civic-military relations: Robert E. Atkinson has touched

over the armed forces (the 25th of February of 1875 constitutional law relative to the organization of powers stated in Article 3 that the President of the Republic "*disposes of the armed force*").[38] To this we must add the *Law of July 11th, 1938 on the General Organization of the Nation in times of War (Loi du 11 juillet 1938 sur l'organisation générale de la nation pour le temps de guerre*) that in its article 5 stated that the President of the Council or (under his high authority) the Minister of National Defense, was charged with coordinating the action of the three departments of War, Navy and Air, seconded by the general chiefs of staff (*chefs d'état-majors généraux)* of the Army, Navy and Air (Force), and in its article 38, stated that the *(…) governments ~~has~~ have the general direction of the war. It fixes the general objectives to be attained by the armed forces (and) puts at the disposal of the commanders in chief the necessary means and supervises their use (…).*[39]

Then there was the issue that capitulation "*en rase champagne*" (in open field) was punishable by death or destitution according to article 324 of the Military Justice Code: *Any commander of an armed troop who capitulates in open country is punished: 1) by the death penalty with military degradation, if the capitulation has resulted in the troop laying down arms, or if, before dealing verbally and in writing, he did not do all that duty and honor required of them. 2) dismissal in other cases.*[40]

Some authors have claimed that the context of the order and Reynaud's offer of a written order to "cover" Weygand, actually changed the figure and thus the execution of the Government's order could not be assimilated to the independent action of a commander in the field. Henri Longuechaud in *L'abominable*

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upon the subject in his essay: Robert E. Atkinson, *The Limits of Military Officers' Duty to Obey Civilian Orders: A Neoclassical Perspective* (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College Press, 2015), https://press.armywarcollege.edu/monographs/448, 25, "military officers, to perform their duty to defend the homeland, must know and act upon the constitutional and moral bases of that duty, the common good."

[38] "Douzième Constitution," Mairie.net, https://www.mairie.net/national/constitutions-conseil-constitutionel/constitutions/12-eme-constitution.htm

[39] Journal Officiel de la République, *Organisation Générale de la Nation pour le Temps de Guerre* (Paris: Imprimerie des journaux officiels, 1955), 8-9, 30. https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6533806d/f11.item.

[40] Weygand. *En lisant,* 66.

armistice de juin 1940, Paris, 1980, develops this idea: *How can we speak of shame thrown on the flags since the recommended solution was subordinated to the continuation of the fight in Africa and on the seas. The execution of a "ceasefire" order could not have called into question the honor of his personality since it stemmed from a policy of conducting the war, a matter of the government: in short an order, which the President of the Council offered to draw up on the spot.*[41]

In response to this line of thought, we must add that the Military Justice Code did not consider this eventuality, or any exception for that matter, and that, after the war, any decision would be open to an interpretation where the results of the war might eventually weigh-in. Weygand, for his part, did not recall (or pretended not to recall) the offer of a written order, nor would it have changed his attitude, according to him. He argued that a Commander-in-Chief that capitulated armed with such an order would have simply dragged also the government into dishonor.[42]

As to the notion of requirements of "duty and honor", a commander such as Weygand would have to weigh in the balance his own personal conviction (and that of his close advisors) with respect to France's capacity to continue the war from North Africa, against the wishes of his government. Ultimately, in Weygand's implied view, for a small group of politicians to save face while leaving the country in the name of continuing the struggle, what was being asked of him was to abandon the possibility of saving literally millions of soldiers from falling into German hands and to sacrifice the hope of conserving - thanks to the sacrifices already made by the Army in its struggle - a Government with control over part of French Metropolitan territory, the fleet and the Empire, with the capacity to care for French interests, instead of leaving Metropolitan France to the unleashed power of the occupier as would be the case if

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[41] Henri Longuechaud, *L'abominable Armistice de Juin 1940* (Paris: Plon, 1980), 40; see also Jacques Belle, *La Défaite Française, un Désastre Évitable*, Tome 2, *le 16 Juin 1940, Non à L'Armistice*! (Paris: ECONOMICA, 2009), 146.

[42] See Weygand, *Mémoires,* 276-277: *Finally, an essential remark: in order to help me decide to capitulate, the government declared itself ready to give me a written order. If there had been a capitulation, the instigating government remained associated with it and the capitulation would in fact have been a governmental and political act. Who were they trying to deceive with such a deception? (...) Even if I had agreed to commit the infamous act, would I not have dragged into the dishonor of this act the government near which I lived in these tragic hours and which urged me to commit it?*

Reynaud's order were executed, as a unilateral ceasefire, but also a capitulation for that matter, imposed no conditions or obligations on the occupier (this while at the same time leaving the French Empire open to attack by Germany and its allies).[43] Later, at the trial of Marshal Pétain, Weygand exposed his views on what he considered France's incapacity to defend North Africa in June 1940: *What did Africa have for its defense? (...) Africa had quite insufficient troops to defend it, and these troops were insufficiently armed. There was no defense against airplanes in Africa, except in the ports of Bizerte and Mers-el-Kébir. There were no heavy guns in Africa, except for old guns of 120 dating from well before the 1914 war. There was only a battalion of tanks and the African troops in Africa, as I have already said, were only partially armed. But then, maybe we could bring in reinforcements? But from where? From France? ...What reinforcements were contemplated?... Two classes were considered which would have had to have been called up (drafted). These classes, gentlemen, that is to say 500,000 men, was there enough to transport them? There were no boats. If there were boats, would we have had time to transport them, considering the transport of a division from North Africa to France or from Great Britain to France required approximately eight days. There was no possible reinforcement of North Africa by British troops who, at*

[43] For Weygand's views on the matter see Haute Cour de Justice, *Procès du Maréchal Pétain: Compte Rendu in Extenso Transmis par le Secrértariat Général de la Haute Cour de Justice* (Paris: Imprimerie des Journaux Officiels, 1945), 137-138 (for electronic version: https://archive.org/details/sc_0000928795_00000001352215/page/n141/mode/2up?view=theater): *What, gentlemen, was the inevitable, indisputable consequence (of the capitulation)? It was France delivered entirely to the enemy, all of a sudden, in 1940; delivered without a convention, for I fully understand that the capitulation would have been signed with a convention, but this convention, which would have been a military convention, would simply have dealt with questions of military details, but not at all with political questions. France was surrendered entirely, the French metropolitan territory was entirely surrendered to the enemy by capitulation. What were the political consequences? A government, a Gauleiter or a Frenchman who would have been no better, an administration entirely German. What were the military consequences? No more army, and therefore no more possibilities of keeping cadres, no more possibilities to camouflage equipment, no more possibilities of doing everything that it was possible to do in an armistice, a sort of arms vigil (armistice, why? to help prepare for the future), no more French army to do that!...Social and political consequences? But, gentlemen, it was immediate deportations, it was forced labour, it was all the resources of France taken by the enemy without any brake, without any convention, once again, which could maintain them within certain application rule, it was, in short, France delivered from the month of June 1940 to the fate of Poland, to the fate reserved at present to Germany, to the fate of Holland, which, in the opinion of all, is that of the invaded countries who suffered the most; however, she had taken the solution advocated by the President of the Council, and which I did not want to follow (...).*

that time, had no more means. There were none by American troops, America was not yet at war at that time. Africa was left to its own means. And what would she have had to face? She would have had to face all of Germany. Germany is free, she no longer has any enemies in Europe; Russia is not yet at war at this time: on the contrary, a treaty binds her (to Germany). She (Germany) therefore has all her forces at her disposal. The delivery (surrender to Germany) of the French territory by the capitulation puts it at the gates of Spain, puts it on the Mediterranean coast, puts it in direct communication with peninsular and insular Italy. All forces of Italy are also available. His forces can act; from where? They can act through Tunisia, where the Italian forces are already numerous, there are 250,000 men in Tunisia (sic) and in Libya. They can act through Spain. Spain has changed its political position, Spain has moved from neutrality to non-belligerence. Spain has views on certain parts of our Moroccan territory, views on certain parts of our territory of Orania, perhaps Gibraltar... All this had been agitated in its time. The "panzer-divisionen" were at the door of the Spanish border, it is even said that some had crossed the Spanish border at some point. And Spain had a magnificent bridgehead in Spanish Morocco where its forces had been increased from 100,000 to 120,000 men. This was indeed a magnificent bridgehead. If Spain does not wish to enter the war, we can suppose that she could (eventually) allow passage (through her territory) for Germany, for German troops. Finally, by the fact that the Axis possessed, at this time, both Sardinia and Sicily, and the coasts of southern Spain with the restrictions I have just mentioned, and the coasts of Italy, but above all Sardinia and Sicily, it has flight bases and first-rate naval bases, either for submarines, or for landing operations, or, even better, for operations for which it alone has means at that time: operations of large aerial landings of air divisions, landings as during the Crete operations, for example. Therefore, Africa can be attacked, both from Tunisia, from Morocco, and from its coasts. It is over hundreds and hundreds of kilometres of land and sea borders that it would have had to face, with its weak, insurmountable forces, while it has an enemy that can be enclosed, since it has all its means, which are enormous. Consequently, I say that an Africa that could not be reinforced, or almost, would have had to face forces which could be reinforced almost indefinitely, and on areas of land where its own forces were absolutely torn apart. (...) In consequence, gentlemen, a long-term defense of North Africa was

impossible. Can we say that in losing through (a military) capitulation (our) honor, the French territory – and the necessary sacrifices (in that case) were important (grands) - we would have kept Africa, I say no, we would have lost (our) honor, the French territory and Africa.

Of course, after the war, these arguments were contested by a number of French soldiers, colonial administrators or academics, notably in the book by André Truché, *L'armistice de 1940 et l'Afrique du Nord*, 1955, who among other issues stressed the cohesion and resistance spirit of French and colonial troops in Africa and of the native populations.[44] For his part, Albert Merglen argued that the whole issue of the indefensibility of North Africa had been a *posteriori* built-up case after the war, and that the reality of the matter was that the top French military elites under Weygand had never really assessed the matter, as they were counting on a swift British defeat.[45] There is also an important essay by Colonel Goutard[46] who tries to demonstrate that Spain had no intention of joining the war and that Germany had neither the means nor the inclination to follow the French into North Africa in June 1940.

Of course, none of these authors could claim to have Weygand's working knowledge of North Africa and its true military potential and those who might have held credit on these matters, as General Noguès or General Juin, were not willing to join the post-war debate. We should add that a man, who often opposed General Weygand and occupied the Ministry of the Merchant Navy in June 1940, Mr. Alphonse Rio, gave testimony to a parliamentary commission after the war that contradicts the optimism of those who considered that the transfer to North Africa of large contingents of French troops was really a feasible operation. Asked if it was possible to evacuate significant forces, he answered: *Theoretically yes, but practically, when the question arose, the Germans were in Tours. They had nothing left in front of them. They could be in Marseilles the next day. I still had nearly 600,000 tons of ships ready for departure*

[44] See André Truché, *L'armistice de 1940 et l'Afrique du Nord* (Paris: University Press of France, 1955).

[45] See Albert Merglen, "La France Pouvait Continuer la Guerre en Afrique Française," *Miszellen* 20, no. 3 (1993): 163-174, https://doi.org/10.11588/fr.1993.3.58451.

[46] Colonel Goutard, "La Réalité de la "Menace allemande sur l'Afrique du Nord en 1940,*" Revue d'histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale* 11, no. 44 (1961), 1-20.

in all the ports of the South. But evacuate who, what? Troops in disarray? It was impossible and we would have run out of time.[47]

At the end of the day, Weygand had to decide, as he probably anticipated, whether to follow the directives of France's legal government that had appointed him, or to follow his own conscience or inclination, based on his own interpretation of his soldier's and the nation's needs! After the war, notably in his depositions at the *Commission d'Enquête,* and later in his memoirs*,* General Weygand gave his own personal view on the matter of the commander's obligation to obey (or disobey) an order, recalling that many soldiers were being imprisoned by the Fourth Republic for having executed orders during the war. For Weygand, whereas the soldier and lower-level officers owed an unswerving obedience to authority (that of their superior officers), the commander-in-chief obeyed the orders of the government – that corresponded to areas that were a prerogative of the government such as the overall conduct of the war – but in so far as they were compatible with the dictates of his conscience. Weygand's personal doctrine also forbade the Commander-in-Chief in disagreement with his government to resign. It was for the government to adapt its policy or replace the Commander-in-Chief.[48]

As to Reynaud, in very simple terms, though claiming to act on the basis of a "decision" by the Council of Ministers, at the moment of insisting on his demand for a capitulation from Weygand at 19:00 on June 15th (he would later talk of "ceasefire"), Reynaud was not acting under a mandate by the Council, but rather trying to convince Weygand by telling him the Ministers were all in favour of a capitulation (which was no longer the case). In short, Reynaud was hoping for a weakening of Weygand that could recreate a unity of the Council in favor of a transfer of the Government to Algiers, on the understanding that provisions were being implemented for the fate of France's armies.

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[47] Henri Amouroux, *Le Peuple du Désastre-1938-1940 (Tome I of La grande histoire des Français sous l'occupation)* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1985), 447.

[48] See Louis Marin, "Contribution à l'étude des Prodromes de l'armistice," *Revue d'histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale* 1, no. 3 (1951), 22-23; *Commission d'Enquête*, *Les Évènements Survenus en France de 1933 à 1945. Témoignages et Document Réunis par la Commission d'Enquête Parlementire* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, s.d., 1951-1952) t. V. des annexes, 1844; also Marin, "Gouvernement et commandement," 22-25 and also Weygand, *Mémoires,* 273-294 (*Considérations générales*).

Not only did Weygand realize that Reynaud was bluffing, as he knew there was an opinion within the Council of Ministers forming in favor of an armistice and behind Pétain, but he also knew that to force the issue, Reynaud would have to dismiss him, the continuator of Marshal Ferdinand Foch (while at the same time excluding Marshal Pétain, the Hero of Verdun, from the Government) and find amongst the top generals a replacement willing to carry-out a capitulation. We say amongst the "top generals" since a junior general such as De Gaulle - in any case incapable of self-immolation through a capitulation - would have left in evidence that in the midst of a hopeless but still on-going battle, the Government was forcing a "solution", rejected by the upper hierarchy of the Army.

This idea, that a dismissal of Weygand would mean a showdown with the French Army's upper echelons and a row with Pétain which in turn was tantamount to a contest with French public opinion was very much present in Reynaud's mind.[49]

At noon, on 15 June of 1940, a significant group of Army Commanders (*Commandants d'Armées*) unanimously agreed on the need to "put a stop to hostilities as soon as possible" and decided to communicate to Weygand their position".[50]

3.2.2 Reynaud, face to face with his Ministers: June 16th, 1970

On June 16th, 1940, Reynaud's government had only a few hours left to run its course. Early in the morning, eager for a reply to his telegram, Reynaud invited

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[49] See Reynaud, *La France,* 327: *To those who believe that it was quite simple to abandon the French people while leaving behind the two military glories of France, who would have treated the ministers as "deserters", I would like to advise me to meditate on the experience of the Belgian cabinet Pierlot, who had, however, not left Pétain or Weygand behind him* (…); see also Spears, *Assignment*, 279: *(...)the question of Pétain's resignation was raised. Once more Reynaud expressed his doubts and fears concerning the effect this might have on public opinion. What would be the reaction if he accepted it?* See also Reynaud, *Au Cœur,* 782: *Never, in truth, in our history, has a government found itself faced with such a tragic decision: to leave French soil, leaving behind us, Pétain and Weygand calling us deserters, as we will see the first utter against us this threat, to embark amid the barking of the defeatist pack, to leave behind us a country morally divided in two, such was the catastrophe which weighed on our heads. Didn't we have a duty to do everything to ward off it?* (These last thoughts are placed in Reynaud's memoirs as corresponding to the second Council of Cangé, on June 13th, 1940).

[50] Claude Paillat, *Le Désastre de 1940. La Guerre Éclair (10 Mai-24 Juin 1940)* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1985), 519.

the British Ambassador, Sir Ronald Campbell, and General Spears to visit him. They both insisted on the necessity to put the French navy out of harm's way by sending its ships to the Britain (in fact they anticipated Churchill's and the British Government's conditions for an agreement to allow France to explore armistice conditions with Germany) but Reynaud explained he could not do that as it would leave the Mediterranean in the hands of the Italians, exposing France's North-African possessions.[51] Reynaud apparently asked that Churchill visit him in France and for a negative reply to the Chautemps proposal of exploring German armistice conditions, in order to bolters Reynaud's own, anti-armistice position within the Council of Ministers.

Around 10 o'clock, Reynaud received the visit of the President of the Senate, Jules Jeanneney and the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Édouard Herriot, who opposed the armistice. The three men agreed that the Presidents of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies would intervene in front of the Ministers (*Conseil de Cabinet* or Cabinet Council), before the opening of the next Minister's Council, which in fact they did, stressing the need for the government and institutions not to fall into the hands of the Germans, a fatality if they stayed in Bordeaux.[52]

Immediately after the departure of the Jeannenay and Herriot, President of the Republic Albert Lebrun arrived to preside over the ministers, transforming the meeting into a Council of Ministers, from approximately 11:00 onwards, with Reynaud reading Roosevelt's answer to his letter of June 14th, promising help which was not military intervention.[53] Answering a question by Chautemps on Churchill's answer to the proposal decided upon the previous day (permission to ask Germany about armistice conditions) Reynaud answered defiantly that no answer had

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[51] Paul Reynaud, *Mémoires, T. 2. Envers et contre tous (7 Mars 1936-16 Juin 1940)* (Paris : Flammarion, 1963), 427; see also Legoux, *17 juin 1940*, 207.

[52] The consent of the Presidents of the Chambers (Senate and Chamber of Deputies) was necessary, constitutionally, to transfer the seat of Government, even more so for a transfer to Algeria: See Reynaud, *Au Cœur,* 818.

[53] See Reynaud, *Au Cœur,* 830. Reynaud places the reading of Roosevelt's answer in the second Council of June 16th (held from 17:00 onwards) while Baudouin, Chautemps, Bouthillier and others, all place it in the first Council of Ministers, held on the morning of the 16th. This latter version seems more plausible as it seems unlikely that Reynaud would have kept such information from the Ministers during 6 hours, given the urgency of the matter.

yet arrived but anticipated a refusal from Britain.[54] This provoked Pétain's intervention: reading a prepared text, threatening resignation if the decision to ask for armistice conditions was not taken straight away. He did this standing up, in fact at one point he appeared to want to exit the room,[55] to further emphasize his resolution. He was eventually convinced to stay on by the President of the Republic and by Reynaud himself, the latter with the argument that at 16:00, he should hold a meeting with Churchill. Also, as Pétain's note was drafted as addressed to Reynaud, the President of the Council argued that the Marshal should at least await his answer. Marshal Pétain agreed to hold-on to his resignation until after the Reynaud-Churchill meeting, but emphatically declared that, after this, he would not tolerate any more stalling tactics.

