Caesar, Pompey, and the Collapse of the First Triumvirate

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The creation of the "First Triumvirate" of Gaius Julius Caesar, Gnaius Pompeius Magnus, and Marcus Licinius Crassus certainly stands as one of the most pivotal events in Roman Republican history. Ironically, its inception, and the resulting power swing that it created, was the beginning of the end for that very republic. Where as the men had weaknesses while separate, together they were nearly untouchable by the optimates that sought to reduce the "Triumvirs'" influence. What, then caused the breakup of these men? The alliance seemed, at least at the beginning, to be the perfect combination for controlling Roman politics, but ultimately the personalities of the three led them in different directions. While the destruction of the Triumvirate is frequently blamed upon the deaths of Crassus and Julia, this is an overly simplistic explanation.

To understand the reasons for the rift one must first understand the men who comprised the amicitia. It brought together three powerful men who all wanted to be in ultimate control. Pompey was the hero of the past, Caesar the hero of the future, but both wanted to be the hero of the present. Crassus was the man whose own significant achievements were overshadowed by both. His drive to show up Pompey was his undoing, as he met an ignoble death in a catastrophic defeat. The alliance among them was thus doomed from the beginning, with three men clambering for the same place; to be First Man in Rome. Caesar proved to be the most cunning, as Pompey was far too prone to believe the flattery constantly heaped upon him by those who would sway him to their interests, namely the optimates who so vehemently hated Caesar. To Caesar, the Triumvirate was a tool to be utilized, and he was a master at using that tool as best

1 The literal definition of a Triumvirate is a group of three ruling with equal power. In the case of the popularly named "First Triumvirate" this is not entirely accurate, as the three men in question never ruled, and the partnership, especially in its later years, was far from equal. All the same, the term has stayed in the vernacular, and thus I will continue to use it for the sake of convenience and recognition.

2 As will be mentioned later, Julia was Caesar’s daughter and Pompey’s wife.
he could, even when the situation was adverse. The civil war that followed the men's split was unfortunate, but was merely the final step in Caesar's rise to the top of the Republic.

The success of the Triumvirate, at least in the beginning, was based upon a mutual need for support among the three. For one, the money of Crassus and Pompey, by the 60's BC the two richest men in Rome, allowed for plenty of "greasing the gears of state". There were few things or people that these two men could not buy, and their money was used extensively in the securing of friendly Tribunes and other magistrates throughout their alliance. The money was also lavishly spent to secure the Consular elections of Caesar and Pompey. While Caesar did not contribute a great deal of money to the cause, what he did bring was a noble family name combined with a formidable political presence that gained the support of the populus with ease.

Especially in its early incarnation, the alliance among these men was seen by contemporaries as being dominated by Pompey, not Caesar, as would become the dominant belief among later historians. Certainly Pompey and Caesar were the leading figures of the three, with the aging Crassus definitely the "third wheel". Given that the purpose of this study is primarily to examine the relationship between Caesar and Pompey, Crassus will not be scrutinized in great detail.

Though my aim is not to give a biography for these three men, a small amount of background on each is nonetheless necessary, so that one can better understand their dynamic together. I will focus primarily on their lives as they neared their pact.

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3 Though there is some disagreement as to whether Caesar formally allied himself to Pompey and Crassus before or after his first election to the Consulship, it is not debated that he certainly used a great deal of bribery money to secure that election. - Greenhalgh, P.A. *Pompey, the Roman Alexander*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1981, c1980, 199-201
Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus was a living legend in his own time, and even more so in his own mind. During his rise to the top of Roman politics he made his mark as both a capable general and a brilliant administrator. As a young man he took it upon himself to levy troops in support of Sulla during the civil wars, meeting the latter as he entered Italy in 83. He was merely 23 at the time, but this movement on his part catapulted him to the forefront of Roman politics. He served for several more years under Sulla, and accounted for himself quite well in actions in Africa and Spain against the Marians. His success garnered him high praise from Sulla, who showed the young man respect that he scarcely ever showed to older, more experienced commanders. Following his successes in Africa Pompey, who had yet to even enter the Senate, was granted proconsular imperium and was given the task of taking on Sertorius in Spain.

I do not wish to labor through every single engagement or command that Pompey was involved with, but these early posts were pivotal in creating the man that Pompey would become in later years. One incident in particular, that of the slave rebellion of Spartacus in 73, was terribly important to later affairs primarily because it was the beginning of the long-lasting animosity between Pompey and Crassus. After several consular armies were defeated in Italy the panic in the Senate caused them to recall Pompey to subdue the threat. As chance would have it, an army commanded by Crassus actually defeated the rebellion while Pompey was still on his way, but a small group of slaves did escape to the North. Pompey encountered this small group and promptly defeated them, claiming credit for putting down Spartacus. From that point on Crassus resented Pompey for stealing

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4 App. 1.7.80
5 Plut. Pomp. 8
6 Greenhalgh 1981, 43
7 Greenhalgh 1981, 63
his moment of glory, a fact which put considerable strain on their amicitia in later years. Given the immense amount of success Pompey enjoyed at such a young age, it is perhaps forgivable that he began to develop what would one day become a truly monumental ego. It is ironic that the very confidence, born in no small part to ignorance of defeat, that propelled him to the top also was responsible to his downfall against Caesar decades later.

Pompey served as consul with Crassus in the year 70, after which he took time off from public politics to rest on his laurels, though not wholeheartedly. He was all too aware of the troubles brewing in the east, and was largely waiting for the right moment to once again appear as the hero. That moment came when he was named as the man to curtail the Mediterranean pirates, which for generations had been wreaking havoc on shipping.\(^8\) This command was a spectacular success, and here Pompey’s great skill at organization and administration came to light. Permitted to chose his own legates, Pompey divided the sea into 13 zones, assigning subordinates with ships and troops to each area. His ability to pick capable commanders was a tremendous advantage, and within three months the pirate threat had been eliminated.\(^9\) With over two years still remaining in his imperium, Pompey then moved East. Securing an extension to his already unprecedented command, Pompey fought against the rebelling monarchs Mithridates VI of Pontus and Tigranes of Armenia in 66. Over the next three years Pompey defeated a succession of outmatched Eastern Monarchs until nearly all of the East, from Armenia to Jerusalem, was under Roman control. In 62 Pompey returned to Italy, his reputation and legacy secure. After all, he had single-handedly conquered both the pirates and the East, securing a more glorious future.

\(^8\) Dio. 36.23.5, 24.1
\(^9\) Plut. Pomp. 26-30
for Rome\textsuperscript{10}

While Pompey's accomplishments were no doubt impressive, he had essentially gone up against a collection of criminals and has-been powers in denial. His victories were so impressive due in no small part to the complete mediocrity of his predecessors in those posts. This is not to say that Pompey was not a great leader or general: far from it. The ease of his victories certainly denoted a great deal of skill, but also proved to be dangerous for his future. Pompey had yet to experience defeat, and the resulting air of invulnerability would not last forever. During Pompey's years away Julius Caesar had been making a name for himself in Roman politics, and though he was as yet not a rival to Pompey, he was rapidly gaining.

As much as Pompey was the storied hero, Caesar was the dark horse: the enigma. Though the product of a noble and proud family, Gaius Julius Caesar was not born with an easy path to political success. The Julians, though aristocrats, were historically unsuccessful in politics, and thus were no highly regarded in practical terms by the other patricians.\textsuperscript{11} Caesar did, however, have the advantage of being the nephew of Gaius Marius, whose proud tradition Caesar would see himself as following later in life. Plutarch mentions that, when advised that Caesar was not worth killing, Sulla himself remarked that in the young man were many Mariuses. Whether this is a case of rewriting history or not, the point remains that Caesar from the beginning believed that he would be great. It was that same confidence that saw him safely through abduction by pirates on his way to Rhodes years later.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{10} This was, at least, the view of the common man: many of the politicians and Equites still shook at the thought of a conquering hero returning to Rome in any capacity. Sulla and his proscriptions were still too fresh in their minds.