The session of the Council ended at 11:30, but we should emphasize that Pétain's threat of resignation had deeply shocked the Council of Ministers. In the words of author Henri Longuechaud: *His resignation is therefore suspended and the Council adjourns the meeting. But it nonetheless remains true that the threat of resignation had traumatized the Council. The ministers would now move towards supporting the request for an armistice. No doubt the President of the Council had the constitutional possibility of accepting this resignation; it was enough to take the Marshal at his word. Why didn't he do it? Things were no longer reduced to the routine dimensions of simple ministerial crises (...).*[56]

Before moving on to the events of the afternoon and evening of June 16th, that is, the Second Council of Ministers held on that day, we should mention another encounter between Weygand and President Lebrun and Reynaud. Both men tried, unsuccessfully, to convince the Generalissimo to accept a capitulation. According to Reynaud's account he offered a written order, thus exculpating Weygand in his view, and insisted that any armistice would, in its initial wording, contain a capitulation anyway.[57] Minister Bouthillier in his memoirs, maintains that Reynaud's offer of a written order did not change the heart of the matter: *An army that capitulates surrenders to the discretionary power of the enemy. It says: I cannot fight. Order. Dispose of my*

[54] Reynaud, 243.
[55] Ibid., 244.
[56] Longuechaud, *L'Abominable*, 44.
[57] Reynaud, *Au Cœur*, 820-821.

remains. A government which negotiates an armistice through political and diplomatic channels strives to move from the state of belligerence to that of a suspension of arms, unless it renounces it if the enemy demands impossible conditions. Capitulation is dishonor in its fullness. It was because they wanted to dishonor the German nation through its army, and to cause this immense vacuum that the disappearance of political power creates over a large territory, that the Allies in January 1943, in Casablanca, decided that the "Wehrmacht" would capitulate unconditionally. In June 1940, General Weygand, supported by Marshal Pétain, saw things from a point of view as classic in diplomatic history as in military history.[58]

On the afternoon of the 16th, a telephone call from London, from General de Gaulle, was passed through to Reynaud at approximately 12:30 (around 10:30 am according to Leca) saying he had just seen Winston Churchill and that something important and resounding was being prepared that would deal with the very entity of the two countries[59]: De Gaulle advised Reynaud not to give in to the pressures in favor of enquiring armistice conditions from Germany.

Reynaud then received the visit of Sir Ronald Campbell, who handed him a first telegram explaining that the British Government could be open to France's asking for armistice terms under the *sine qua non* condition, to be previously met, of sending over the French fleet to British ports.[60]The conversation between Reynaud and Sir Ronald Campbell was not over when a second telegram arrived from the Foreign Office for Sir Ronald, complementary to the first. In this second telegram, Great Britain required that it be consulted on the conditions that would be imposed by Germany, emphasized that the transfer of the fleet to the British Isles would strengthen France's negotiating position (rather than weaken it), and further requested precautions regarding the French aviation so as to make sure it could not be used by the Germans against England.[61]

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[58] Bouthillier, *Le Drame,* 83.

[59] Avi Shlaim, "Prelude to Downfall: The British Offer of Union to France, June 1940," *Journal of Contemporary History* 9, no. 3 (July 1874): 47, https://doi.org/10.1177/002200947400900302

[60] Kammerer, *La Vérité*, 130.

[61] Ibid., 131; see also Jacques Benoist-Méchin, *Soixante jours qui ébranlèrent l'occident* (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1956), 254.

Then a new phone call, again by General De Gaulle, was received before the meeting of the Council of Ministers, set for 17:00 o'clock informing Reynaud that the British Cabinet had approved a proposal for a Franco-British Union: *From now on, France and Great Britain are no longer two nations, but an indissoluble Franco-British nation (...) during the war there will be a single war cabinet for the supreme direction of the war*.[62] According to de Gaulle, this single war cabinet would govern from the place which it deemed suitable for the conduct of operations. The two parliaments would be joined together: *All the forces of Great Britain and France, land, sea or air, will be placed under a supreme command (...)*.[63]After this Churchill telephoned Reynaud and they both agreed to meet the next day, somewhere in Brittany (Bretagne), either in Quiberon or Concarneau. Shortly after, a new note arrived from the British Embassy notifying this proposal to create a super Franco-Great Britain state and to make a joint declaration of Union, Reynaud seemed relieved by this proposal: he had counted on a rejection of the armistice *démarche* by the British, as a way of defending his position before his colleagues, and instead had been sent a conditional acceptance. The project of a Franco-British Union seemed to cancel or at least suspend Britain's conditional acceptance. This was shortly confirmed by yet another telegram from the Foreign Office, swiftly communicated to Reynaud, that the two first telegrams regarding the French fleet (and Britain's conditional acceptance of the Chautemps proposal) were superseded by the offer of the Declaration of Franco-British Union.[64]

At 17:00 and until 20:00, a second Council of Ministers was held that day. According to Reynaud, he informed the Council of Britain's conditional acceptance,[65] then of its cancelling this conditional acceptance (of the proposal to ask

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[62] Reynaud, *Au Coeur*, 828-829.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Benoist-Méchin, *Soixante,* 258; see also Shlaim, "Prelude," 47: notably Churchill's recollections: *These gentlemen (Morton, Monnet and Pleven) had evolved the outline of a declaration for a Franco-British Union with the object, apart from its general merits, of giving M. Reynaud some new fact of a vivid and stimulating nature which would carry a majority of his cabinet into the move to Africa and the continuance of the war.*

[65] Reynaud, *Au Coeur*, 830. Reynaud also places the Reading of Roosevelt's answer in the second Council of June 16th, while Baudouin, Chautemps, Bouthillier and others, all place it in the first Council of Ministers, held on the morning of the 16th. Why would Reynaud have kept such information from the Ministers during 6 hours?

Germany for armistice conditions). Then Reynaud presented to the French ministers the proposed Franco-British Union that received what Kammerer has described as an "*instinctive and spontaneous rejection*".[66] Chautemps reacted saying he didn't want France to become a British Dominion. Ybarnegaray and other Ministers followed suit in criticizing the project. In his memoirs, Baudouin expresses the anguish of the other Ministers, at the very least those favoring the Chautemps proposal: "(...) it (the Franco-British Union proposal) in no way responded to what we expected. It did not loosen the grip that was suffocating the country. The Council of Ministers did not discuss it, because it had, that day, to examine a single problem which it was unanimous in wanting to resolve, that very evening: should the fight be stopped or not?".[67] According to some, Pétain compared the project to "merging with a corpse", others maintain he kept silent on the issue.

Finding no support among his ministers for the project of declaring a Franco-British Union, Reynaud tried to swerve back the discussion towards a debate on the armistice and on the need to choose between being "Albert I or Leopold III", but Chautemps took the debate back towards his proposal of asking armistice conditions from the Germans, this time without consulting the British as they had already stated their position.[68]

A bitter exchange of words ensued with Georges Mandel saying more or less that the Council was divided between those wanting to fight and those who did not. In fact, the bitterness of Mandel's words mask his last minute battle to reorient the discussion towards a decision between armistice and capitulation by the army - the partisans of the latter wishing to continue the war transferring the Government to North Africa or elsewhere - as he knew a few of the ministers favouring the Chautemps proposal did not really want an armistice. Yet, by that time, the heart of the debate had

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[66] Kammerer, *La Vérité*, 141.

[67] Baudouin quoted by Benoist-Méchin, *Soixante*, 260-261.

[68] Chautemps, *Cahiers*, 162: *(...) I then pointed out to the President of the Council that my proposal was only of a preparatory nature and did not subsequently involve the question of separate peace and the Franco-British alliance. It was only a matter of shedding light on the situation which seemed obscure to some of our colleagues. And I asked him if he would not agree to take the initiative, with a view to maintaining the unity of his government, given that he would have the faculty of conferring further with the English in the event, improbable moreover, that the German response justified it.*

been irrevocably placed by Frossard, Chautemps and others on the lines of "enquiring Germany's armistice conditions" an idea favoured by a majority, although for different reasons. According to Yves Bouthillier, Reynaud's Finance Minister who had been won over to the cause of the armistice, the majority of the ministers did not want to leave France without first finding out if an armistice could avoid the complete occupation of metropolitan France, and before making sure that German conditions for an armistice would be unacceptable.[69]

Reynaud himself defended, after the war, the decision not to call a vote, and gave his vision of the situation as the Council of Ministers was adjourned: *(...) I analyzed the reasons why I was opposed to the vote. It was not at all, in my eyes, a question of majority or minority, as one of my adversaries, a supporter of the armistice, Mr. Frossard, wrote. The Cabinet was dead, as the British Government realized. It was not possible to continue to govern with a government whose two vice-presidents of the Council and a large number of ministers, on a vital question, were in categorical opposition to me. The whole question was whether or not I would be responsible for remaking a government. I had already changed my government on June 5. I had changed the command before. (...) But what I needed was the support of the President of the Republic (...).*[70]

As to the closing of this second Council of Ministers of June 16th, according to Reynaud he closed the debate in order to confer with President Lebrun: *In reality, I ended the debate, declaring that I wanted to discuss the situation with the President of the Republic. I asked, however, the ministers to return at ten o'clock (p.m.). I wanted, in fact, to have them on hand, in the event that M. Lebrun, after having consulted the Presidents of the Chambers, would have instructed me to form a new government, or, in the contrary case, to hand over to the President of the Republic the collective resignation of the cabine*t.[71] According to Lebrun's account, Reynaud tried

[69] Bouthillier: *One thing was obvious: the greatest number of ministers did not want to embark before knowing whether the armistice would permit avoiding the complete occupation of the territory, and before being sure that German conditions would be unacceptable* (Bouthillier, *Le Drame,* 88-89).

[70] *Commission d'enquête sur les évènements de 1933 à 1945. Rapport,* 2421; https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6536546t/f169.item.texteImage.

[71] Reynaud, *Au Coeur*, 836.

to resign during the session of the Council, but he did not allow it, telling Reynaud that only he could stay and manage the destinies of France: (…) *I ask that we adjourn the meeting*".[72] They both agreed to convoke the members of the government for another meeting at 22:00 p.m.

In studying, in the previous paragraphs**,** the decision-making process by the French government on June 16th, leading to (and including) the decision by the French government to ask Germany what the armistice conditions would be, the issue at hand, for this Independent Study, has been whether this decision-making process was serious with respect to the on-going situation in international systemic terms (including the uncontested military collapse of France), fair and reflective of France's political forces, and respectful of France's constitutional and institutional framework. I would venture further and ask: was it mindful of France's immediate interests as a nation when seen through the prism of a neo-classical realist analysis? In other words, was it a legitimate exercise or, as a number of authors have tried to advance, was it the product of undue pressures, conspiracies, blunders and so forth?

For example, citing the later opinions expressed by ministers Marin, Rio, Monnet, Laurent-Eynac, Dutry and Pomaret (the latter personally in favor of the armistice), the Italian academic Franca Avantaggiato Puppo has sustained that had a vote been called on the 16th, the majority of the ministers would have probably voted against asking for an armistice[73]. The lack of voting on the issue of the armistice on June 16th 1940 is sometimes portrayed as a blunder by Reynaud.[74]

The obvious first counter to this argument is to recall that voting had never been in the traditions of the Council of Ministers. The next consists in placing the

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[72] Aron, *Histoire,* 49-50.

[73] Franca Avantaggiato Puppo, *Gli Armistizi Francesi del 1940* (Milano: Dott. A. Giuffré Editore, 1963), 164-165. See also Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *L'abîme: 1939-1945* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1982), 181: *Very probably the supporters of the resistance would have won if there had been a vote - a procedure which was, in any case, contrary to custom*.

[74] Avanataggiato Puppo, *Gli Armistizi*, 165: *It can therefore be deduced that, if a vote had taken place, the result would almost certainly have been contrary to a request for an armistice and therefore Reynaud, by resigning on the basis of a personal appreciation of the existing majority within the council, undoubtedly took upon himself a serious responsibility.* Louis Marin, using the listing by Pomaret of those in favor and against, also protested, after the war, that Reynaud had not asked for a vote (Marin, "Contribution," 22-27).

political debate within the Council within its real bounds and context. It makes little difference that some of the ministers backing the so-called Chautemps proposal may have honestly believed that the German armistice conditions would be too harsh, and that once this was proven they would then have the political manoeuvring space to continue the struggle from the French colonies. Even had Reynaud had more power and ascendency as a President of the Council than he actually had by June 16th, he could not have legitimately by-passed the debate around the Chautemps proposal and set the course on a vote on the issue of armistice versus capitulation or leaving for North-Africa versus remaining in Bordeaux (or simply for or against the armistice as bluntly demanded by Mandel), because most ministers and the President of the Republic presiding the Council did not want to precipitate a political crisis by a head-on collision with Pétain (and, through him, with French public opinion) and Weygand (and behind him the upper echelons of the French Army), nor, apparently, did Reynaud himself. In simple terms, even if he had the support of both the President of the Senate and President of the Chamber of Deputies, Reynaud did not have the backing of the Council of Ministers to order the evacuation of the Government to Algiers if that meant a head-on collision with Pétain (and the Army), nor, as we shall see, did he have the backing of the President of the Republic for the dismissal of the ministers and the formation of a new cabinet of ministers, more committed to continuing the struggle from overseas.[75]

[75] Reynaud's hope of returning to power in case Pétain was forced to resign after failing to obtain an "honorable" armistice from the Germans is no secret and it was admitted by Reynaud himself, notably in his prison diaries (Paul Reynaud, *Carnets de Captivité, (1941-1945), Présentés par Évelyne Demey* (Paris: Fayard, 1997), 87. *From June 16 to the 25, I stayed in contact with Pétain's ministers in case I came back to power, as had been agreed with Jeanneney and Herriot*") and also in his *Mémoirs* (Reynaud, *Mémoires,* 436). In later years, Reynaud's state of mind or calculations, the lack of a vote by the Ministers and the feverish deliberations and comings and goings of different actors helped build certain legends and theories around how the armistice decision was reached, some of them with a clear intent of discrediting the whole decision-making process. Bernard Legoux in his book *France, Juin 1040, les vrais raisons de l'armistice*, has described some of these conspiracy theories: the so-called Pétain-Weygand conspiracy; the so-called Pétain-Laval conspiracy; the so-called Conspiracy of the *Die-hards*; the so-called Pétain-Reynaud conspiracy; and the "little conspiracy", this last one involving an understanding between Reynaud, Lebrun, Jeannenay and Herriot and translating into the desire of these four statesmen that Hitler's armistice conditions would be so harsh (eventually including delivery of the French fleet to the Germans) that Pétain would simply have to accept the impossibility of an armistice, leaving the way open for a recall of Reynaud (Legoux, *France*, 294-295) and a continuation of the war from North-Africa. There are the theories surrounding Weygand's apparent

insubordination and the impact of the *Généralissime's* stance on the members of the Council of Ministers, especially as the hours, and days went by and especially as the said Ministers realized that Weygand and Pétain were acting in unison, providing each other mutual support with a view to favoring a common cause. As both of these old soldiers harboured certain resentments towards democratic institutions and the political class, some have pushed the idea further supposing they were actively conspiring against the Republic and using illegitimate means to favor their own cause. Some French intellectuals have chosen to go down this path. Among them we should mention Marc Bloch, *L'Étrange Défaite* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 202 (the original edition is Francs-Tireur, 1945)(see also in English: Marc Bloch, *Strange defeat a statement of evidence written in 1940* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968), 170) *They were ready to find consolation in the thought that beneath the ruins of France a shameful regime might be crushed to death and that if they yielded it was to a punishment meted out by Destiny to a guilty nation*. We should also mention Édouard Bonnefous whose *Histoire Politique de la Troisième République, T. VII La Course vers l'Abime: La Fin de la IIIe République (1939-1940)*(Paris: Éditions PUF, 1967) highlights these conspiracy theories (182). Bonnefous further stresses the need for the military to put the blame for the defeat on the politicians: "*If there is defeat, this defeat must only be political, only political*" (218). Among these authors we must further name Henri Guillemin, alias Cassius (*La Vérité sur l'Affaire Pétain* (Genève: Éditions du Milieu du Monde, 1945)) a very popular intellectual but who found little support for his idea that Pétain had somehow favored France's downfall in his desire to reform France's political landscape (though Pétain no doubt castigates the Republic, from July 10, 1940 onward), and there is also the book by Gérard Boulanger, *À Mort la Gueuse!, Comment ¨Pétain liquida la République à Bordeaux 15, 16 et 17 Juin 1940* (Paris: Calman-Lévy, 2006). Many authors have written extensively on long-term political relationship developed by Pétain and Laval during the 1930's and some have shown how from June 15th onward, Laval was actively lobbying the Ministers in favor of an armistice with the help of the Mayor of Bordeaux, Adrien Marquet (Planes, Louis-Georges and Dufour, Robert, *Bordeaux,* 120-121). As to the so-called Pétain-Reynaud conspiracy, it would make ense if Reynaud had reached the conclusion that he needed some kind of inter-regnum by Pétain to break the deadlock that was keeping him from departing to North Africa with the French Government. In his memoirs Camille Chautemps criticized Reynaud, bitterly, for his decision to resign in favor of Pétain: the President of the Council had opposed the Chautemps proposal on the basis that it could eventually lead to the armistice, and instead resigned… in favor of Pétain who stood even more determinedly for the armistice! To the believers in a Pétain-Reynaud conspiracy, this would explain Pétain's ready-made cabinet ministers list on the evening of the 16th, and it could also explain Pétain's rather clumsy - but nonetheless effective - intervention in the Council of Ministers, on the morning of the 16th of June as he was probably, so say the defenders of this theory, expecting Reynaud's support, and found himself up against the President of the Council's resistance. Evelyne Demey, Reynaud's daughter, in her book *Paul Reynaud, mon père* has developed extensively, not the theme of an actual agreement between Pétain and Reynaud, but certainly the latter's hopes for a quick return to power once (if) Germany's armistice conditions proved unpalatable, especially in case Hitler demanded the handing over of the French fleet (Evelyne Demey, *Paul Reynaud, mon Père* (Paris: Plon, 1980), 81-86). As to the conspiracy of the *Die-Hards* mentioned by Legoux, this refers principally to the actions of Paul Reynaud and Georges Mandel, his minister of the Interior, to block the efforts of the partisans of the armistice. According to this theory Reynaud and Mandel send De Gaulle to London not only to obtain the help of the British to move French troops to North Africa but also to harden Churchill against making concessions to France with respect to an eventual armistice (Jacques Chastener, *Histoire de la Troisième République, Vol. VII, le Drame Final (1938-1940)* (Paris: Hachette, 1952), 216-

3.2.3 Last card: Reynaud and "legal France"

Dominique Leca, one of Reynaud's principal advisors, though not a member of the Cabinet and thus not a direct witness to the discussions, gives us the following account of what followed the adjournment of the Council of Ministers: *Paul Reynaud, after the last Council, decided to override the hesitations of his ministers, wanted to first receive, respectful of the rites of the Third Republic, the indisputable caution of the legal country. He wanted to release this approval, in a burst of reason that he had the right to hope for, from a decisive interview with Lebrun, Jeanneney and Herriot who, effectively, personified the regime. Once this approval had been obtained, he could either impose his views on the Council the same evening, or reshuffle it immediately during the night, by finally creating a sort of committee of public safety. Lebrun accepted the principle of this preliminary interview, in this last consultation at the summit of the Third Republic. It was a disaster. Lebrun, at the end of the day, had only one thought left in his head. The Chautemps proposal had just received, before his eyes, in the afternoon, a fairly broad consent from the ministers and full support from the military. From now on, in his eyes, the country would only understand the prolongation of the struggle outside France if it came up against unacceptable, dishonorable conditions, which would probably be stipulated by Hitler. It was therefore*

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217). It is in this context that they view De Gaulle's intervention in favor of the Franco-British Union project, as a form of avoiding an acceptance by Britain, though conditional upon putting the French Navy in the safety of British ports, of France's inquiries of German armistice conditions (Legoux, *France,* 279-281; see also Chastener, *Histoire,* 226-227). From the "Préfecture" and through the prefects (the French prefects being the departmental representatives of the Minister of the Interior) Mandel calls to Bordeaux as many parliamentarians as possible in case it becomes necessary to reassemble parliament in order to fight the pro-armistice faction. In their book *Bordeaux, Capitale Tragique, Mai-Juin 1940*, L.G. Planes and Robert Dufourg mention an episode, in the late hours of the 15th, early morning of the 16th, where the Minister of the Interior, Georges Mandel asks general Joseph Lafont, commanding the military region of Bordeaux (who had also taken over control of the Police forces as the city was under a state of siege) to provide him with 500 Gardes Mobiles (part of the French gendarmerie). Lafont answers he can provide only 150 and even this offer doesn't seem to have materialized. All these conspiracy theories, though some hardly deserve the appellation of "conspiracy", can help, in their own way, to explain one or the other aspect of the events leading to the French armistice of June 1940. None of them invalidates, from the point of view of democratic principles or of the correct functioning of France's democratic institutions, the political legitimacy of the deliberations within the Council of Ministers, or of President Lebrun's decision to call on Pétain.

necessary to know these conditions. It was a hypothesis to be lifted.[76] Reynaud or another had to lift it, preferably Reynaud. If he refused, someone else.[77]

Reynaud himself gave a similar interpretation of events. He said he had held a first meeting with Lebrun, it is understood that with the intention of forming a resistance cabinet, but that Lebrun conditioned his support upon his adoption of the Chautemps proposal: *So here I am, alone, after a quick dinner, with the President of the Republic. Through the debates which have just taken place, he is aware of the situation. I have just expressed myself forcefully on the fact that France is bound by the word given to England. To my surprise, Mr. Lebrun said to me: "I want to keep you but I ask you to apply the Chautemps proposal*. Here is my response as he himself reported it at the trial of Pétain: *I cannot go down there and ask the question that Mr. Chautemps obtained from the majority of the Council. It is contrary to my policy; therefore, I cannot do it. This is my position*. He could have added that I told him: *To implement this policy, contact Marshal Pétain*! And I was careful not to talk to him about (any) majority.[78]

A new attempt at convincing Lebrun to approve a resistance cabinet is tried with the help of the presidents of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies: *At nine o'clock, we found ourselves, Jeanneney, Herriot and I (Reynaud), in the office of the President of the Republic (...) At that moment, the problem was fully explored, just as the positions were taken. It was time for the President of the Republic to resolve the crisis, by making a choice between two diametrically opposed policies (...) The President of the Republic questions, each in turn, President Jeanneney and President Herriot. Both respond that, like me, they are opposed to the armistice request. They conclude by asking President Lebrun to keep me in power to pursue my policies. Not hiding the fact that he sided with the Chautemps proposal, Mr. Lebrun succeeded in winning over neither Jeanneney nor Herriot to his views. It was then that, effectively using his prerogative, he ignored the qualified opinion that each of the presidents had*

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[76] Dominique Leca, *La Rupture de 1940* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1978), 233.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Reynaud, *Mémoires,* 433.

expressed to him, and he decided to appeal to Pétain, whom, he knew, was going to ask for an armistice.[79]

What of the other three actors? What was their version of this capital deliberation and ultimate decision? In a short text subtitled "The interview with the President of the Republic", Herriot gave his version of this moment: *At 9 p.m., that same Sunday evening, June 16th, we found ourselves at the President of the Republic's (lodgings), Jeanneney, Reynaud and me. Reynaud explained to us the situation; from an external point of view, England offered us a merger proposal but refused its consent to the armistice. From the domestic point of view, Pétain, who was still surrounded by great prestige, and Weygand did not want to continue the struggle. Mr. Lebrun asked Reynaud to apply the Chautemps proposal accepted by the majority of the Council. Reynaud declared that he did not agree to disavow himself. To succeed him, Mr. Lebrun invited us to appoint someone. Reynaud, we answered. But he (Reynaud) persisted in not wanting to address Germany*: *So who?" asks the President. – It's your business. You won't be embarrassed. Reynaud intervened: Marshal Pétain told me this morning that he had his Cabinet in his pocket. We withdrew (...).*[80]

For his part, Jeanneney gave a version in accordance with Herriot's: *I insisted to Reynaud. He must make the maximum effort to stop the Council on the wrong slope. Let it (the Council) be careful not to believe that it could be a good tactic to approach Germany. That would be relaxing inevitably the spring of resistance and - I emphasize the word – (that would) "cut the country's hamstring": Beware. I implore him. A Council of Ministers must be held at 10 p.m. in the very room where our interview is taking place. Time was approaching. We must conclude. Lebrun asked: "If the Council imposes consultation and, as is expected, Reynaud refuses it... who? Heriot and I answer together: "Reynaud". Lebrun said: "Reynaud, yes...But it's not possible...Pétain? (and with a weary gesture) Pétain! Lebrun (or Reynaud) added: "Pétain said openly: I have my Cabinet there, in my pocket, all ready*" (...) *As for Herriot and I, we stick to: "Reynaud", and leave*.[81]

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[79] Reynaud, *Au Coeur,* 843-844.

[80] Édouard Herriot, *Épisodes, 1940-1944* (Paris: Flammarion, 1950), 74-75.

[81] Jules Jeanneney, *Journal Politique, Septembre 1939 - Juillet 1942*: *Édition Établie, Présentée et Annotée par Jean-Noël Jeanneney* (French Edition) (Paris: Librarie

Lastly, there is the testimony of President Albert Lebrun himself who gave a version that left out Reynaud's earlier desire to form a resistance cabinet: *After leaving the Council, I spoke with Mr. Reynaud. He advised me to call Marshal Pétain, placed at the heart of the new majority, to replace him. I consulted the two presidents of the Senate and the House and informed them of my intention. So, I called the marshal. I entrusted him with the mission of forming the new cabinet (...).*[82] At the trial of Marshal Pétain, Lebrun gave a testimony which was more consistent with Reynaud's version. When one of the members of the Jury asked if he couldn't have asked Paul Reynaud to form a cabinet composed exclusively of *résistants* and for the purpose of resistance and not for seeking an armistice, as the presidents of the Senate and of the Chamber were both in favor of resistance, Lebrun answered: *Oh, in those troubled times, anything was possible. There was no Chamber (of Deputies). There was nothing. In the end, I was still struck to see this majority that had been formed in the Council. The President of the Republic was the arbitror, I arbitrated in the sense of the vote which had just been cast.*[83]

After the war, especially as some of the ministers gave their testimony to a Parliamentary commission of enquiry formed to clarify issues arising from events from 1933 to 1945, including the Fall of France and the Armistice, an important question was raised as to the reality of this so-called majority opposition to Reynaud. One of the first to raise the issue was Charles Pomaret who elaborated what he called his "score" (*pointage*) shortly after the events. As recounted by Pomaret, the Government was formed by the President of the Council and twenty-three ministers, plus the Under-Secretary to the Presidence of the Council Baudouin, who was also admitted to the proceedings, in total twenty-five. According to Pomaret, there were twelve ministers who were anti-armistice: Paul Reynaud, Louis Marin, Georges Mandel, César Campinchi, Yvon Delbos, Louis Rollin, Laurent-Eynac, Jules Julien Alphonse Rio, Paul Thellier, Georges Monnet and Raoul Dautry. Pomaret also added three others, Henri Queuille, Albert Sérol and Georges Pernot as being likely to vote

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Armand Colin, 1972) (We do not have the exact pages as we have accessed the book through Kindle).

[82] Albert Lebrun, *Témoignages* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1945), 85.

[83] *Commission d'enquête sur les évènements de 1933 à 1945*. *Rapport,* 2424.

against the armistice, had there been a vote. To these anti-armistice ministers, Pomaret opposed only eight rigidly pro-armistice ministers, notably: Marshal Philippe Pétain, Camille Chautemps, Jean Ybarnégaray, Yves Bouthillier, Charles Pomaret (himself), Jean Provost, Louis-Oscar Frossard and Paul Baudouin. He added two other names that were likely favorable to the armistice than against: Albert Chichery and Albert Rivière. In other words, 12 against the armistice versus 8 in favor, or 13 against versus 10 in favor[84], a "score" that some considered damaging for Reynaud's reputation. Pomaret's memoirs were published in 1968, but his "score" was taken up and published in Ambassador Albert Kammerer's *La Vérité sur l'Armistice.*[85]

Without doubting Pomaret's sincerity in his evaluation of his fellow minister's true leanings, we should note that as the debates closed on June 15th in Bordeaux, the issue for the Ministers is no longer between armistice or capitulation, but between those for and those against the Chautemps proposal of asking Germany what her armistice conditions would be. With respect to this last debate, we have Reynaud's own count, noted on a piece of paper and shown to Lebrun, with 13 names in favour of the Chautemps proposal against 7 in favour of Reynaud.[86] Another detail deserves mention regarding the closing of the Council of Ministers on June 15th: Reynaud, considering himself in minority, offers his resignation to the President of the Republic in front of the Ministers assembled: Lebrun does not accept the resignation and renews his confidence to Reynaud on the public understanding that he will execute the first part of the Chautemps proposal (which he does) to ask the British government if it will give leave to France to ask Germany for its armistice conditions. It is an almost universal practice in this kind of group negotiation for a figure presiding (in this case Lebrun) to "wrap-up" at the end of a meeting, what is considered the group's position. In this case it is a compromise whereby the resistance Premier Reynaud stays in power, but with the obligation to carry out the first phase of Chautemps proposal. If the "wrap-up" in question somehow misrepresents a group's position, then the dissenting voices must make themselves heard at that moment, otherwise their silence is taken as consent. In

[84] Charles Pomaret, *Le Dernier Témoin, Fin d'une Guerre, Fin d'une République Juin et Juillet 1940* (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1968), 30-31.

[85] Kammerer, *La Vérité*, 154.

[86] Reynaud, *Au Cœur,* 807; Reynaud, Paul. *La France,* 341; see also Lebrun, *Témoignage,* 85.

this case, no one challenged Lebrun's meeting-closing and meeting-summarizing formula, which clearly recognized the majority forming itself around the Chautemps proposal.

Be it as it may, after the war, few people attacked Reynaud more vehemently (on the basis of Pomaret's arithmetic) than one of Reynaud's ex-Ministers, Louis Marin, who participated as a member of the mentioned parliamentary commission. Taking up the issue of an apparent anti-armistice majority, Marin added the issue that, according to him, the President of the Republic could not have acted as arbiter if Reynaud had not resigned: *(...) and I respond to his first argument that the President of the Republic was only an arbitrator on the condition that you resigned. What surprises me is that you resigned under the conditions in which it was done. I cannot understand, and none of the reasons you have just given seem to me to demonstrate that it was necessary to resign. You could perfectly change the members of the cabinet, it was not complicated (...)*.[87] To Reynaud's reply that according to the 1875 Constitution he could not change the Ministers without the approval of the President of the Republic, Marin answered that in times of war he could have perfectly done so, and President Lebrun would not have moved.[88]

Here we should say that, although technically debatable, Louis Marin's theory delivers a scenario that seeks to ignore the reality of the issue being fought over, that is the Chautemps proposal, and the possibility of concluding an armistice with Nazi Germany to some, to others the hope of obtaining from that very same Nazi Germany the proof of a humiliating and dishonorable intransigence that could help justify (in the eyes of French public opinion) a flight of the Government to Africa and thus reconstruct the unity of the Government around a resistance formula understood and approved by all. When analysing Marin's arguments, we cannot forget that Pétain, the hero of Verdun, had already threatened to resign if there was no decision on the armistice that day and that the Army, through Weygand, had refused to accept a military capitulation. To this we must add that in addition to the debates of the ministers, President Albert Lebrun had been directly pressured by the military: around 18:00 when the discussions were still on-going within the Council of Ministers, the military

[87] *Commission d'enquête sur les évènements de 1933 à 1945. Rapport*, 2424.
[88] Ibid.

commander of Bordeaux General Robert Lafont had entered the meeting room and handed Lebrun a message from General Georges, Chief of Staff of Weygand, stating the following: *(…) Situation aggravated (…) Serious supply situation for withdrawn troops and civilian populations. Difficult manoeuvers due to traffic jams on roads and bombardment of railways and bridges. Absolute necessity to take a decision*.[89]

If we follow the maxim attributed by some to Bismarck, by others to Louis XIV and Frederick the Great, that politics is the "art of the possible", then we must look on Marin's counterfactuals with reservations. At the end of the day, Reynaud's withholding of his resignation would have been paramount to a political coup d'état for which he did not apparently have the means, assuming he had had the stamina for such a revolutionary act (or non-act), of dubious legality.

3.3 Reynaud's Inner Circle and Its Role

We have already seen how some of the principal players inter-acted and influenced the outcome of June 16th. First Weygand, calling for an armistice on June 12th and 13th. Then Marshal Pétain, through his intervention inside the Council of Ministers, on June 13th, stating the need for the Government to remain in France and suffer the fate of its people. Then, on June 15th and 16th, Weygand first, and then the Army through Weygand, refusing to capitulate and implement a "Dutch solution", placing Reynaud and the ministers who wanted to transfer to Algiers in an almost untenable situation: if they left, they would be seen as "deserting" while more than two million Frenchmen were still in arms and while some were still fighting on, against the Germans and the Italians. Finally, there was the action of ministers Frossard and Chautemps, inside the Council of Ministers, creating not a consensus, but at least what appeared a majority feeling of Ministers decided to condition their action upon the reality of German armistice conditions and not upon Reynaud's guess of those conditions. All these actions, slowly but inexorably, reduced Reynaud's options and left him with little room for manoeuvre: he chose to gain time.

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[89] See Reynaud, Paul. *Au Coeur de la Mêlée, op.cit.,* pp. 836-837*;* Reynaud, Paul, *La France a sauvé l'Europe, op.cit.,* pp. 355-356*;* Benoist-Méchin, Jacques*, Soixante jours…op.cit.,* pp.261-262*;* Boulanger, Gérard*, A mort la Gueuse, op.cit.,* p. 164

Now we must come to the players, important ones and smaller ones too, that tried to influence the result through the President of the Council Paul Reynaud. A lot has been written around the aides surrounding Reynaud and how their combined varied positions and pressures with regard to the armistice, somehow undermined, according to some, the President of the Council's resistance.

The idea behind these explanations is that President Lebrun's decision to call Marshal Pétain into office in order to ask for armistice conditions was perhaps not the only course of action and that a more resolute defense of the anti-armistice position could have been tried by a more resolute and less demoralized Reynaud. This line of thought is rather unfair to Reynaud as it tends to show him as a weak character, manipulated by aides and by his mistress, countess Hélène de Portes.[90] A softer line of criticism limits itself to Reynaud's so-called nervous collapse and to his being surpassed by the requirements of modern warfare, but the political intent is the same: to "disqualify" the legitimacy of the political exercise that lead to the designation of Marshal Pétain as President of the Council of Ministers, by President Lebrun.[91]

Among Reynaud pro-resistance and anti-armistice inner-circle members, we should mention Georges Mandel, who joined the Government as Minister of the

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[90] Pertinax, *Les Fossoyeurs, Défaite Militaire de la France. Armistice. Contre-révolution,* Tome II (New York: Editions de la Maison Française, 1943), 286: *Bouthillier, Leca, Devaux, Villelume, Baudouin, madame de Portes: now the family is complete. This is the group that governed France at the most terrible turning point of its history. Almost every evening they would meet, at place du Palais-Bourbon, in the small apartment where Paul Reynaud lived after having left the marital home of the Faubourg St Honoré. The discussions would last sometimes until two in the morning. Reynaud was there the object of disgusting sycophancy. In everyone's comments, the term "brilliant minister" was used. He accepted it without blinking (...).*

[91] In his *Mémoires de Guerre,* Charles de Gaulle describes Reynaud on the night of June 16th, mixing praises with evident criticism of the statesman that had named him Secretary for national defense a few days before: (…) *He gives me the impression of a man who has reached the limit of hope. Only those who witnessed it can measure what the test of power represented during this terrible period. Throughout the restless days and sleepless nights, the President of the Council felt the entire responsibility for the fate of France weighing on his person. Always, the Leader is alone in the face of bad destiny. (...) He faces the turmoil with a solidity of soul that does not waver. Never, during these dramatic days, did Mr. Paul Reynaud cease to be in control. We never saw him lose his temper, become indignant, or complain. It was a tragic spectacle presented by this great value, unjustly crushed by excessive events. (...) Basically the personality of Paul Reynaud responded to conditions where it would have been possible to conduct the war in a certain order of the State and on the basis of traditionally established data. But everything was swept away*! (Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de Guerre, Tome I : L'Appel, 1940-1942* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1954), 65-66).

Interior was certainly an important moral support from the resistance side for Reynaud. But from the point of view of the debates raging in the last few days of the Reynaud administration within the Council of Ministers, Mandel did not seem to have applied much support for Reynaud's struggle. On the last fateful Council of Ministers before Reynaud's resignation, Mandel did not give the Premier any support over the Franco-British Union project, leaving him to fight it out on his own. Then, as Chautemps retook the initiative and captured the support of the ministers by re-placing the debate around his "Chautemps proposal" this time with the idea of circumventing the British and consulting the Germans regardless, Mandel made one last, but rather clumsy effort at bringing back the debate towards a positioning of the ministers with respect to the armistice itself, by stating the Council was divided between the brave and the cowards, between those willing to fight and those ready to give-in.

De Gaulle could have helped Reynaud, but De Gaulle was a very absent aide. During the brief time he served as Secretary of State for War and National Defense, from June 5th -6th to June 16th, 1940, De Gaulle had really only two tasks, in themselves contradictory, one being the creation of national resistance stronghold in Brittany (Bretagne), the other the efforts to prepare some kind of resistance from France's North African possessions by moving troops and weapons there, a task he only took up from London, in the very last hours of the Reynaud administration and for which no help seemed forthcoming from the British or from French quarters.

To these two tasks, some have added a third one: to provoke the resignation of Weygand. By June 5th, Reynaud had understood that Weygand would not be a pliable *généralissime* if there was need to make the Army capitulate, so he sought some form of provoking his resignation: De Gaulle and the Brittany redoubt (*le Réduit Breton*).[92] Weygand did not fall into the trap, however, whereas the Brittany redoubt was of some strain on Reynaud, delaying the fall-back on Bordeaux and consequently amplifying the sensation of pressure on the Government from the advancing enemy forces.

Before his last trip to London on behalf of the Reynaud government, De Gaulle advised Reynaud to simply transport himself to Algiers. For De Gaulle, the issue

[92] Leca, *La Rupture*, 206.

at hand was for Reynaud to physically to Metropolitan France so as not to be overtaken or "submerged" by events.[93]

Finally, De Gaulle's contribution to the discussions of the Council of Ministers must be resumed to pushing forward the Franco-British Union discussion on June 16th, a move that turned out to be jeopardizing for Reynaud, one which completely discredited and weakened the Premier, in his last battle with his colleagues.

A word should be said of De Margerie, Reynaud's aide for diplomatic affairs and a committed member of the "resistance group" against the armistice. In the last days in Bordeaux, he was of little help in Reynaud's titanic battle against the likes of Weygand, Pétain, Chautemps and others. Margerie was not a Minister and consequently had no place in the deliberations of the Council of Ministers that concentrated the main decision-making exercise during the last three days of the Reynaud government in Bordeaux. On June 15th, he was trying to convince Darlan to help move troops to North Africa.[94] He did help dispel, through his notes, any misunderstanding regarding what Churchill said or didn't say in relation to freeing the French from their March 28th commitment (contrary to what Bauduoin went around saying), other than that he became a rather marginal player.