\textsuperscript{12} Meier 1982, 108
During the 70’s Caesar began to grow in prominence in the Roman political arena, not least of all through the trial of the proconsul Dolabella in 77. In that case, he prosecuted the returning proconsul for extortion in his former province of Macedonia. Though Dolabella was acquitted, the trial gained Caesar great fame and popularity in Rome, and served as a stepping stone for his political career.¹³

Throughout his climb up the social and political ladder Caesar displayed a remarkable arrogance in relation to the world around him. He was known to spend immense amounts of money on lavish parties, country villas, art and slaves. At all times he displayed an easy nonchalance for all to see, even though it was said that his debts were reaching 8 million Denarii.¹⁴ Caesar was no mere playboy, though; despite what those around him may have thought, it was all part of his plan. He knew that in order to break into the upper echelon of Roman politics one needed friends, and friends were expensive to make. Furthermore, one also had to "look the part" to gain acceptance. Caesar was all too aware of these factors to his success, and thus he embarked on an all-or-nothing gamble whereby he racked up massive amounts of debt knowing that he had to succeed. It was this drive, and the cunning to back it up, that made him so capable.

In 69 Caesar attained the office of quaestor, and with it membership in the Senate. From there he served in Further Spain briefly, followed by an incident in Transpadane Gaul, where he displayed himself an ardent supporter of full citizenship for those living in the province. Though his efforts were unsuccessful, he did gain further support from the populus there, which would gain him advantages in later years.¹⁵ In 66 Caesar expressed his full support for the bill giving

¹³ Plut. Caes. 4
¹⁵ Gelzer 1968, 32; Meier 1982, 141-42
Pompey the power to make war and peace on behalf of Rome, hoping to garner favor with the man. Though Pompey had been a Sullan in days past, Caesar realized the need for powerful allies, and there were none at the time that had anything close to the power that Pompey wielded.\(^{16}\)

The year 66 saw Caesar’s election as an aedile, a post which emphasized the spending of yet more money on public games and festivals. This Caesar did, gaining yet more popular support while increasing his already massive debt. The next few years saw Caesar further embroiled in domestic politics, and also his first association with Crassus. The two began to be linked in the minds of some\(^{17}\), and likely in reality as well, as they both saw political opportunities rising from the general unrest in Rome at the time.\(^{18}\) It is at this point that Caesar truly came to the forefront of Roman politics. In the year 63 he was elected pontifex maximus, making him the high priest of Rome, and also won election to the praetorship for the following year.\(^{19}\) The pieces were in place for the Triumvirate to be born.

There was, of course, a third member of the Triumvirate whom I have only briefly mentioned. As I have stated before, Crassus is the least important of the three in terms of the triumvirate’s collapse. As for its beginning, however, he has a great deal more bearing, and thus deserves some attention.

Older than either Pompey (by about 8 or 9 years) or Caesar (by at least 14 years), Marcus Licinius Crassus was born the son of a senator and censor. His family, though not wealthy, was well respected in Roman political circles. As a man Crassus was seen as above reproach in almost all categories save one: avarice.\(^{20}\) His

\(^{16}\) Meier 1982, 146; Dio 36.43.2-3
\(^{17}\) This linkage was seen most notably by Cicero, who was convinced of a conspiracy involving the two. Cic. *tog.cand.*, argum.
\(^{18}\) Gelzer 1968, 39-41
\(^{19}\) Meier 1982, 160-61
\(^{20}\) Plut. *Cras.* 2
quest for wealth is the best documented aspect of his life, with all other accomplishments shrinking in comparison.

The vast fortune that Crassus possessed by the 60's was accrued largely through the purchase of real estate in various forms, though the possession of large amounts of slaves and mines also played a role. His primary concern in the Triumvirate was to gain favorable legislation for his tax farming interests in Asia, (as well as to keep an eye on the movements of his old foe Pompey, so that the latter might not gain too much power in relation to Crassus). Beyond these two goals Crassus' primary aim seems to be simply the accumulation of more wealth, as Plutarch so frequently notes in his Life of Crassus. It was this goal that would ultimately lead to his death at the hands of the Parthians in 53.