Finally, a word should be added about Dominique Leca, a very close anti-armistice and pro-resistance aide of Reynaud who, like De Margerie, had no place in the Council of Ministers structure. Like De Gaulle, Leca's advice to Reynaud turned around the importance of materializing the displacement of Reynaud himself and of his Government to Algiers, whatever obstacles put in place by the armistice faction. Contrary to de Gaulle's advice, Leca's could not be given with complete disregard for the political reality of the legitimacy being fought over in Bordeaux. Consequently, his advice was paired with the idea of a split of the Government, negotiated or based on some form of understanding, whereby Reynaud and some ministers (and the presidents

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[93] According to De Gaulle's memoires, he sees Reynaud in Bordeaux on the evening or night of the 14th and advises him to leave immediately for Algiers: De Gaulle, *Mémoires de Guerre,* 59: *For three days, I have been measuring how quickly we are moving towards capitulation. I gave you my modest assistance, but it was to fight the war. I refuse to submit to an armistice. If you stay here you will be overwhelmed by defeat. We must reach Algiers as quickly as possible. Have you decided or not? "Yes!" replied Mr. Paul Reynaud (...)*.

[94] De Margerie, *Journal*, 346-347.

of the Chambers of the senate and Deputies) would leave for Algiers, while Pétain and another group of Ministers would stay over to reach some form of modus vivendi with the Germans. Reynaud seemed to have listened to this formula according to Leca, and, on the morning of the 15th, discussed it with De Margerie and Charles François-Roux,[95] but in Mid-June 1940 it was a formula that smacked of wishful thinking as it had little chance of being agreed to by Marshall Pétain and the pro-armistice faction: in accepting such a formula (and we have no record that any such offer was made) Pétain would have accepted the task of negotiating with the Germans almost devoid of any bargaining chip, as from Algiers, Reynaud would have proclaimed himself the head of France's legitimate government, commanding the obedience of the Fleet and of the Empire.

Then we come to the pro-armistice faction composed mainly of Baudouin, Bouthillier, Villelume and of Reynaud's mistress, Hélène des Portes. It is the influence of this group that has been the source of constant criticism by many writers as they have found it difficult to understand how friends from his inner-circle could have been so dramatically opposed to Reynaud's inner convictions. The reasons for this dichotomy of thinking and inclinations were in part related to the dramatic military situation, to France's apparent quasi-abandonment by her British ally and to America's impossibility to intervene militarily. To this international scenario, we must add the pressure of domestic forces to which these figures of Reynaud's inner circle were apparently more sensitive than their leader: the gradual collapse of the French administration; the mass of almost 10 million refugees on the routes of France, lacking in food and shelter; the pressure from the armed forces for the government to do something (by way of an armistice) and the mounting pressures from all quarters for a political solution to the crisis.

There have been many descriptions of Madame de Portes and of the influence she held over Reynaud. Some have contested this influence, notably Leca,

[95] Leca, *La Rupture*, 221; General Spears, also on June 15th, puts the split-government theory in the mouth of Georges Mandel: a hurried word, after this meeting (with Reynaud), with Mandel, who was in a better position to judge the position than we were and who was completely staunch and reliable, led us to telegraph that the mood in which the Cabinet would begin its deliberations would be in favor of establishing two governments, one in France to negotiate, the other in Africa to continue the struggle, Reynaud to be head of the latter and Pétain of the former (…). See Spears, *Assignment*, 258.

who claims that Reynaud was never prone to listening to her advice on political matters.[96] One strong example of her sway over Reynaud is the fall in disgrace and removal of the Quai d'Orsay's Secretary-General, Alexis Leger, on the unjust pretext that he had been responsible for the burning of the Foreign Ministry's archives in Mid-May 1940.[97] Some of the players of the armistice, like Camille Chautemps made a strong case for Madame de Portes' influence on Reynaud *(...)*".[98] Charles Pomaret has also left the portrait of a very strong-minded and determined woman, constantly and steadfastly defending the armistice and strongly influencing Reynaud".[99] William

[96] Leca, *La Rupture*, 239: "it was necessary to place her at the true place, an insignificant one".

[97] Pertinax, *Les Fossoyeurs*, 287-288.

[98] Chautemps, *Cahiers Secrets*, 175-176: *(...) the confusing agitation of certain people without a mandate gave a painful impression. One of them, a personal friend of Paul Raynaud, was there, speaking without measure and annoyingly interfering in public affairs. I myself had to courteously refuse my signature for a decree which she had initiated (...) she tried to make me accept her point of view and begged me to work to bring Reynaud there. I was deeply surprised to discover a real palace intrigue surrounding the President of the Council and I pitied him for having to struggle at such a moment in the middle of an intimate drama which added to his patriotic anguish (…).*

[99] Charles Pomaret, *Le Dernier Témoin fin d'une Guerre, fin d'une République, Juin et Juillet 1940* (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1968), 49-51: *If I speak here of a woman failing the rules of decorum, it is because decency quickly finds its limits in the search for historical truth. Historians of the armistice, even the best educated, have not been able to neglect, to explain sometimes the inexplicable, the action of this woman, the certain influence that, through a constant presence, and an unrelenting insistence, she had on the head of government. We cannot really explain certain attitudes of Paul Reynaud, some serious errors, obvious hesitations chipping away at a fierce will, hesitations at essential moments, waste of time, some refusals to act and command (if not through) through the presence, the action and influence of Hélène de Portes. To deny it would be a disservice to the memory of Paul Reynaud, because we would no longer understand the character, he would lose all humanity. Why then should I remain silent when I was the immediate witness of this feminine action, especially from June 10; so especially since in the last days, the last hours of the tragedy of Bordeaux, I shared the feeling of this Egeria, never at rest, on the necessity of the armistice. In short, there is no other explanation - especially not that of the fatigue dominated by Paul Reynaud's tempered soul - to understand that at the last moment, floating, tossed around, he left and gave way to Pétain, while the majority of ministers, the "hardliners" followed him without weakness to continue (without knowing very well how) a fight which they did not admit was lost. (...) it is obvious that the relentless action of this passionate woman, in certain admirable ways, was felt, translated into precise gestures or, on the contrary, in the absence of expected gestures throughout the time of the government of P. Reynaud. Whether it is the choice of certain ministers who were "soft" (I quote Baudouin and Bouthillier) disinclined to continue a losing struggle, whether it is the very unexpected ousting of Aléxis Léger, Secretary General of Foreign Affairs, whom Paul Reynaud could not accuse of weakness, whether it was the friends in favor of the armistice whom she constantly put in the footsteps of Paul Reynaud, the influence of Hélène de Portes was exerted, nagging and precise, and Paul Reynaud willingly listened to*

Shirer has reported the testimony of another witness of those feverish days in Bordeaux, that of H. Freeman Matthews, First Secretary of the American Embassy: *(...) I believe that if he (Reynaud) gradually lost his composure, it is largely because of the influence she exerted on him (...).*[100] The British historian Sir Alistair Horne has also subscribed to this vision of a Reynaud broken by exhaustion, by the opposition within the Council of Ministers but also by the opposition within his inner circle, foremost by his mistress: *Suddenly, the tough little Frenchman collapsed. Physically and mentally exhausted, he could no longer stand up to the "softs" (...)*.[101]

For his part, French academic Raymond Krakovitch has left us the following analysis of her imprint in these troubled times: *Hélène de Portes played a role that too many testimonies do not allow to be considered only secondary and anecdotal. We will never know to what extent her vibrating activity could have eaten away at the nerves of her companion but, in such a circumstance, in a game so difficult to play, the weight of this woman acquired by the armistice and asserting her opinion to everyone, at all times, has probably been a deleterious element. However, in our opinion, it was not the most decisive*.[102]

Most of all, she was credited with having influenced the rise of Yves Bouthillier and even more so of Paul Baudouin,[103] ex-director of the Banque d'Indochine and a man credited with sympathies towards Fascist Italy. The two collaborators passed into the Pétain (and Weygand) camp at the end of May-beginning of June 1940, while remaining very close to Reynaud, indeed on June 5th Reynaud made one of them Minister of Finance and the other Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs. To the very last, both men would try and influenced Reynaud in favor of the armistice. As an example of their actions, we have an important episode when Baudouin, apparently

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her opinions and attached all the more importance as he recognized in her a very great political sense (...).

[100] William L. Shirer, *La Chute de la III° République, Une Enquête sur la Défaite de 1940* (Paris: Stock, 1970), 840.

[101] Alistair Horne, *To Lose a Battle, France 1940* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1969), 576.

[102] Raymond Krakovitch, *Paul Reynaud Dans la Tragédie de l'Histoire* (Paris: Tallendier, 1998), 343

[103] Ibid., 283-286.

supported by Bouthillier, tried to dissuade Reynaud to present the Franco-British Union project to the ministers on June 16th, but to no avail.[104]

As to Lieutenant-Colonel Paul De Villelume, Reynaud's military advisor, we have his own account of the fatidic days of June 14th, 15th and 16th, during which he repeatedly advised Reynaud in favor of an armistice, blocking his efforts to produce a letter for Weygand in favor of a capitulation (Villelume supported Weygand's theory that a capitulation would be dishonorable for the Army). There is also a curious episode, contained in Villelume's memoirs where on June 14th he tried to convince the American Ambassador to Poland, Anthony Biddle, that the United States had to help France obtain an armistice, this at a time when Reynaud was still awaiting Roosevelt's answer to his letter asking for Washington D.C.'s entry in the war, not a very loyal attitude by Villelume towards his President of the Council.[105]

In the end, none of these episodes, or even their sum-cumulative effect, can be described as "decisive" on Reynaud's resolve. Although we have the descriptions of Spears to show a Reynaud visibly relieved from the burden of office after his resignation,[106] none of these episodes can counter the fact that Reynaud played his hand up to the very last minute, offering to constitute a resistance Cabinet on the night of June 16th, a request supported by the presidents of the Senate and of the Chamber of Deputies, but a request denied by the President of the Republic, leaving Reynaud with no further course of action in his mind (as he had consistently said he would not lead a government that would ask Germany for armistice conditions). If he didn't dismiss Weygand in the previous days before his own resignation it was not through some negligence or to avoid displeasing the pro-armistice members of his inner-circle, but simply because he did not have the power to do so without an all-out confrontation with Pétain inside the Council of Ministers. If he did not dismiss Pétain and the pro-armistice ministers previously it was not because of Hélène de Portes or Baudouin's sympathies for the Victor of Verdun, but because he didn't have the backing of the President of the

[104] Baudouin, *Réponse*, 173.

[105] Paul Villelume, *Journal d'une Défaite, Août 1939- Juin 1940* (Paris: Fayard, 1976), 422-429.

[106] Spears, *Assignment*, 308-309.

Republic, nor was he prepared for the confrontation with French public opinion that it would have entailed.

CHAPTER 4
CONCLUSIONS

In working on this research, we have followed a neo-classical realist framework to lay down our analysis, starting from the international level (including military developments that shape it), and working down to the state and individual levels. We have chosen to follow a neoclassical realist approach that takes into account both the systemic and unit-level variables, following on Gideon Rose' description of this school of thought: *It explicitly incorporates both external and internal variables, updating and systemizing certain insights drawn from classical realist thought. Its adherents argue that the scope and ambition of a country's foreign policy is driven first and foremost by its place in the international system and specifically by its relative material power capabilities. This is why they are realists. They argue further, however, that the impact of such power capabilities on foreign policy is indirect and complex because systemic pressures must be translated through intervening variables at the unit level. This is why they are neoclassical*.[1] Juliet Kaarbo further states that as the systemic and relative material capabilities are filtered through the decision-makers, the "*state responses are affected by a wide range of domestic political and decision-making factors, including perceptions, state's motives, political traditions and identities, domestic institutions and coalition building, and perceived lessons from the past*".[2] Thus, the object of this research is simply to explain a foreign policy decision through a neoclassical realist lens.

To do this, we must start by explaining that in times of war, the military developments, such as major defeats, major loss of territory (in the case of this study French devastation in different dimensions) – are crucial to shaping the "international system" and determining a state's "material power capabilities".

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[1] Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics* 51, no. 1 (1998): 146. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887100007814.

[2] Juliet Kaarbo, "A Foreign Policy Analysis Perspective on the Domestic Politics Turn in IR Theory," *International Studies Review* 17, no. 2 (2015): 203, https://doi.org/10.1111/misr.12213.

The weight of the French defeat is of course self-evident and appeared as such to the contemporaries. This explains why, as we saw in the previous chapter, at the session of the *Comité de Guerre* (War Committee) on May 25th, 1940, Weygand led the conversation towards France's predicament in case the Germans pierced the Somme and Aisne front (France had just seen 30 of her divisions encircled in the North and one of her allies (Netherlands) had just dropped out of the war). When President Lebrun mentioned the possibility that France might have to ask for an armistice, none of the ministers and high-ranking military officers or civilian officials present objected to the idea, with Reynaud reminding the Ministers they were committed through the March 28 agreement not to seek a separate peace, but nevertheless declaring he would consult with the British ally on the steps to be taken.

Of course, even before the period studied in this last chapter drew to a close (ranging from June 14th to the late hours of June 16th), those in favor of continuing the fight, foremost among them Paul Reynaud, chose to give another vision of the "international system" and of France's "material power capabilities" through an amalgam of French, British and eventual American resources, in the context of a war of continents on a planetary scale. Until as late as June 11th, of course, this vision is not really debated or discussed amongst French cabinet ministers, who until that moment for the most part were all in tune with the President of the Council's resistance stance. It was simply mentioned in Reynaud's conversations or correspondence with General Weygand and Pétain, as a way of stating the Government's policy, one of "*résistance à outrance*", which we could translate as resistance to the utmost.[3]

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[3] See Paul Reynaud, Paul. *La France a Sauvé l'Europe, tome II* (Paris: Flammarion, 1947), 176: *The arrival of Pétain and Weygand had revived hope in all hearts, and here were these two men united against me to tell me that if we were beaten in the metropolis, France would have to ask for an armistice! In vain I represented to them that we must, at no cost, separate ourselves from our allies, that there is no independence possible for France except in a close union with the two great Anglo-Saxon democracies, of which the assistance would be necessary for us to rebuild our country after the war, as France could even less be the only enemy of Germany which capitulated, as she held, intact, the second empire in the world and the second fleet of Europe, that finally and above all, France had made the commitment, which it could not dream of renouncing, not to conclude a separate armistice. His honor and his interest therefore agreed to forbid him from doing so. To whom the Marshal replied in a soft and slightly quavering voice: -You place yourself on the international level and I, on the national level* (…). In his answer to Weygands note of May 29th and to the commentaries by both Weygand and Pétain regarding the eventual need to ask

This is not to say that the "international system" or France's "material power capabilities" worked in favor of Reynaud's avowed policy of resistance to the utmost. Rather, through an ingenious interpretation of the international forces at play and of France's remaining resources, and even more so through the avoidance of an open discussion by governmental elites of the full implications of France's military defeat, Reynaud had managed to maintain the unity of his government behind a common "resistance to the utmost" stance.

We can of course understand this "resistance stance" by appealing to cultural factors such as patriotism and the rejection of Nazism and the aggressions that Hitler's Germany represented in the eyes of these politicians. Here we should add that these cultural, ideological and ideational factors are sometimes incorporated into the neoclassical realist approach, especially what is termed "strategic culture" or "*entrenched beliefs, worldviews and shared expectations of society as a whole*".[4]

But as explained by Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, these strategic cultures can in fact hamper elites when it comes to reading an international reality: "*strategic cultures can place sever constraints on the ability of elites to undertake strategic adjustments to systemic changes (…) decision-making elites can become trapped by strategic culture, which can prevent them from reorienting grand strategy to meet international imperatives and avoid self-defeating behaviour*".[5] In the particular case of Reynaud, we can add a close alliance with Churchill upon which he had staked his

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for an armistice (if the Somme-Aisne front were pierced) Reynaud answers: (…) *The fact that, in the hypothesis considered, the entire national territory could no longer be defended does not have the necessary consequence that we could suspend hostilities under conditions compatible with the honor and vital interest of France. (…) I add that my intention is to raise two classes and send them to North Africa to make them contribute to its defense, with weapons purchased abroad*. (185). On June 12th, Reynaud had another conversation with Weygand and Pétain, while visiting General Georges at the *Grand Quartier Général: I point out to them that if we separate from England, in agreement with her, as the convention of March 28th obliges us to do, or by unilaterally breaking our commitment, England will find itself ipso facto freed from all obligations towards us. We would find ourselves alone in the presence of Germany, for the present and perhaps for the future. We would be handed over, tied hand and foot, to Hitler*. To which Weygand, approved by Pétain, replied: *The country will never forgive you if to remain faithful to England, you refuse the possibility of peace*. (Paul Reynaud, *Mémoires, T.2, Envers et Contre Tous* (Paris: Flammarion, 1963), 399).

[4] Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro and Steven E. Lobbel, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 66.

[5] Ibid., 69.

political survival as he managed to identify himself completely with this resistance stance, and committed himself and his country through a declaration-agreement of March 28th, 1940, not to negotiate any separate peace or armistice: the political survival of a leader being one of the lenses through which international systemic factors (even those governing a states' or a community's survival) are interpreted.

This situation of an apparently united ministerial cabinet changed when, on June 12th, 1940, at the Council of Ministers held at Cangé, General Weygand revealed to the Ministers the extent of France's military defeat and called for an armistice. Though Weygand's message at first made few converts among the assembled Ministers - but one of those who adhered to his view was a vice-president of the Council and Victor of Verdun, in favor of an armistice for some time, but who had avoided expressing it openly - the debate had been clearly placed in the hands of the said Ministers and could no longer be avoided. Nor could the Ministers avoid, from then onward, addressing the domestic implications of this planetary war scenario. The next day, June 13th, Marshal Pétain intervened saying he would not abandon France's metropolitan territory and would dissociate himself, if need be, from the Government, leaving no doubt, in the minds of the other Ministers, that from that moment, whatever decision they took, collectively speaking but also their individual stance, would be subjected to a harsh public scrutiny.

As we saw in the preceding part, the issue of leaving French metropolitan soil inexorably led to the issue of what would become of the French army and of the French populations thus abandoned at the hands of the German invader and, thus, swung back to the Council of Minister's true dilemma: armistice or capitulation. At a given moment, an overwhelming majority of Ministers accepted the idea of a capitulation as an expedient capable of putting an end to the bloodshed (an apparently necessary first step for embarking for Algiers) but did not feel they could impose it on the Army. In fact, they could not decide on it as a group without breaking with Pétain, which probably meant provoking the opprobrium of the whole nation.

When analyzing this IS, three main ideas seem to impose themselves. One relates to the issue of formal versus real power, which in my view proves impossible to obviate. Another relates to the role of what Professor E. Lobell has called the Foreign Policy Executive (FPE). In this case Paul Reynaud, a FPE who, as before, failed to act

as an honest broker vis-à-vis his Ministers and the political forces present in his cabinet, but also *vis-à-vis* the French Armed Forces engaged in an uneven battle and the French people at large, with Reynaud pushing for a "solution" for which he no longer had the necessary political and institutional backing. Finally, a last thought, crucial to this research, has to do with the functioning of elites and institutions in normal times as opposed to times of crises, especially in a crisis that is clearly existential in nature and where the very survival of the nation, the State and the community are at stake.

4.1 Formal Versus Real Power

In such an ideologically charged subject as the armistice of 1940, it becomes something of a challenge to distinguish between the formality of power and the reality of power. The formality of Reynaud's power can more easily be defined and numerous academics such as Bankwitz, Gates and others, but also actors of the drama of 1940 such as Chautemps, Marin and so forth, have tended to stress the formal subordination of the armed forces to the elected political power. Consequently, some have accused Reynaud of not having used his prerogatives as President of the Council of Ministers in a determined and resolute fashion - at least not in a way resolutely favoring the continuation of the war from North Africa - in different instances, for example by supposedly "taking" the armistice-capitulation debate to the Council of Ministers (from June 12th) through giving access to that Council to General Weygand,[6] but also by not dismissing Weygand[7] and by not purging the Cabinet of Ministers of its pro-armistice elements on June 16th, instead of resigning.[8]

The issue of real power is of course more complex. Could Reynaud really have dismissed Weygand for refusing to capitulate and for asking for an armistice when the *Généralissime's* policy was in fact backed by the Army's top commanders? Could Reynaud have taken such a step at a time when the French forces were being dislocated

[6] Camille Chautemps, *Cahiers Secrets de l'Armistice. 1939-40* (Paris: Plon, 1963), 119-120.

[7] Eleanor M. Gates, *End of the Affair: the Collapse of the Anglo-French Alliance, 1939-40* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1981), 213.

[8] *Commission d'enquête sur les évènements de 1933 à 1945. Rapport fait au nom de la Commission d'Enquête Parlementaire*, Tome 8 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, s.d., 1951-1952), 2424.

and crushed by the German forces? In his memoirs, he mentions his intention to dismiss Weygand and to replace him with general Doumenc until a capitulation of French forces in French Metropolitan territory was signed, then to name General Noguès as commander-in-chief, to continue the war from North Africa.

Formally speaking, he could, of course choose any superior officer for the task of surrendering French forces on the European continent as long as he found one willing to play the role. But what would have been the effect on French moral, on the moral of the Army, of the French people, of the millions of civilians scattered on the routes of France? Marshal Pétain and the pro-armistice faction would not have stood by idly, allowing him to impose a "capitulation", thus killing in the act, any hope of an armistice with Germany. Would Lebrun have stood by and looked the other way, as Marin suggests? Would a mass of roughly three million French soldiers have passively accepted imprisonment in German POW camps - ultimately over a million eight hundred thousand French soldiers were taken as prisoners of the Germans, before the entry in force of the armistice signed at Rethondes – while Reynaud and a handful of Ministers embarked for Algiers, with some of those three million soldiers being asked to risk their lives in order to facilitate the President of the Council's and the Cabinet's retreat? Would the French high command have accepted to ply itself to this course of action? Here we should cite the declarations of General Huntziger to the author Benoist-Méchin commenting on De Gaulle's efforts to entice him to accept command of the Army in June 1940 and to organise a resistance around the Cotentin peninsula (in reality a stage before a capitulation by the Army and an evacuation to England of the Government): *The manoeuver was impossible; but apart from that, replacing General Weygand, on June 11, 1940, at the head of the French armies, would have meant causing the vertical collapse of our defense. Whoever his successor had been, he would not have enjoyed sufficient authority to maintain cohesion in our troops at such a critical moment*.[9]

We should add that the debate, for too long, has been blurred by the issue of the Army's natural inclination to avoid accepting the opprobrium of defeat that

[9] Jacques Benoist-Méchin, *Soixante Jours qui Ébranlèrent l'Occident* (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1956), 118; See also Bernard Legoux, *17 juin 1940: l'armistice était indispensable?* (Casablanca: L'esprit Du Livre Editions, 2010), 597.

would spring from a military capitulation and by its equally natural desire to transfer that responsibility to the shoulders of the political establishment, through the signing of an armistice. When we mention the "Army", we should say, foremost, the generation of high-ranking officers that in pre-war years, at least in principle, had been co-responsible with the politicians for France's military unpreparedness, foremost among them Pétain and Weygand.

The existence of this institutional stance cannot be doubted. The issue at hand is to try and determine whether it was the decisive driving force behind the stance of the top echelons of France's army, as interpreted by some, or whether it was a subsidiary feeling felt by men who acted rather on the realization that they held in their hands the possibility for part of French Metropolitan territory and the French Empire as a whole to avoid military occupation, for a large part of the army to avoid imprisonment, and for the maintenance of an authority capable of protecting French interests, and also realized that by sacrificing these assets[10] in order to permit a formal continuation of the struggle by France, they might be seen by the French people as

[10] One of the postulates of this IS has been not to bring into discussion elements or developments from the period following the actual decision to ask for armistice conditions, as they usually serve only as self-justification for the different factions and not as elements for understanding the real issues and situation as they presented themselves when the decision-making process was in full swing. Here we believe that we should refer to the instructions given to the French plenipotentiaries that signed the armistice at Rethondes. They cannot be taken at face-value since we will never know for a fact if, in case they had not been met, the Pétain-Weygand government would have simply broken-off negotiations, even after having staked their reputation on the armistice, through Pétain's call to the French people, on June 17th, or if the said government would have eventually accepted even harsher terms than were accepted. But what we can say is that these instructions (apparently handed down by Weygand) are a reflection of the objectives that the Pétain-Weygand team had set out to obtain, and the feasibility of these objectives - not to hand over the Navy, not to permit a German presence in any portion of the Empire, not accept the total occupation of French metropolitan territory – was to a large extent proven by the agreement signed at Rethondes (see Françoise Berger, "L'Armistice de 1940: Negotiations et Consequences," *Revue de la Société des Amis du Musée de l'Armée* no. 140 (2011): 57-65, and also Maxime Weygand, *Mémoires, T.III, Rappelé au service* (Paris: Flammarion, 1950), 238*: "les ministres étaient d'accord pour accepter que les négociations soient rompues si l'ennemi exigeait la livraison de la flotte de guerre, ou prétendait occuper une partie de nos territoires d'outre-mer (…)")*. The clause regarding the handing over of German exiles did, in fact, touch upon France's honor, but General Keitel assured the French that it would be applied restrictively and only upon those who had actively worked in favor of the war and against Germany (regarding this issue see Pierre Chandelier, *La Défaite de 1940 et l'Armistice: Une Approche de la Vérité* (Paris: Éditions Lettres du Monde, 1996), 79-89).

having sacrificed the larger interests of the French nation to the whims of what would soon be seen by many as a "pro-British clique".

In his book, *La Fin de la IIIe République,* Paris, 2007, Emmanuel Berl has approached this idea to a certain extent and from another angle: *But if for the French, their allies, their enemies, the question is: are we ending or are we continuing the war? If perhaps it poses itself in this way in Mandel's mind, it is not in these terms that it is approached by the Comité de Guerre (War Committee), the councils of ministers, or the Supreme Council. In Tours, in Cangé, in Bordeaux, it is not a question of knowing whether France remains at war or not, but whether we want to ask for an armistice or sign the capitulation (...) the real problem, in fact, is as follows:* ***is France's first concern to limit the terrible damage that the war is causing to its army and its territory, or to increase, as much as it can, the chances of its English partner in the battle he will soon have to fight***?[11] Berl went further, stating: *But I also think that* ***this sacrificial policy which we can claim to be the most serious, France in June 1940 was neither physically nor morally in a position to practice it*** (...) *And this policy I doubt that anyone was able to propose it. Generals could not be expected to say: too bad for the army. And as for the civilians, those who were often - and unfairly - suspected of preferring England to France, accused - much more justly - of having subordinated the policy of France to that of England, how could they have dared to say: "you must sacrifice yourself for her...*?[12]

Finally, the fact remains that Reynaud ultimately subordinated his dismissal of Weygand to the constitution of a new government with the backing of Lebrun on June 16th, and this, in itself, is already an admission that though he had the legal attribution to dismiss or destitute Weygand, he did not have the actual "power" to do so.

4.2 The Role of the Foreign Policy Executive (FPE)

Here we must come back to an idea treated in chapter II, the idea that the state or rather those at the head of the state, normally play a role as mediator(s) between

[11] Emmanuel Berl, *La Fin de la IIIe République* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007).
[12] Ibid.

the realms of international and domestic politics. S.E. Lobell has mentioned the figure of what he calls the *Foreign Policy Executive*, FPE - in this case, the foreign policy executive is Paul Reynaud, holding the position of President of the Council (of Ministers) - standing between these two worlds,[13] normally more permeable to the imperatives of the international field, but eventually responsive to the pressures of domestic forces.

Neoclassical realist theory never assumes that the FPE functions as an unbiased arbitror, it rather assumes that the systemic and domestic elements are funnelled through the biased prism of an agent or agents who, among his/their primary concerns has/have in mind their own political survival.[14] Furthermore, some IR academics have stressed that in some cases, a certain level of deception becomes a necessity for functioning in regimes that, on a formal level, give little autonomy to the Executive for conducting foreign policy and when the foreign policy executive believes that there are considerable national interests are at stake and that they would be jeopardised, without the use of deception, by uncompromising domestic forces.[15] Having said this, there are a few elements that need to be developed.

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[13] Steven E. Lobell, "Threat Assessment, the State, and Foreign Policy: A Neoclassical Realist Model," in *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, eds. Norring M. Ripsman and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 47.

[14] Balkan Devlen and Özgür Özdamar, "Neoclassical Realism and Foreign Policy Crisis," in *Rethinking Realism in International Relations,* eds. Annette Freyberg-Inan, Ewan Harrison and Patrick James (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 143.

[15] See Norrin M. Ripsman, "The Politics of Deception: Forging Peace Treaties in the Face of Domestic Opposition," *International Journal* 60, no.1 (2004/2005): 194. Ripsman describes Third Republic France as an example of a political system that provided close surveillance with regard to international agreements, for example: *The Third Republic provided its executive with very limited autonomy over foreign policy, particularly where peace treaties were concerned. Executive authority was officially represented by the president, but in practice was exercised by his cabinet (or ministry) which was responsible to the Chamber of Deputies and could govern only if it enjoyed the confidence of that house. If defeated in a vote of confidence, it was obliged to resign collectively. Thus, parliament was the maker and breaker of ministries, the source of all executive authority, and the axis about which the whole governmental machinery of the Third Republic revolved. While the constitutional laws of February 25th of 1875 (Art. 3) and July 16th 1975 (Art. 8 & 9) gave the president – hence the ministers – primary authority over foreign affairs, they required the approval of both chambers of the legislature when declaring war or negotiating peace treaties and all treaties affecting trade, finance, territory, or the rights of the French nationals abroad. Therefore, the parliamentary role in foreign affairs was considerable* (197).

In the first place, in the neoclassical realist model, the FPE cannot choose to ignore, over time, the imperatives of both the international system and domestic forces, as seemed patent with Paul Reynaud's utmost resistance policy. Then, the "deception", as mentioned by neoclassical scholars such as Ripsman, consists in techniques whereby the statesman chooses a domestically complicated course of action, with a view to an international policy result intended to be at least palpable as a whole and to be submitted to public scrutiny in the long run, whereas in the more condensed time space of the armistice decision-making process, from June 12th onward, the Council of Ministers had transformed (itself) into the decision-making body *par excellence* and its decisions or guiding lines could not legitimately be dismissed by Reynaud. In the case of Paul Reynaud, he fails to act as a mediator between the systemic and domestic forces; in fact, we can say that at some point his policy of all-out resistance to Nazi Germany defied both the systemic and domestic forces in his drive to keep going an alliance that for many Frenchmen had lost all sense.

Here we should add that this sort of situation has rarely been studied from a theoretical international relations perspective, much less so from a neoclassical realist perspective as neoclassical realists, in general, start from the basis that democratic leaders will need to survive public scrutiny through elections, at given intervals, whereas in the crisis around the armistice, if the option to continue the war from exile could permit a triumphant return to an liberated country, after years of absence, the normal democratic electoral game could thus be relativized, in Reynaud's mind at least, and counterbalanced by a powerful element: ultimate victory over Nazi Germany.

We should mention here Reynaud's determined, even visceral, rejection of Nazism and everything it stood for, as well as a strong faith in the capabilities and strengths of the Anglo-Saxon world. It is important to think of Reynaud as a man with special regard for the political ideologies of the time, one who saw his fight against Nazi-Germany in almost messianic terms.[16] These are all elements that can be rescued and that enrich an analysis from a neoclassical realist approach that, according to

[16] On the relevance of the political beliefs of leaders for neoclassical realism, see Devlen and Özdamar, "Neoclassical Realism," 138.

Foulon, bridges the three divides: the spatial (domestic-international), the temporal (present-future) but also the cognitive (material-ideational).[17]

Beyond Reynaud visceral dislike of Hitler's regime and his understanding of Nazism's barbaric nature, Reynaud was also guided by what international relations has termed a "strategic culture", in this case a very old pact of the French elites with Britain, dating back to the Cordial Entente and based on the understanding of France's declining relative strength in the face of Germany. This strategic culture is one of the reasons Reynaud's policy was strongly supported by the other Ministers in his Government almost up to the end, even if it meant a possible continuation of the war from outside of Metropolitan France. And yet, the ultimate allied victory, anticipated by these French statesmen committed to the resistance stance, should not blind us to the fact that in June 1940, this "strategic culture" was hindering their objective assessment of both systemic–international imperatives and power capabilities, and domestic forces.

This is not to say that Reynaud was completely oblivious to the domestic forces at play. The opposition of the Army is noted and accounts at a given moment for his failure to dismiss Weygand. The immense popularity and ascendant of Marshal Pétain over the French public opinion is also understood by Reynaud, and accounts for his failure to leave him out of his reshuffled Cabinet on June 5th, and his failure to reshuffle it again and exclude Pétain once the Victor of Verdun rebels against his policy. But instead of adapting his policy to that of the armistice, he chooses to gain time, hoping that Weygand's and Pétain's formal subordination to his authority will somehow neutralize them. When this is patently no longer the case, from June 12th onward, he chooses to gain time by avoiding a "decision" within the closed doors of the Council of Ministers, hoping somehow that events would procure him some formula for a politically palatable exit from France.

Lobell's theory of the FPE principally addresses adjustments in foreign policy that materialize over time, with time for political accommodations and for a diverse set of influence groups to be able to set into motion and effectively lobby a given government. But the model is equally valid for a fast evolving existential/survival

[17] Michiel Foulon, "Neoclassical Realism: Challengers and Bridging Identities." *International Studies Review* 17, no. 4 (2015): 653.

crisis, only the tempo varies and the interests and desires of the different national groups simply have to be rapidly deduced through an assessment of available data: and there could be no doubt as to the wishes of the French army and of the millions of displaced civilians on the routes of France by June 16th, 1940!

In the last days of his government, Reynaud had understood that he could not force his ministers to embark for Algiers without obtaining first a capitulation of the French army that would put an end to a now senseless bloodshed in Metropolitan France, or without first asking Germany for armistice conditions and as long as those conditions proved patently dishonorable and damaging for France. In Bordeaux, as we have already seen, he did not have the (real) power to produce a military capitulation by the Army, and instead of working to enquire Germany's armistice conditions, he chose to play for time. Pressed by an ever stronger and more assertive armistice faction, headed by France's most loved and most prestigious soldier, he opted for a sort of legal "coup d'état", through the designation of a new Cabinet that could be purged of its pro-armistice elements. The constitutional legality of Reynaud's intended move could not have been challenged had President Lebrun supported it (together with the presidents of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies).

As Yves Bouthillier mentions in his memoirs, the Council of Ministers could not claim to represent the French parliament and consequently the French nation, and a decision to dismiss some of the ministers if backed by President Lebrun and, at a later stage, legitimized by a vote of confidence from a recognized quorum of the parliament, would have been, formally or constitutionally speaking, a legitimate exercise.[18] If we chose to call it an intended "legal coup d'état" it is because the move

[18] Yves Bouthillier, *Le Drame de Vichy. T. I: Face à l'Ennemi, Face à l'Allié* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1950), 89: *One must be very ignorant to believe that the Council of Ministers was qualified, in any way, to replace Parliament. Under the Third Republic, the President of the Council, invested by the President of the Republic, received by a vote of confidence from the Chamber of Deputies, the mandate to exercise the government function under the control of Parliament. A deliberation of the Council of Ministers is, for the government, an internal matter. If certain ministers do not agree with the opinion of the President of the Council, they resign. So, one of two things. Or the President of the Council replaces them and it will be up to Parliament to say, during the nearest debate, who got the better of the president or the ministers who left. Or the President of the Council resigns himself and the President of the Republic appoints a personality who constitutes a cabinet, then presents himself before the Chambers. It is a fact that on Sunday June 16, the President of the Council did not take the first course, but the second*.

would by no means have been seen as fair-play by the now powerful armistice faction and even by some of the "resistance" ministers won over to the Chautemps formula. Nor would it have solved the issue of the demands of the French army that would have needed to be silenced through determined and energetic measures, assuming this was possible.

It is not easy to imagine this pretended "Committee of Public Safety" Cabinet, as Leca calls it, being installed without a strong resistance by Pétain, Weygand, the Army and a strong opposition from the French people towards self-styled resistants that were, in effect, preparing to exit the French metropolitan territory while the French population was being left, by them, to endure German occupation (and German POW camps, for France's soldiers).

The complexity of this scenario, although never avowed by the opponents of the armistice, is perhaps one of the elements that led so many anti-armistice politicians and academics to question the sincerity of Reynaud's determination to head such a resistance Cabinet and to believe, rather, that France's four principal authorities, Lebrun, Reynaud, Jeannenay and Herriot were all secretly betting on a failure of an armistice *démarche* by Pétain that could permit them to re-take hold of the Government and recreate a national unity of sorts, behind a decision to take the fight to the colonies. This supposed "policy" needed no prior agreement between the four statesmen and the sequence of events like the dialogues they present in their respective memoirs regarding their last, fateful, meeting, on the night of June 16th, need not be contested for this theory to ring true, with Lebrun accepting to play the role of the "villain", simply because he was more affected by the majority feeling behind the Chautemps proposal, and by the Army's call for a "decision".

4.3 On the Functioning of Elites and Institutions in an Existential-Survival Crisis

In the previous chapter, we saw how Paul Reynaud had applied his own policy during his May 26th trip to London, a policy as we saw in line with the needs of Winston Churchill, at the time engaged in a contest with Halifax, but disregarding the

call of his colleagues of the French War Committee[19] (*Comité de Guerre*), on May 25th, for a frank exchange with Britain, one taking into consideration France's real predicament, military-wise, the ostensible reason for the trip.[20] Something similar happened on his return to France when the Council of Ministers, on Foreign Minister Daladier's initiative, deliberated on May 27th on eventual concessions to Italy, but with Reynaud making sure to limit these concessions when the moment came to actually submit proposals to the Italians. It is thus that he blocks projected telegrams by Daladier offering eventual concessions on the Somali Coast, between Libya and the Congo coast, eventually regarding the status of Tunisia, and most of all a conference on Mediterranean issues. He did this with the help of the Quai d'Orsay's Secretary General François Charles-Roux, but also of General Weygand and Marshal Pétain, in order not to antagonise London, most of all avoiding the only issue eventually capable of any success with Mussolini:[21] the idea of a conference on Mediterranean issues (but that

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[19] Paul Baudouin, *Neuf Mois au Gouvernement (Avril-Décembre 1940)* (Paris: Éditions de la Table Ronde, 1948), 92: *Paul Reynaud asked the English to agree to the internalization of Suez, Gibraltar and Malta, in order to be able to urgently initiate negotiations with Italy. Halifax agreed. Churchill took shelter behind the War Cabinet which must give a response tomorrow. I ask Mr Paul Reynaud: "What did you say about the need where we may soon be to stop the battle? Under what conditions will the English release us from our word? "I was not able to ask this question" he replied. I told him that he was wrong, that he did not fulfil the mission with which he had been charged by the War Committee, and that the longer we wait to resolve this question, the more difficult it will be to find a solution*.