Of Crassus' early political life only scattered remnants are known, save for a period of exile during the 80's, after his father and brother were killed in Marian proscriptions. During the civil war he served under Sulla in Africa, and proved himself quite capable on the field of battle, though beyond this his military career was essentially limited to his victory over Spartacus. It seems that Crassus preferred the economic and political arenas to that of war, and saw little use for the latter once the age for serious office had been reached. He worked his way through the cursus honorum, being elected praetor in 73 and consul in 70.

For the next decade Crassus and Pompey were engaged in a constant competition for supremacy in Rome, with Pompey ultimately emerging victorious.

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21 Chief among his methods was to purchase burning buildings from their panicked owners for next to nothing. Crassus actually had a trained collection of slaves that would repair or rebuild the buildings on what would have been very expensive property, resulting in great profit for him. Plut. Cras. II
23 Plut. Cras. 2
24 Ward 1977, 54
25 I have already mentioned this slave rebellion when speaking of Pompey.
26 Ward 1977, 82,100
with his commands against the pirates and Mithridates. Crassus remained in Rome, continuing to exert influence though his finances. It was this dynamic that repeatedly brought him into contact with Caesar.  

By the year 61, when Pompey returned from the East, Caesar and Crassus had become well acquainted. The former was becoming an increasingly influential politician and the latter had the vast resources necessary to support Caesar’s political career. The first half of the Triumvirate was thus already in place long before the entrance of Pompey. Caesar had of course been helping Pompey in little ways for the previous several years in the hope of garnering his support in turn. The actual time when Caesar solidified the pact that bound all three men is rather hazy, though it is most likely that it took place before his election to the consulship rather than afterwards.

What followed was in essence a short honeymoon for Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus. Caesar was elected consul with the ineffective Bibulus as his counterpart. Pompey’s desired agrarian law was passed, as were laws for the relief of over-zealous tax farmers for Crassus, and Caesar dominated Roman politics for the year. It was also during this year that Caesar gave his daughter Julia to Pompey to wed, sealing their alliance in a very concrete way.

As all seemed to be going to plan, what possibly could have brought about the catastrophic meltdown that would result in civil war a decade later? The problem began, not as some claim with the death of Julia, but with Caesar leaving for Gaul at the end of his consular term. It is not so much that Caesar was unaware of Pompey’s actions during the former’s Gallic campaigns; far from it.

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27 Meier 1982, 182
28 Suet. Caes. 19.2; Plut. Cras. 14
29 Through this law Pompey’s soldiers from his Eastern campaigns were given land to farm as a reward for their service.
30 App. 2.2.10
Caesar had plenty of informers and tame officials to keep him updated with the latest news, a condition which Plutarch remarks upon. Rather, the problem arose by Pompey *thinking* that Caesar could not see what was going on. When this ignorance was combined with Pompey’s colossal ego and inferiority complex the situation was bound to deteriorate, though this was not immediately evident.

Aware of the risks associated with leaving Rome for an extended period of time, Caesar sought to minimize the risk by becoming closer with Pompey. It seems at this time that Crassus was no longer the necessity he had once been to Caesar, now that his military command and tax law had secured the latter greater support among the *Equites*. Pompey, however, was still needed to a greater extent, not least of all because he still held considerable military and political power; in 59 he definitely outmatched Caesar in terms of resources.

This imbalance was not to last, however. Over the next several years Caesar enjoyed great success in Gaul, accumulating wealth far beyond what his debts had been. Much of this wealth he sent back to Rome, along with his famous commentaries on his campaigns. The result was, naturally, that his prestige among the *populares* and the *populus* in general continued to grow, while Pompey’s own fame began to ebb. Of the money that remained with Caesar, generous amounts were given to his soldiers for loyalty and successful service. By rewarding his troops Caesar went even further to strengthen his power, making them into *his* army, not Rome’s. This was to have great consequences during the events leading up to the outbreak of civil war in 49.

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31 Plutarch’s remarks almost give the impression that the author was laughing at Pompey’s shortsightedness as regards to Caesar. Plut. *Pomp.* 51

32 This complex was derived to a large extent from his coming from a less than noble family from Picenum. His driving desire to be accepted in the inner circle was a key weakness that the *optimates* took advantage of when they sought to separate him from Caesar.