[20] The mood of the *Comité de Guerre,* on May 25th, clearly stands out from the stenographic records, as published by Reynaud himself: Paul Reynaud, *Au Coeur de la Mêlée, 1930-1945* (Paris: Flammarion, 1951), 589*: Mr Paul Reynaud declares that he will go to London tomorrow, that he will clearly explain the situation to the English, the inequality of the fight one against three and that, nevertheless, the French government is ready to support it even if it should no longer be anything other than a struggle for honor. He will consider with the English what the situation would be, Paris being taken. He recognizes that England can tell us: You are bound by your signature. You must fight even without hope. (...) General Weygand intervenes to point out that it is necessary to ask London the question of the total destruction of the French forces, which would inevitably occur if the French army had to fight to the end to save honor. We must, in fact, preserve the means of keeping the country in order. What troubles would not occur if the last organized forces, that is to say the army, were to be destroyed? To conclude, the general said: We must find out (where) England (stands) on all these questions. The President of the Council gives his agreement*.

[21] Even this idea was not sure to produce any effect on Mussolini by this stage, as proven by the apparent Italian lack of interest for Halifax's proposal, emanating from his conversation with Ambassador Bastianini. See Reynaud, *Au Coeur*, 611: *In London, Lord Halifax having received no response from Count Bastianini to his opening on the 25th, (he) had Ciano questioned by Sir Percy Lorraine. Ciano replied that he had, in fact, received a*

could be understood as possibly expanding to a European one), ideas being explored by Halifax, as he well knew, and suggested at one point by France's Ambassador to Rome, François-Poncet.

Both in London and on his return to Paris, Reynaud steered clear of this idea, concentrating instead on possible concessions to Italy, to be made in exchange for Rome's neutrality, and to be delivered only once allied victory was assured,[22] not an appealing concept to Fascist Italy, as would soon be proved, but one that had the advantage of making the French Ministers believe they were being consulted and that some formula was being devised. Finally, Daladier would submit a watered down note to the Italians, but only after Reynaud had first obtained the agreement of the British ally.[23]

We have seen that from his position as President of the Council (and Foreign Minister and Defense Minister) Reynaud had access to information of capital value to the other ministers of the Cabinet, which he wilfully chose not to share with them, sometimes distorting the truth. He simply shrugged off the warnings of Weygand and Pétain in early June, hoping that their natural obedience would silence, for a time, their different perception of the national interest.

On June 13th, he fails to materialize the invitation of the Council of Ministers for Churchill to discuss the situation with the French Ministers, thus showing blatant disregard for the Council's decisions. He then went on to use his decision to call for America to join the war, to avoid any effective decision by the Council of Ministers regarding the issue of the armistice on the pretext that they needed to wait for Roosevelt's answer.

But what better example of his deception tactics than his hiding from his colleagues, on June 16th, Churchill's conditional acceptance of the French Cabinet's request to enquire armistice conditions from Germany (under the condition that the

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telegram from Bastianini on this subject, but that this overture fell, from now on, under the general embargo placed by Mussolini on any discussion, of any nature, with the Allies (...).

[22] Reynaud, *Au Coeur,* 601.

[23] François Charles-Roux, *Cinq Mois Tragiques aux Affaires Étrangère (21 Mai-1er Novembre 1940)* (Paris: Plon, 1949), 14-17. Reynaud, *Au Coeur*, 615.

French fleet be sent to Britain)?[24] Of course, Churchill back-tracked on his offer, but only at the insistence of De Gaulle and Monnet, Reynaud's agents, through the acceptance by the British government of the Franco-British Union it had so far discarded, and ultimately at the insistence of Reynaud himself (through Campbell and Spears). Is it too far-fetched to think that a more transparent flow of information could have led to some form of understanding at a time when this understanding was so important to both powers? Failure to obtain a British acceptance of Chautemps' proposal to enquire armistice conditions (the ostensible reason for Reynaud's continuation in power on the night of the 15th of June), his patronage of a Franco-British Union project that no other French minister respected as worthy of addressing, and his subsequent failed efforts to bring back the debate in the Council of Ministers to the issue of continuing the fight from Africa versus an armistice that was shameful in his eyes, when to the majority of his Ministers this debate had been superseded by the Chautemps proposal, finished with what little credit Reynaud still had amongst some of these Ministers.

In any case, to the more intransigent resistance-minded elements of the Cabinet, such as Mandel, or Marin, Reynaud was unfit for the clear-cut revolutionary decisions needed, foremost among them the need to embark and continue the resistance from Algiers, from the French colonies or from London. To the others, and they included ministers in favor or against the armistice but who all believed it necessary to explore Hitler's conditions, Reynaud had acted deceitfully and lost precious time that was being paid for with the blood of French soldiers and civilians.

We saw how a certain measure of "deceit" was necessary for the conduction of a successful foreign policy under France's Third Republic control systems.[25] Riccardo Tomada refers to the importance of "executive autonomy" from the point of view of international relations, indeed from the point of view of a neoclassical realist analysis: (…) *policy leaders are dependant not only on systemic-level factors but are also sensitive to the quantity of executive autonomy. It is executive autonomy that*

[24] See Reynaud, *Au Coeur*, 830-831: *I informe the Council of the results of the mission with which the majority entrusted me the day before (with respect) to the British government. I indicate that the latter first gave conditional consent, then took it back.*

[25] Ripsman, "The Politics," 194.

crucially permits ideological, nationalist, and bureaucratic tools to be implemented over the short-medium term to orchestrate the temporality of reform or to promptly react to systemic imperatives (…).[26]

Indeed, in normal times, a great deal of latitude is left to the leadership that by-passes the natural controls to foreign policy. We could even go further and say that until June 12th, some of the French Ministers were willing bystanders, willingly dedicated to menial issues if we regard them in conjunction with the overall conduction of the war. All the more so if we consider they were, right up to June 12th, for the most part, in line with Reynaud's policy of utmost resistance, even if it implied that the government had to be transferred abroad. François Delpla describes it thus: *Reynaud hardly assembled his new cabinet formed on June 5th: only on the 9th. He never consulted it on anything: on the 9th, he simply announced the departure of the government from Paris*.[27]

To a certain extent, and providing things went relatively smoothly, through cumulating the functions of President of the Council, Minister for War and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Reynaud could hope to keep a close grip on the overall conduction of the war without any real control or surveillance by the Council of Ministers or the Parliament. He didn't even have to contend with a War Cabinet in the British sense, as his War Committee (*Comité de Guerre*) was rarely summoned, and his daily conferences with Pétain, Weygand and later Darlan were not opened to other members of the Government or of the bureaucracy. But what if things went brutally wrong as becomes clearly manifest when the Generalissimo concluded France was militarily defeated and demanded an armistice?

What about times of crisis, a crisis of an existential-survival nature, with the normally subservient "controlling" elements or elites realizing that they too stand to lose directly, existentially speaking, if such a crisis aggravates? In any case, they realize they will be subjected to severe forms of public scrutiny, what some social

[26] Ricardo Tomada, "Does Neoclassical Realism Provide a Compelling Approach to Military Change?," *E-International Relations*, last modified March 17, 2015, https://www.e-ir.info/2015/03/17/does-neoclassical-realism-provide-a-compelling-approach-to-military-change/.

[27] François Delpla, *Churchill et les Français. Six Homes Dans la Tourmente, Septembre 1939-Juin 1940* (Paris: Éditions François-Xavier de Guibert, 2010), 480.

scientists have termed “retrospective voting or sanctioning”. What of civic virtues or patriotism, when the very survival of a state and a community is at stake? In studying the genesis of the armistice, too much emphasis has been given always to conspiracy theories that tend to explain away the decision-making process leading to the armistice as the product of a failing of the men and institutions in charge. At the same time, too little light has been shed on the obvious counter-explanation: that in times of a survival crisis, national elites and institutions can, in effect, waken to their duties.

Is it not normal to presume that under survival-threatening conditions, elites might find the strength to fully assume their nominal responsibilities? These responsibilities and formal attributions are often watered down in normal times, monopolized by the stronger elements in an administration, such as a President or a Prime Minister, or carried out by middle or even upper echelons of an administration but with a high level of subservience to the top authorities, even at the risk of jeopardizing state or community interests. It is a normal behaviour in any bureaucracy!

But in times of an existential crisis, these responsibilities can naturally be reassumed by certain elites or institutions in search of their self-interest and also of what they perceive as the common good, even if it means defying certain power structures if those power structures do not seem to be functioning in pursuit of their interpretation of the said common good.

We can think of other examples such as the fall of Mussolini in July 1943, through a coup d’état by the monarchy and the army – following a revolt of the Fascist elites on the night of the Great Council of Fascism, 24-25th of July 1943 – precisely because the Duce was trying to prolong a war that no longer seemed sustainably for Italy. We can also think of the fall of Kerensky’s discredited provisional government through Lenin’s revolution and an even better example is the Halifax-Churchill dispute in May-June 1940, where some elites seemed poised to abandon Churchill who only manages to win through the “miracle” of Dunkirk, which actually changed the international-systemic equation as well as the institutional-domestic mood, as the days preceding the said “miracle” were clouded by the prospects of a Nazi victory.

In the case of this study the alluded power structures are represented by Reynaud, Herriot and Jeanneney, and to a certain extent by the President of the Republic Lebrun. The “contesting elites” are represented by: Weygand and the Army;

Darlan and the Navy; by Pétain, Chautemps, Frossard and the other Ministers that follow their lead; by part of Reynaud's inner circle, among them two members of the Council of Ministers, Baudouin and Bouthillier, but also others like Villelume and Hélène de Portes; the Commander of the Bordeaux Military region General Joseph Lafont who in effect manages not to deliver to the Interior Minister Georges Mandel the army of *Gardes Mobiles* that Mandel was requesting;[28] by parliamentarians such as Reibel[29] or Laval who actively lobby for an armistice in the anti-chambers of power and by the Mayor of Bordeaux, Adrien Marquet, who had also installed an axis of power in favor of the armistice from his Mayor's office. But in the period in question, they were "rebellious" only in so far as their conception of national interest had come to differ from that of the "resistance" faction and went against Reynaud's policies that in turn were perceived by these elites as going counter to the obvious international systemic realities - Nazi Germany's temporary victory and apparent overwhelming hold on the European continent - and counter to the domestic forces, foremost the Armed Forces, while at the same time anaesthetizing French public opinion with respect to the extent of France's military defeat (as exemplified in Reynaud's June 13th speech to the French nation)[30].

This is not to say that these contesting elites are acting unconstitutionally or illegally, one cannot even accuse them of being disloyal to Reynaud, though he often complained they were. Once in power, Pétain (thanks to Laval's manoeuvring) would obtain full powers from the parliament and his administration would drive the nation on a path to dictatorship and collaboration with the Axis powers. Both the armistice and

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[28] Louis-Georges Planes and Robert Dufour, *Bordeaux Capitale Tragique! et la Base Navale de Bordeaux-le Verdon, Mai-Juin 1940* (Paris: Éditions Médicis, 1956), 95-97.

[29] It was not possible to expand this study to give an idea of the multiple *demarches* that Senator Charles Reibel makes in favor of the armistice right up to the last days of Reynaud's Bordeaux Government, transmitting the views of military leaders such as Weygand and Georges not only to other parliamentarians, but also lobbying French Ministers and President Lebrun himself: Charles Reibel, *Pourquoi et Comnent fut Decide la Demande d'Armistice (10-17 Juin 1940)* (Vanves: Imprimerie Kapp, 1940).

[30] For the text of the speech see: Reynaud, *Au Coeur*, 785-786. Of course, no war leader will publicize the full extent of a military defeat when that military struggle is still on-going, but Reynaud's claim that he had clearly proclaimed his resolution to continue the struggle hides the fact that had not prepared the Nation or the Armed Forces for an abandonment of the metropolis by the Government.

Pétain's dictatorship and collaborationist regime are phenomena fuelled by a very strong anti-parliamentary current that cut across all of French society, even amongst the political class, and that sees the defeat of 1940 as a sort of consequence of the political bickering of the French Third Republic. They are nevertheless two separate and distinct phenomena in French history, something instinctively understood by the French public at large, but not so in the Anglo-Saxon world (or in the Gaullist credo) that has, deliberately, amalgamated them.[31]

The neoclassical realist scholar, Nicholas Kitchen, has explained that by taking into account the strength of ideational factors - and we saw what an important place was given to ideology and anti-Nazism in the minds of Reynaud or Mandel - it is conceivable for a state to embark upon a policy that at some point defies some of the international-systemic realities: but Kitchen does not consider this phenomena to be sustainable: *this neoclassical realist theory does not deny that a state might place such ideas at the very heart of its policy making and so choose to pursue a contra-realist grand strategy. However, it does contend that the likelihood of that strategy being either maintained or successfully implemented is exceptionally unlikely*.[32] Gustav Meibauer also follows this line of thought: *If ideas that contradict given state interests permanently captured the foreign policy process, or their competition became so pronounced as to produce persistent stasis, neoclassical realists would expect (at least over the long term) foreign policy failures that can negatively affect relative power and ultimately risk state survival*.[33] The same Meibauer writes: *Indeed, if decision-makers*

[31] Yves Bouthillier puts it thus: *We know well that we only want to see the armistice as a double prelude to a coup d'état and to the policy of "collaboration" with the enemy. But that confuses everything. Not a single one of the ministers of June 16th thought of a constitutional reform. Marshal Pétain thought about it himself so little that he was astounded by P. Laval's projects, which were to result, as we know, in the law of July 10th, 1940. Not a single one of the ministers of June 16th could have conceived of "collaboration" with the occupier, in the hated sense that this term has taken. Nothing has ever linked the armistice to a revision of the 1875 constitution, nor to any cooperation between France and Germany, nor to the supposedly uncertain fate of British arms. The armistice agreement was the necessary conclusion to a military situation with no other way out (...).* (Bouthillier, *Le Drame*, 130).

[32] Nicholas Kitchen, "Systemic Pressures and Domestic Ideas: A Neoclassical Realist Model of Grand Strategy Formation," *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 1 (2010): 139.

[33] Gustav Meibauer, "Interests, Ideas, and the Study of State Behaviour in Neoclassical Realisms," *Review of International Studies* 46, no. 1 (2020): 35.

come to hold ideas that deviate too much from objective reality, that is, if the state is co-opted by parochial ideation, they risk strategic failure because the system's material reality persists and punishes continued digression".[34]

Of course, one could contend that Nazi Germany's aggressive expansion in the period surrounding 1940 was an international power grab that in itself defied international-systemic realities, as it relied on the resources of a unreliable quasi-ally (the Soviet Union), on the problematic assumption of an absolute defeat of Britain or of a British "change of mood" somewhere along the line, and on the uneasy neutrality of the world's largest industrial power (the United States).

One of the authors dealing with the armistice that has actually tried to develop this theory is Maurice Schumann, *Un certain 18 juin*. Paris, 1980. For example, he argues that on June 19th, the German Ambassador to Moscow anticipated the imminent annexation of Bessarabia by the Soviet Union. Schumann signals out that as the Bordeaux government prepared to sign the armistice, the course of the Anglo-German war was becoming uncertain and that the contours of the future Russo-German war were beginning to appear. In the early hours of June 19th, German Ambassador to Moscow count von Schulenberg informed Berlin that Molotov had informed him of the measures (annexation) that the Soviets would be taking in relation to the Baltic state.[35] He described the predispositions and efforts of general Noguès in Morocco to continue the war on the allied side.[36] He dwelled on the Japanese impasse in China and how, in July of 1940, the determined Henry L. Stimson entered Roosevelt's team as Secretary of War, etc.[37] By a brilliant portrayal of the coalition mounting, burgeoning, against the Axis on June 18th , Schumann also seeks to explain and acclaim De Gaulle's anti-armistice stance on the date of the Free French leader's first proclamation: *We have proof of this: De Gaulle, on June 18th, did not know everything notable that was happening in London, even when he was personally involved. A fortiori could he only be ignorant of the course of events which were taking place or being prepared in Washington; Munich, Tokyo or Moscow. Now, if he had known them down to the*

[34] Meibauer, "Interests," 28.
[35] Maurice Schumann, *Un Certain 18 Juin* (Paris: Éditions Plon, 1980), 41-42.
[36] Ibid., 239-241.
[37] Ibid., 207-208.

details, he would not have added a single word to the Call, he would not have taken away an iota, he would have kept every intonation. This act of disobedience - although born from a rebellious heart - was first of all an act of obedience to History. A challenge to destiny, but dictated by common sense, that is to say by the art of divining the world.[38]

And yet, although in hindsight we may see Nazi Germany's international power grab as an act of hubris, with the turning of the tide not so far away from the month of June 1940 that set the stage for the armistice, this was not the prevalent feeling among French leaders and the French people whose reading, by that time, of both systemic and domestic capacities ran counter to the resistance policy advocated by Reynaud, because they were based on a different, more restricted time-frame, as the circumstances and France's material and moral strengths seemed to dictate.

This study contends that as leaders and regimes put the very existence of a state at risk through the pursuit of contra-systemic policies - as we consider to be the case with Reynaud's policy of "resistance to the utmost" – the natural corollary for that is for elites who are somehow part of the state apparatus and definitely at risk of being harshly sanctioned for their association or apparent association with the regime and its prevailing policies – and in so far as they are aware of the impending doom –to naturally seek their own survival and the survival of the state they serve at the risk of defying the leaders, their policies and their political credo. It further contends that such a situation naturally creates feelings of mixed-loyalties where the individual players naturally look for their own survival and ideally to promote their interpretation of the common good.

The outcome of these elite contestations and their nature can of course vary. In the case of the Churchill-Halifax dispute, the contesting elites were subdued by the British Prime Minister. In the case of the armistice, the movement was successful and (initially) remained within the scope of the Third Republic's traditional political *modus operandi*, with the designation of Pétain as President of the Council by the President of the Republic Albert Lebrun. In the case of the fall of Mussolini, clearly there was an effort at keeping appearances, with the Grand Council of Fascism approving a motion to bolster the Kings wartime prerogatives, and with King Emanuel III naming a new

[38] Schumann, *Un Certain,* 275. The paragraph is brilliantly written. One is almost tempted to ask why then did Maurice Schumann integrate Pétain's first ministerial cabinet, which approved the armistice *démarche* on the night of June 16th?

Prime Minister in the person of Badoglio, but this goes hand-in hand with the arrest of Mussolini and a purge of the Fascist elements within the administration that could be described as a counter-revolution.

When the commanders of France's main army formations engaged in the fight against the German onslaught met with General Georges on June 15th, and signed a petition to the Government urgently requesting an armistice, they were not plotting against the Republic; they were informing the Government of France's true military situation and how they envisioned an exit to the crisis (which is not to say that had they acted in this sense earlier and individually they would not have been dismissed by a political authority that acted with severity after the collapse of the front at Sedan).