33 Ward 1977, 220-222

34 Plut. *Pomp.* 51
During this initial period of Caesar's absence from Roman politics, which lasted from about 58 to 56, Pompey was struggling to maintain the position that he felt he so richly deserved; that of First Man in Rome. At the beginning of 58 Pompey once again regressed from political life, happy to spend time with his new wife. This was just the opportunity needed by his political opponents to begin to undermine his authority. This occurred most notably with the tribune Clodius, who, after spending a year or so working to repeal Pompey's legislation, directly opposed him in the trial of Milo in 56. When Pompey attempted to speak in the defense of Milo he was drowned out by Clodius and his men, who mocked him openly with insults of all sorts.

Pompey was highly distressed by these events, as he was unused to taking verbal abuse from anyone. What disturbed him still more was that neither the Senate nor Crassus had come to his defense. It is at this time that Pompey began to become truly paranoid. He was convinced that Crassus was plotting to have him killed, along with numerous other senators and magistrates. There likely was a bit of truth to his paranoia, though it is doubtful that death was their aim for him: public disgrace and loss of power were more than enough.

This chain of events is immensely important when discussing the eventual rift that would form between Caesar and Pompey. His relations with Crassus had deteriorated to point where they were political opponents once again. For the first time in his career Pompey felt isolated, and while he knew that he still had the

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35 In 56 Caesar called his conference at Luca. Though he did not actually return to Rome during his conference, he did become more personally involved in Roman politics, at least briefly. It should also be noted that Caesar never really left Roman politics: he simply made his wishes known and enforced them through his various tribunes and other magistrates.

36 Plut. Pomp. 48

37 App. 2.3.15,16

38 These were, as Plutarch states "a rabble of the lewdest and most arrogant ruffians". Plut. Pomp. 48

backing of Caesar, he did not wish to use that; his pride would not let him. Pompey began to entertain thoughts of reconciling with the optimates, with the hope that he would be able to regain his “rightful place” at the top of Rome.

Caesar was aware of the deteriorating situation back in Rome and was worried, as without the support of Pompey and Crassus he was at risk of losing his command. Therefore, over the winter of 66 Caesar met with both Crassus and Pompey. The three renewed their pact, and it was decided that Crassus and Pompey would be the consuls for 55. Their election would be secured by contingents of Caesar’s men who would be released to vote in the elections, and once the consular term was up the two men were to be granted commands that would equal Caesar’s. Caesar’s own command was to be lengthened so that all three had their terms expire at the same time. This last condition was to alleviate the growing disparity between the Caesar and the other two in terms of real power. With disaster thus averted (at least temporarily), Caesar returned to his campaigns in Gaul.

The true significance of this meeting is multifold. First, Caesar bought time with which to plan for the inevitable end of his command, when he would need to defend himself from the various charges that were sure to arise against him. Second, Caesar simultaneously established himself as the dominant member of the trio and alleviated the others’ concern over that very fact. Since he held proconsular imperium Caesar could not leave his provinces of course, but the act of Crassus and Pompey traveling to meet him was in itself a significant concession.

40 If he lost his command he would be vulnerable to charges brought against him for his high-handed and often illegal actions during his consulship. Gelzer 1968, 119-121
41 While Appian and Plutarch state that Pompey and Crassus both met Caesar at Luca (App. 2.3.17; Plut. Pomp. 51), Cicero, in his letter to Spinther (Cic. fam. 1.1.9), seems to suggest that Crassus met with Caesar at Ravenna, and did not join the later conference at Luca. Whichever is correct, the end result remains the same.
42 Gelzer 1968, 121-123
on their part. Of course, Pompey’s ego would not have allowed him to see the oddity of him, Pompeius Magnus, traveling at the behest of a man he considered to be lower in status to him. As for Crassus, the new agreement actually elevated his position in the triumvirate, as well as gave him the opportunity to do what he always had wanted: to eclipse Pompey though his own exploits. It stands to reason then that Crassus would have had nothing to complain about in regards to the circumstances of the meeting.