When Weygand talked to the Council of Ministers and asked the government to enquire armistice conditions, he was not trying to bring down the Republic or committing a treasonable act: he was giving his military assessment and his view of how the crisis ~~should~~ had to be solved according to the Armed Forces (though in any case a dangerous advice to give for his position as Generalissimo, were he not backed-up by the upper echelons of the Army). When Pétain declared on the 13th that he would not abandon French soil whatever the Government decided, he was not overstepping his prerogatives as a vice-president of the Council, he was expressing a legitimate paternalistic and protective love for his homeland, though with a ruthless warning to Ministers who had to choose exile, at such a moment.[39]

Here, inevitably, we are forced to ponder on the extraordinary and exceptional characteristics of the two main leaders of the armistice movement in June 1940, General Weygand and Marshal Pétain (or the exceptional political skills of Chautemps for that matter), and, simultaneously, on the very natural, matter of fact nature of the pro-armistice factions that they headed, both at the military and political levels. Was the armistice possible without these two soldier-statesmen? And if not, does this mean that Reynaud's bid for a continuance of the struggle from abroad stood a fair chance of success without them?

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[39] Philippe Simonot, without necessarily contesting the legitimacy of Pétain's conduct, does contend that his intervention on June 13th constitutes what he calls a "soft coup d'état" ("*from now on, besides the Reynaud government, a Pétain government is formed*" (Philippe Simonot, *Le Secret de l'Armistice 1940* (Paris: Plon, 1990), 155-156).

To some this will remain, as it has been for more than 80 years, something of an open question, for if on the one side, we stress the extraordinary timing, resolve and adroitness of the two soldiers,[40] and this once they had first mustered their supporters as well as within an extremely tight timeline, as the slightest delay could have substantially diminished the value of the armistice in Hitler's eyes (possibly making Reynaud's policy a domestically viable solution again, at some point), on the other, we have the enormous resources of France, both within and outside the *métropole* coupled with the French people's apparent natural rejection of the "sacrificial policy", as Emmanuel Berl has fairly coined Reynaud's policy of utmost resistance (but again a rejection that makes itself obvious only in the last few days of the crisis!). If we follow Berl's idea of a nation opposed to – indeed incapable of – Reynaud's "sacrificial policy"[41] and yet still with the military resources for an arrangement with France to be

[40] Some may contest the notion that these soldier-statesmen acted with adroitness. For example, some conservative writers have wondered whether Weygand should not have insisted earlier on an armistice, before the Franco-German choc on the Somme and Aisne, from June 5th onward; but is the notion reasonable considering the avowed policy of Reynaud, almost uncontested until then, except for the deliberations of the May 25th French War Committee? Others have stressed Weygand's lack of empathy with the Ministers, his histrionics and lack of self-control. But he does manage to force the Council of Ministers to seize itself of the matter at hand at the right moment: sooner he would have been simply weighed down by the pro-resistance Ministers, later he might have been too late to obtain satisfactory armistice conditions. Most of all, he does this having first obtained the backing and loyalty of the top echelons of the French Army. As to Marshal Pétain, historians tend to emphasise his *gaffe* on June 17th when prematurely asking French soldiers to "lay down their arms", a mistake that caused confusion and helped accelerate the German advance (and capture of prisoners). And yet, until June 16th, his interventions are brilliantly timed and have an almost paralysing effect on the pro-resistance Ministers, as I believe we have shown in this essay.

[41] In 1976, admiral Gabriel Auphan gave the following testimony during a television debate in France: *I am the last survivor of the French maritime high command, the deputy and then the successor of Admiral Darlan at the head of the navy until November 1942 and also the confidant that the Marshal sent to General de Gaulle in August 44 to attempt to reconcile the French in the truth for their common good. And I'm in the same state of mind. In these various capacities, I was witness to things that I am happy, thanks to you, to be able to say to the French (people) (…) I was a witness that the Franco-British commitment of March 28th not to make a separate peace was not a solemn pact as Churchill wrote, but a simple press release of limited scope and mainly for internal use. I was a witness that (…) on May 27th, mandated by General Weygand and Admiral Darlan, to support the bridgehead (at Dunkirk) and not to evacuate it, I found the English beginning to re-embark without having informed us, a rupture of alliance prior to our own request for an armistice. You see, the English withdrew their marbles without the Americans putting any into the game and we were alone in the face of Nazism and Communism, (both) united! We must not forget it. Our*

sufficiently enticing for Germany, then we cannot explain away this episode through the apparent genius of the Pétain-Weygand "team" and the apparent "incompetence" of the Reynaud-Mandel team, even if many authors, if not most, have indeed stressed Reynaud's shortcomings.

What if Weygand had not been generalissimo in June 1940, how would a different commander have reacted, for example, generals Georges, Huntziger, Réquin, Touchon, Frère, Héring, Besson or Doumenc? How would any of them have reacted in a similar situation? Of course, we do not have an insight into their minds, save perhaps that most of them signed the position paper in favor of the armistice on June 15th mentioned above[42] but if we follow Tolstoy's classic, determinist theory of political commitments,[43] and we recall the need to care for more than 3 million men in arms as

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civilian leaders, I witnessed it, and General De Gaulle himself with his Bretton redoubt, were swimming in unrealism. The transport of the French army to Africa, which has been talked about so much, was a utopia. Example, on June 15th, President Paul Reynaud asked us to transport 500,000 men to Africa, without being able to tell us where and when such a human mass would be assembled. We answered we will see for 500,000, let's start with 30,000 men and we brought together 8 large troop transports in the region of La Palice, Bordeaux, Le Verdons. Two are sunk, there were losses, it doesn't matter, but when our boats were assembled, when our armada was ready, with its air and naval escort, we could barely find a few people to put on board, that was all. (...) The capitulation of the army alone would have doubled the number of prisoners of war, plunged the metropolis into anarchy and attracted the Germans to Africa, later preventing the American landing. (...) This solution (can seem) perhaps comparable to the Belgian solution (...) I must say that Belgium was not at all in the same situation as France. France had an Empire. The capitulation led the German army into our Empire. It is a fact. I believe that all the military at the time recognized this. In addition, France only lived under occupation with significant maritime supplies. Basically, half of what the French ate until 1943 was imported by sea. What other solution were we offered than the Belgian capitulation? The Churchill solution: June 11 in Briar, fighting town by town, street by street, house by house, etc., it was, if you like, endless guerrilla warfare, exhaustion, and today I would call it genocide. Demographically, the armistice saved our country on the contrary, because Marshal Pétain was confronted with it. This was his fundamental concern. If, after the bloodletting of the first war we had had to endure another one as drastic, well, France would have been emptied and there would not be so many of us talking about it this evening. So, the French solution, we found no other, it was the armistice in honor, I call honor, an essential condition of honor, the non-surrender of the fleet (…). *Témoignage de l'amiral Gabriel Auphan á l'émission "Dossiers de l'écran"* (mai 1976) INA Histoire, "Les Dossiers de L'Ecran: Pétain | Archive INA," YouTube, March 31, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cTkZ70SRViU.

[42] Claude Paillat, *Le Désastre de 1940, T. III, La Guerre éclair, 10 Mai-24 Juin 1940* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1985), 519.

[43] See Leon Tolstoy, *War and Peace, Vol. VI* (New York: Crowell, 1889), 278: "*So that if we consider the position of a man in whose case the connection with the external world is best known, when the world is the period of time between our judgment and the act is*

well as the need to feed and shelter more than 10 million displaced Frenchmen and refugees on the routes of France, the logical answer can only be the armistice. In Tolstoy's theory there is always a measure of Freedom and a measure of Necessity in a man's acts, but the more powerful a man is, the more he is constrained by the elements that produce that power, the groups that sustain it, and consequently the lesser the real Freedom in the acts of such a man.[44]

What if Pétain had not been vice-président of the Council in June 1940? Could we not presume that some of the actors who actually reacted to Reynaud's *nonchalant* style towards the Council of Ministers, perhaps we should say his deceitfulness, the Chautemps, Frossards, Bouthilliers and others would have likewise reacted and, at some point placed the debate on the same issue as Pétain and Weygand: the legitimacy or illegitimacy of abandoning metropolitan French territory in the nation's darkest hour?

And what of the other great, but less talked about, figure of the armistice? What of Admiral Darlan? No one doubts that by positioning itself on the side of the armistice, the French fleet had made more viable an "honorable armistice" as neutralizing Europe's second fleet was well worth some concessions from Germany's part. But what if Reynaud had not antagonized him, asking for impossible movements of troops across the Mediterranean? What if Pétain had not tried to bribe him with the prospect of making him a triumvir or a First Consul?[45] Would he still have sided with the armistice, or finished his career with a gesture of "splendid indiscipline" and sailed with his fleet to Britain as he said he would, in case the Germans tried to get their hands on his fleet?[46] Of course, the issue of not surrendering the French fleet was paramount. But once Pétain and Weygand had assured him that it would never be surrendered, could the sailor Darlan ignore that the French infantryman, artilleryman, tank

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the very greatest possible and the causes of the act most accessible, then we shall gain a conception of the most perfect necessity and the least possible Freedom (…)".

[44] Tolstoy, *War and Peace*.

[45] Couteau-Bégarie, Hervé et Huan, Claude, *Darlan* (Paris: Fayard, 1989), 228-238; 255-257. These authors do not believe that Pétain's offer of a Ministry was the deciding factor, but rather Darlan's belief in the indefensibility of North Africa in June 1940. See also Robert O. Paxton, "Darlan, un Amiral Entre Deux Blocs. Réflexions sur une Biographie Récente," *Vingtième Siècle, Revue d'Histoire* Année no. 36 (1992): 6.

[46] Jules Moloch, *Rencontres avec…Darlan et Eisenhower* (Paris: Plon, 1968), 138.

commander or captain manning a fort on the Maginot line, were also his comrades in arms and that if he abandoned them he would condemn three million of them to captivity in German POW camps? Could any commander in charge of the French Navy ignore this?

What of Reynaud? Did he lose his window of opportunity as Chautemps and others seem to suggest, for not having had the Council of Ministers approve a political decision to abandon French soil and continue the war from abroad at an earlier date, say before abandoning Paris? Had this measure been taken at such an earlier date, who is to say that Pétain would not have reacted? And had it been taken with a Council of Ministers expurgated of the hero of Verdun, who is to say that the decision would have been enough to overrule the objections of the military establishment in times of war? Was not the March 28th agreement with Great Britain eventually ignored once it collided with France's vital, existential interests? As to the issue of the March 28th agreement, it has been treated by Pierre Chandelier who, among other arguments, cites the jurist Jean Leca in order to explain, through the "state of necessity" formula, the irrelevance of the March 28th, 1940 agreement: *the exception of necessity is a rule in international law which allows a State to suspend the execution of its conventional obligations if these directly hinder, without the treaty having expressly provided for it, the exercise by the State of its essential skills which condition its existence as a subject of international law*.[47]

For over eight decades, Reynaud's management of the crisis has been criticised by partisans and opponents of the armistice alike and, after the war, he made sure never to leave any attack on his person unanswered. But there is a strong ambivalence in his stance that to this day remains at the heart of the issue. If, as he claimed, he was so decided to reshuffle his cabinet and continue the war then why did he not materialize Weygand's dismissal, as was his prerogative? If, on the other hand, as he mentions in his memoirs, his hands were tied by the overwhelming ascendency of Marshal Pétain over French public opinion, then how could he suppose that the President of the Republic could follow his scheme for a cabinet reshuffle (and a corresponding departure for Algiers) in defiance of the support shown for the

[47] Chandelier, *La Défaite,* 74.

Chautemps proposal? The apparent ease with which Reynaud, Herriot and Jeannenay in effect submitted to Lebrun's decision – with Reynaud resigning - is difficult to understand other than as a tacit avowal that the President of the Republic's choice, in effect, reflected the will of France's political forces, as represented in the Council of Ministers.

Bernard Legoux has stressed the wording of Reynaud's telegram to Churchill on the night of June 15th, transmitting on behalf of the Government the Chautemps proposal as instructed by the Council of Ministers, specially the reference to the departure of the government as seen by the people as a desertion, and explained how this telegram showed that a departure scenario would be impossible to "pull-off" or "sell" (*vendre*) to the French people: *The Council of Ministers held this afternoon estimated that at a time when the enemy is on the verge of occupying the entire country, inflicting incredible privations and suffering on the French nation, the departure of the government would be considered by the people as desertion. It could provoke violent reactions in the public, unless it has previously been demonstrated that the peace conditions imposed by Hitler and Mussolini are unacceptable, because contrary to the vital interest and honor of France* (...)".[48]

Of course, Reynaud was executing a mandate of the Council, à *démarche* he had steadfastly opposed and a proposal he transmitted with no enthusiasm. Even so, the wording was his and with this wording must have come the realization that, beyond the opposition of part of the Council of Ministers, he was limited also (in his desire to embark for Algiers or London) by his own responsibilities as Head of Government to the French people.

It was all very well for De Gaulle to say that all that mattered was to move to Algiers or London. Until June 16th, De Gaulle was shielded by the mission given to him by Reynaud to negotiate with the British a transfer of French troops to Africa. More than that, he was shielded by his own apparent insignificance with respect to the on-going battle.[49] Later on, De Gaulle would come to incarnate the spirit of the fighting

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[48] Legoux, *France*, 241-242.

[49] According to Francois Delpla, around June 13th, 1940, De Gaulle contemplated resigning his position as Secretary for War and National Defense (as a form of protest for what he considered the Government's lack of resolution) and reverting to a military

Free French and of the Resistance. One day, he would march on the *Champs-Elysées* to the acclamation of the Parisians and head a provisional government in a liberated France. But on Mid-June 1940, he could not move one bag of cement to the so-called "Brittany redoubt" or one infantryman from Bordeaux or Marseilles to Algiers. In the early hours of June 17th, 1940, he was no longer Secretary for War and National Defense and only a British airplane and his relative insignificance with respect to (and personal detachment from) the on-going battle - be it for the sake of a planetary war or a war of continents looming on the horizon - could permit him to exit the French battleground.[50]

command, but was dissuaded from this by Mandel who argued that the departure of the Government for Algiers was still possible and that, in any case, his official government position would come in handy in the near future (Delpla, *Churchill*, 485-486).

[50] Even so, De Gaulle's departure to London and subsequent calls to the French, through the BBC, to fight on against the Germans, brought about disciplinary measures. On June 22nd, De Gaulle's temporary rank of Brigadier General is annulled by the French Ministry of War. On June 23rd, he is dishonorably retired with the rank of Colonel. On July 4th, 1940, a day after the British attack on the French Fleet at Mers-el-Kébir, the Military Tribunal of the 17th Region sentences colonel De Gaulle to four years in prison and a monetary fine. On August 3, 1940, the Permanent military tribunal of the 11th region, in Clermont-Ferrand, sentenced him *in absentia* to the death penalty, military degradation and confiscation of his property, for treason and desertion. This judgment will be annulled after the Liberation of France, in January 1945.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
GLOSSARY OF FRENCH/LATIN TERMS

a posteriori = after the facts.

a priori = usually "before the facts" but we use it as "in principle".

capitulation en rase champagne = capitulation in an open field. At the time a crime punishable by death according to the French military code, it is a purely military convention, signed on the one side by a defeated military commander who in the act surrenders (on the other side, by the victorious military authority).

combattants = fighters.

comptes-rendus = reports or stenographic notes of meetings.

Conseil supérieur de la guerre = High War Council.

coup d'état = a sudden, unlawful seizure of power.

comité de guerre = War Committee (in the period covered by this study it meets only one time, on May 25th, 1940, presided by the President of the Republic and formed by certain civilian ministers and the heads of the armed forces, Army, Navy, Air Force. Paul Reynaud designated Paul Baudouin to act as its Secretary).

comission d'enquête = Investigative Committee created after the Second World War and ran by the French parliament, it dealt with events that occurred from 1933 to 1945 in search for the reasons and political and military responsibilities behind France's defeat in 1940.

démarche = political step, political initiative or follow-up regarding a given issue.

gardes mobiles = Mobile guards (in France they belong to the Gendarmerie, a sort of military style police, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior).

généralissime = in English, the term Generalissimo is usually used (taken from the Spanish "generalisimo") and means the supreme military commander but designates a military authority (thus different from the role played by the President of the USA as Commander in Chief). In the case of Weygand, he had a (nominal) authority over land, sea and air forces on all continents (and direct command over the Army). The figure of an overall Generalissimo in times of war was contemplated in the French system.

général d'armée = Army General or Full General.

In the French Army hierarchy, "général d'armée" is the highest rank attainable, commanding an Army which in 1940 grouped different Army Corps, themselves grouping/incorporating different army divisions. In 1940, there were 11 armies, each between 80,000 to 150,000-160,000 men each.

matériel = term used for military equipment (in English the French term is usually employed).

métropole = French metropolitan territory. (French metropolitan territory includes European France, including the island of Corsica, as opposed to the French departments in French Algeria and France's colonial possessions or territories under French protectorate).

plaidoyer = advocacy/a lawyers plea.

préfets = Prefects. They represent the highest government authority at the departmental level. They are designated by the President of the Republic and take orders from the Ministry of the Interior.

président du Conseil = President of the Council (in allusion to the "Council of Ministers", title of the Head of Government under the Third Republic. It should be noted that he does not technically preside the "Council of Ministers", presided by the President of the Republic but in an aloof, arbitrator sort of way, while the Head of Government conducts the debates. In case of absence of the President of the Republic, the ministers simply form a Ministerial Cabinet headed by the President of the Council).

vice-président du Conseil = Vice-president of the Council.

résistance à outrance = resistance to the utmost.

secrétaire-général = general secretary. In this case, it designates the Secretary General of the Quai d'Orsay, France's Ministry of External Relations. The Secretary General deals with political and administrative issues/designations. He advises the Minister and also takes decisions in so far as he handles day-to-day issues. The post is always held by an experienced career diplomat.

triumvir = a member of a Triumvirate (in the French system, it often alludes to the Triumvirate installed by Napoleon Bonaparte during the period called the "Consulship", inspired in Roman times.

APPENDIX B

DECISION-MAKERS AND DECISION-INFLUENCERS AND THEIR RESPECTIVE POSITIONS ASSUMED DURING THE JUNE 15-16, 1940 DEBATES INSIDE OR OUTSIDE THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETINGS

Decision-makers and decision-influencers	**Respective positions assumed during the June 15-16, 1940 debates inside or outside the Council of Ministers meetings**
Jules Jeannenay, President of the Senate (not a member of the Council of Ministers)	He was in favor of resistance, even at the cost of transferring the Government overseas to defend the "national interest". On the night of June 16th, he advised, unsuccessfully, President of the Republic Albert Lebrun to reconfirm Reynaud.
Édouard Herriot, President of the Chamber of Deputies (not a member of the Council of Ministers)	He was in favor of resistance, even if it meant transferring the Government abroad. On the night of June 16th, he advised the President of the Republic Albert Lebrun to reconfirm Reynaud and thus keep France in the war.
Paul Reynaud, President of the Council, Minister of Foreign Affairs & Minister of Defence	He was in favor of resistance to the utmost in solidarity with the British ally (considering the March 28th, 1940, declaration that he had adhered to and that excluded the notion of a separate peace). In this sense he favoured a Brittany redoubt, in the beginning, hoping this would create the conditions for a show of resistance, possibly followed by the exile of the Government to Britain, then, when the Government fell back on Bordeaux, he favoured a transfer of the seat of Government to Algiers, from where he hoped to continue hostilities, with the resources of the French Empire and its Navy that was still almost intact and with the hope that the United States would at some point join the fight. The signing of a capitulation by France's military commander seemed like a necessary corollary for said departure of the Government to Algiers, and, from June 15th, he pushed for a military capitulation on humanitarian grounds.
Georges Mandel, Minister of the Interior	As in the case of Reynaud, he favoured a continuation of the war on Britain's side, and the creation of a resistance cabinet (excluding the pro-armistice elements). He opposed the Brittany redoubt on the ground that it could be interpreted as existing only to

Decision-makers and decision-influencers	**Respective positions assumed during the June 15-16, 1940 debates inside or outside the Council of Ministers meetings**
	protect the governments exit from French metropolitan soil. On the evening of June 16th, during the last Council of Ministers presided by Reynaud, he tried desperately, and unsuccessfully, to change the "axis" of discussion from discussion for or against the "Chautemps proposal" to a contest between those for or against the armistice, between those who wanted to fight, and those who didn't.
Georges Monnet, Minister of Blockade	He was in favor of continuing the war on Britain's side (June 12th Council of Ministers meeting at Cangé).
Campinchi, Minister of the Navy	He was against an armistice as he believed it would mean handing the Navy to the Germans and so declared the June 12th meeting at Cangé.
Alphonse Rio, Minister of the Merchant Navy	He was against the armistice and in favor of resistance. After the war, he put in doubt France's real capacity to transport a large quantity of troops to North Africa in the days preceding the request for armistice conditions, not for lack of ships, but rather due to the general disorder and demoralisation.
Raoul Dautry, Minister of Armaments	He was against the armistice, as he clearly stated in the June 12th Council of Ministers meeting and subsequently.
Louis Marin (State Minister) ; Louis Rollin(Colonies) ; Yvon Delbos (National Education) ; Albert Sérol (Justice)	These Ministers were resolutely in favor of Paul Reynaud's resistance stance.
Jules Julien, Minister of Postal Service, Telegraphs, Telephones and Transmissions	He was considered pro-resistance by Charles Pomaret. Categorized as favouring the Chautemps proposal on the second June 16th, Council of Ministers by Reynaud.
Albert Lebrun, President of the Republic of France, presided of the Councils of Ministers	He favoured a resistance stance like Reynaud, but on May 25th at the meeting of the War Committee he showed himself ready to study all options, including that of an armistice, if the military developments required it, and suggested consultations with Britain on the subject. On June 15th, he kept Reynaud in power under the condition that he tried to obtain a go-ahead from Britain to implement the Chautemps proposal (of asking Germany what its conditions would be for an armistice), and after the second Council of Ministers

Decision-makers and decision-influencers	Respective positions assumed during the June 15-16, 1940 debates inside or outside the Council of Ministers meetings
	meeting of June 16th, demanded that Reynaud implemented the modified Chautemps proposal (asking Germany for its armistice conditions irrespective of Britain's attitude).
Camille Chautemps, Vice-President of the Council	He was apparently in favor of continuing the war on Britain's side even if it meant for the Government to choose exile, Chautemps was extremely sensitive to what he believed to be French public opinion for reasons of legitimacy. He believed that only harsh and dishonourable terms by Germany could justify a continuation of the war by France with its corresponding misery for the refugees on the roads, the French soldiers. Some (Reynaud among them) have doubted the sincerity of his apparent resistance stand, and considered his "proposal" to have been a manoeuvre to break the unity of the resistance faction, which it did.
Ludovic-Oscar Frossard, Minister of Public Works	He was the first to propose a formula of simply deciding on enquiring Germany's armistice conditions and then deciding the next step, depending on Germany's answer (Chautemps would elaborate on this formula).
Henry Queuille (Supply); Paul Thellier (Agriculture); Albert Chichery (Commerce); Georges Pernod (Public Health) ; Laurent-Eynac (Air/Ministry of aeronautics)	These Ministers, according to Reynaud, rallied the Chautemps proposal. According to Charles Pomaret, Minister Laurent-Eynac was resolutely against the armistice, and Ministers Queuille and Pernod were rather against the armistice also, but this did not necessarily mean Reynaud was wrong in categorizing them as rallied to the Chautemps proposal.
Marshal Philippe Pétain Vice-President of the Council	He was already in favor of an armistice by late May 1940, he did not openly defy Reynaud and his resistance policy until the June 12th meeting at Cangé, and Weygand's call for an armistice. On the 13th, he warned the Ministers that he would remain in France come what may, whether inside or outside the Government. At the first June 16th Council of Ministers he presented his resignation but withdrew it. Being a soldier, together with Weygand he was especially conscious of the limited time framework within which the armistice option would stand a chance of success.
General Maxime Weygand, Commander in	Until June 8th-9th, he tried to hold the Germans on a defensive line stretching for the Somme and Aisne

Decision-makers and decision-influencers	**Respective positions assumed during the June 15-16, 1940 debates inside or outside the Council of Ministers meetings**
Chief of the French Army, Generalissimo of French forces (not a member of the Council of Ministers but allowed to give his view on military affairs)	rivers, all the way to the Maginot line in the East. He declared Paris an open-city on June 10th, tried to discuss the need for an armistice within the Inter-Allied War Council on the 11th, but was impeded from doing so by Reynaud, and demanded an armistice from the members of the Council of Ministers on June 12th, 1940. He also impressed upon the Ministers that the military situation was lost on the afternoon of June 15th, 1940, and that military cooperation with Britain had come to an end. He professed to favoran armistice only under honorable conditions and claimed to have asked to transfer the Navy to the safety of North Africa before reaching out to the Germans (Baudouin, Bouthillier and Pomaret, corroborated this version, others denied it). He refused to yield to Reynaud's entreaties to capitulate - Reynaud euphemistically talked of cease-fire in his different memoirs – basically on the grounds that a capitulation would shed dishonor on the Army.
Admiral François Darlan, Commander in Chief of the Navy (not a member of the Council of Ministers but intervenes there on June 16th, 1940)	He favoured resistance until the morning of June 15th, 1940, even contemplated finishing his career with an act of "splendid indiscipline". Between June 15th and June 16th, he changed sides and joined the armistice camp, no doubt with guaranties that the Navy would not be handed over to the Germans.
Albert Rivière (Minister of Veterans)	He rallied to Chautemps (probably pro-armistice at heart according to Charles Pomaret).
Jean Provoust Minister of Information	Together with Marshal Pétain, he was the first to side with General Weygand on June 12th, 1940, and call for an armistice.
Jean Ybarnégaray (Minister of State)	He was considered a determined pro-armistice according to Charles Pomaret. He aligned himself with Pétain and Weygand avowedly out of discipline to the military chiefs, but only from June 13th onward, once Reynaud failed to present Churchill to the Ministers.
Yves Bouthilliers, Minister of Finance	Yves Bouthillier was a young minister, close to Reynaud who named him Minister of Finance in his June 5th Cabinet, but also very much in admiration before Weygand and Pétain, to the point of joining the pro-armistice camp. His principal intervention was on June 13th, incisively critical of Reynaud when he failed to present Churchill to the Ministers as promised and after Reynaud admitted to telling the

Decision-makers and decision-influencers	Respective positions assumed during the June 15-16, 1940 debates inside or outside the Council of Ministers meetings
	British that the French government was in favor of a resistance stand (when in fact the Council of Ministers had not yet decided its course of action).
Paul Baudouin, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs (authorized by Reynaud to participate in the Council of Ministers meetings)	As a close collaborator of Reynaud and as a member of the War Committee and of the Inter-Allied War Council meetings, he was early and very conscious of France military situation. Like Bouthillier, he only disassociated himself publicly with Reynaud's utmost resistance stance from June 13th onwards and remained a close advisor to Reynaud until the end. He believed, or claimed to believe that on June 13th, Churchill had declared that for France to ask Germany for armistice conditions would not break the solidarity between the countries.
Charles Pomaret, Minister of Labour	In his memoirs, he declared himself resolutely in favor of the armistice.

Sources in the case of the main players. As there are no transcripts of the meetings of the Council of Ministers, the positions of the other Ministers were reconstructed from the following sources:
Charles Pomaret, *Le Dernier Témoin* (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1968), p. 30.
Paul Reynaud, *Mémoires, T.2. Envers et contre tous (7 mars 1936-16 juin 1940*) (Paris: Flammarion, 1963). (photograph of notes taken by Paul Reynaud, between pages 366-367).

APPENDIX C

ARMISTICE AGREEMENT BETWEEN FRANCE AND GERMANY, JUNE 22, 1940, TRANSLATED FROM FRENCH

Text of the armistice signed in Rethondes on June 22, 1940.

Mr. Colonel-General Keitel, Head of the German High Command, mandated by the Führer of the German Reich and Supreme Commander of the German Armed Forces, on the one hand,

and Mr. Army General Huntziger, Mr. Ambassador of France Noël, Mr. Vice-Admiral Leluc, and Mr. Air General Bergeret,

Plenipotentiaries of the French Government with regular powers, on the other hand, have agreed on the following Armistice Agreement:

Article 1

The French Government orders the cessation of hostilities against the German Reich, on French territory, as well as in the possessions, colonies, protectorates and mandated territories and on the seas. He orders that the French troops, already surrounded by German troops, immediately lay down their arms.

Article 2

In order to safeguard the interests of the German Reich, the French territory, located to the north and west of the line drawn on the attached map, will be occupied by German troops. To the extent that the regions of the occupied territory are not yet in the power of German troops, their occupation will be carried out immediately after the conclusion of this convention.

Article 3

In the occupied regions of France, the German Reich exercises all the rights of the occupying power. The French Government undertakes to facilitate by all means the regulations relating to the exercise of these rights and their implementation with the assistance of the French Administration. The French Government will immediately invite all French authorities and administrative services in the occupied territory to

comply with the regulations of the German military authorities and to collaborate with the latter in a correct manner.

The German Government intends to reduce the occupation of the western coast to the strict minimum after the cessation of hostilities with England.

The French Government is free to choose its seat in the unoccupied territory, or if it wishes, to even transfer it to Paris.

In the latter case, the German Government undertakes to provide all necessary facilities to the Government and its central administrative services, so that they are able to administer the occupied and unoccupied territories from Paris.

Article 4

The French armed forces on land, at sea and in the air will have to be demobilized and disarmed within a timeframe yet to be determined. Troops necessary to maintain internal order are exempt from this obligation. Their numbers and weapons will be determined by Germany or Italy respectively;

The French armed forces stationed in the regions to be occupied by Germany must be quickly brought back to unoccupied territory and will be demobilized. Before being returned to non-occupied territory, these troops will deposit their weapons and equipment in the places where they are at the time of the entry into force of this convention. They will be responsible for the regular delivery of the above-mentioned equipment and weapons to German troops.

Article 5

As a guarantee of strict compliance with the armistice conditions, it may be required that all artillery pieces, battle tanks, anti-tank devices, military aircraft, D.C.A. guns, infantry weapons, all means of traction and ammunition of units of the French army engaged against Germany and which are, at the time of the entry into force of this convention, on the territory not to be occupied by the Germany, are delivered in good condition. The German Armistice Commission will decide on the extent of these deliveries. The delivery of military aircraft may be renounced if all aircraft, still in the

possession of the French armed forces, are disarmed and placed in safety under German supervision.

Article 6

Arms, munitions and war materials of all kinds remaining in unoccupied French territory - to the extent that they have not been left at the disposal of the French Government for the arming of authorized French units - must be stored or secured under German or Italian control respectively. The German High Command reserves the right to order all necessary measures to prevent the improper use of this material. The manufacture of new war material in unoccupied territory must cease immediately.

Article 7

All land and coastal fortifications with their weapons, ammunition and equipment, stocks and installations of all kinds, located in the regions to be occupied, must be delivered in good condition. The plans of these fortifications, as well as the plans of those already taken by the German troops, must also be submitted.

All details on mined locations, landmine barrages, time fuses, chemical barrages, etc. are to be handed over to the German High Command. These obstacles will have to be removed by French forces at the request of the German authorities.

Article 8

The French war fleet - with the exception of the part which is left at the disposal of the French Government for the safeguard of French interests in its colonial empire - will be assembled in ports to be determined and must be demobilized and disarmed under the supervision of Germany or Italy respectively.

The designation of these ports will be made according to the home ports of the ships in peacetime. The German Government solemnly declares to the French Government that it does not intend to use during the war, for its own purposes, the French war fleet stationed in ports under German supervision, except those units necessary for surveillance of coasts and minesweeping.

He further declares, solemnly and formally, that he does not intend to make any claims against the French war fleet upon the conclusion of peace; with the exception of the

part of the French war fleet to be determined which will be assigned to the safeguard of French interests in the colonial empire, all war units located outside French territorial waters must be recalled to France.

Article 9

The French High Command must provide the German High Command with precise information on all mines laid by France, as well as on all mine barriers in ports and in front of the coasts, as well as on military defense installations and protection.

The dredging of mine dams must be carried out by French forces to the extent that the German High Command decides.

Article 10

The French Government undertakes not to undertake in the future any hostile action against the German Reich with any part of its remaining armed forces, nor in any other way.

The French Government will also prevent members of the French armed forces from leaving French territory and will ensure that neither arms nor any equipment, nor ships, aircraft, etc., are transferred to England or abroad.

The French Government will prohibit French nationals from fighting against Germany in the service of states with which Germany is still at war. French nationals who do not comply with this requirement will be treated by German troops as *francs-tireurs*.

Article 11

Until further notice, French commercial vessels of all types, including cabotage vessels and port vessels under French control, will be prohibited from leaving ports. The resumption of commercial traffic will be subject to prior authorization from the German Government or the Italian Government respectively.

French commercial ships located outside French ports will be recalled to France by the French Government and, if this is not possible, they will be directed to neutral ports. All boarded German merchant ships in French ports will be returned in good condition if requested.

Article 12

A take-off ban on all aircraft on French territory will be imposed immediately. Any aircraft taking off without prior German authorization will be considered by the German military aviation as an enemy aircraft and will be treated as such.

Airfields and land military aviation installations in non-occupied territory will be placed under German or Italian control respectively.

They may be required to be rendered unusable. The French Government is required to place at the disposal of the German authorities all foreign aircraft found in unoccupied territory or to prevent them from continuing their route. These planes will have to be delivered to the German military authorities.

Article 13

The French Government undertakes to ensure that, in the territory to be occupied by German troops, all installations, tools and military stocks are handed over intact to German troops. It will also have to ensure that ports, industrial enterprises and shipyards remain in the state in which they are currently, and that they are not damaged in any way or destroyed. The same applies to means and routes of communications of all kinds, in particular with regard to railways, roads and waterways, all telegraph and telephone networks, as well as navigability indication installations and coastal marking. Furthermore, the French Government undertakes, on orders from the German High Command, to carry out all necessary restoration work.

The French Government will ensure that, in the occupied territory, the necessary specialized personnel and the quantity of railway rolling stock and other means of communications corresponding to normal peacetime conditions are available.

Article 14

All T.S.F. transmitter stations located in French territory must immediately cease their broadcasts. The resumption of transmissions by T.S.F. in the unoccupied part of the territory will be subject to special regulations.

Article 15

The French Government undertakes to carry out the transit transport of goods between the German Reich and Italy, through the unoccupied territory to the extent required by the German Government.

Article 16

The French Government will repatriate the population in the occupied territories, in agreement with the competent German services.

Article 17

The French Government undertakes to prevent any transfer of economic values and stocks of the territory to be occupied by German troops in unoccupied territories or abroad.

These values and stocks located in occupied territory can only be disposed of in agreement with the Reich Government, it being understood that the German Government will take into account what is necessary for the life of the populations of the non-occupied territories.

Article 18

The costs of maintaining German occupation troops on French territory will be borne by the French Government.

Article 19

All German prisoners of war and civilian prisoners, including defendants and convicts who have been arrested and convicted for acts committed in favor of the German Reich, must be handed over to German troops without delay. The French Government is required to hand over on request all German nationals designated by the Reich Government and who are in France, as well as in French possessions, colonies, territories under protectorate and under mandate.

The French Government undertakes to prevent the transfer of German prisoners of war or civilian prisoners from France to French possessions or abroad.

With regard to prisoners already transferred outside France, as well as the sick, that cannot be evacuated or injured German prisoners of war, exact lists indicating the place of their stay must be presented.

The German High Command will take care of sick or wounded German prisoners of war.

Article 20

Members of the French armed forces who are prisoners of war of the German army will remain prisoners of war until peace is concluded.

Article 21

The French Government is responsible for ensuring the security of all objects and values whose return to good condition or being made available to Germany is stipulated in this convention or whose transfer outside France is prohibited. The French Government will be liable for damages for all destruction, damage or misappropriation contrary to this agreement.

Article 22

A German Armistice Commission, acting under the orders of the German High Command, will regulate and monitor the execution of the armistice agreement.

The Armistice Commission is, moreover, called upon to ensure the necessary concordance of this convention with the Italian-French armistice convention.

The French Government will constitute at the headquarters of the German Armistice Commission a delegation responsible for representing French interests and receiving orders of execution from the German Armistice Commission.

Article 23

This convention will come into force as soon as the French Government has also reached, with the Italian Government, an agreement relating to the cessation of hostilities.

The cessation of hostilities will take place six hours after the Italian Government has announced to the Reich Government the conclusion of this agreement. The Reich Government will make this moment known to the French Government by radio.

Article 24

This armistice agreement is valid until the conclusion of the peace treaty. It may be denounced at any time and terminated immediately by the German Government, if the French Government does not fulfil the obligations assumed by it in the present convention.

This armistice agreement was signed on June 22, 1940, at 6 p.m. 36, German summer time, in the Compiègne forest.

Signed: HUNTZIGER, KEITEL

Note: The line mentioned in Article 2 of the armistice agreement begins in the east, on the Franco-Swiss border, near Geneva, and is then punctuated by the localities of Dôle, Paray-le-Monial and Bourges, up to about twenty kilometers east of Tours. From there, it passes a distance of twenty kilometers east of the Tours-Angoulême-Libourne railway line, as well as, further, through Mont-de-Marsan and Orthez, to the Spanish border.

Source: The French text was taken from the following Digithèque MJP site: https://mjp.univ-perp.fr/france/1940armistice.htm#:~:text=Le Gouvernement fran%C3%A7ais%20s'engage%20%C3%A0%20n'entreprendre%20%C3%A0%20l,ni%20d'aucune%20autre%20mani%C3%A8re

BIOGRAPHY

Fernando Berguño is a Chilean career diplomat born in Washington D.C. in 1966. He has served in Jakarta, Brasilia, Beirut, Manila, Tehran and Bangkok and as a member of the Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations in New York. He opened the Chilean Embassy in Tehran and served there as Chargé d´affairs a.i. (2016-2017). He was one of the main Chilean advisors and negotiators for the Rio+20 process. He studied History (*Licence* and *Maitrise*) at the Sorbonne (Paris V) and has a master and a doctorate in History from the *École pratique des Hautes Études*, Paris. He is a member of the *Sociedad Chilena de Historia y Geografía*, and a corresponding member of the *Academia Chilena de la Historia*, and has contributed to several publications on maritime, colonial, and Napoleonic history. He is the author of the book *Les Soldats de Napoléon dans l'Indépendance du Chili (1817-1830)*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2010, later updated, translated into Spanish, and released in Chile in 2015.