With the new agreement in place the Triumvirate seemed to be back on track. Crassus and Pompey headed back to Rome, and after a lengthy delay to the elections succeeded to gain the consulship for the year 55. All was going well for the goals of the three men, when the first of several blows rocked the Triumvirate in 54. Pompey’s beloved wife Julia, for whom he had stayed in Rome even when his term as consul was up, died during childbirth, the infant soon to follow. That tragic event put a tremendous strain on Pompey and Caesar, both individually and in their relationship with each other. What should have been an event to strengthen their bond turned into one that nullified all physical connections between them.

Now, it is important to point out at this time that while Julia’s death was a great blow to the stability of the Triumvirate it by no means caused the collapse. What it did do was once again bring Pompey’s greatest weakness to the surface: his insecurity with his status. With the death of Crassus later the same year the Triumvirate was essentially gone: while Pompey still worked for Caesar’s aims as

43 Though they gained election with a significant amount of bloodshed to assure victory.
44 Seager 1979, 128
46 Plutarch states that Caesar and Pompey had stayed together through mutual fear of what Crassus might do if they fell at each other, but I disagree. Crassus was not the active threat to either, and they knew it.
per their deal, there was little faith between them. Pompey therefore decided to hedge his bets once again, as Plutarch mentions, by building up strength through urban magistracies. 47

What followed was an elaborate game of who could control more magistrates. What Pompey failed to realize was that Caesar had been at work establishing his network for years, and though Pompey had his own men, Caesar had the definite advantage. 48

The Political climate in Rome by 54 was rapidly approaching chaos. Rule of law was practically nonexistent, and there were many who began to call for a dictator to be appointed to restore order. Pompey seemed like the likely candidate to many, including Cato, who fought against the proposition tooth and nail. Plutarch mentions that Pompey's friends came forward and defended the proconsul, saying that he had no desire for the dictatorship. 49 Given "Magnus'" monumental ego it is more likely that he simply believed the time was not yet right for him to take such drastic control, though he certainly felt he deserved it. By denying that he had any aims at the dictatorship Pompey saw his credibility grow, and silenced many of his critics.

While the unease in Rome continued, the alliance between Caesar and Pompey began following a similar path. In 53 Caesar offered his great-niece Octavia to Pompey, hoping to once again solidify their pact through marriage, but Pompey declined. 50 It seems odd that Pompey would have rejected such an obvious overture of support unless he was entertaining advances from the boni. 51 Whether

47 Plut. Pomp. 54
48 Of this network I alluded earlier, when referring to Pompey's perception that Caesar was a long ways from Roman politics.
49 Plut. Pomp. 54
50 Seager 1979, 140
51 Boni is an alternate term for the conservative optimates used widely in Cicero's works. It means "the good" literally.
or not this is true at the time it became so a year later, when he married the daughter of the noblest man in Rome, Quintus Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio Nasica.\textsuperscript{52}

That marriage, and the events of the year 52 in general, are terribly important when discussing the growing rift between Pompey and Caesar. The anarchy that had plagued Rome for nearly a decade reached a peak in that year, culminating with the murder of Clodius and the subsequent burning of the senate house as his funeral pyre. In the following wave of violence and urban panic the populus cried out for Pompey to be named dictator or consul. A proposal was brought forth and Cato, the man who embodied the heart of the \textit{optimates}, supported the nomination of Pompey as consul without a colleague.\textsuperscript{53} That the ever-so moral Cato would have supported such a blatantly illegal act is incredible. The necessary conclusion is that the \textit{optimates}, seeing the current deterioration of their strength, decided to seek Pompey as an ally. It is widely maintained that Pompey was still a fence-sitter at this time, but Cato’s support of Pompey’s power, combined with the soon to follow marriage to a powerful \textit{optimus}’ daughter seems to indicate otherwise.

Up in Gaul, Caesar was fully occupied with Vercingetorix’s revolt, and thus, perhaps for this first time in his proconsulship, he left his supporters in Rome to largely do his fighting for him. Pompey, regardless of his personal feelings, was sticking to his promise of blocking discussion of Caesar’s provinces until the year 50, but that was not all he was doing. He also pushed though a law whereby there would be a five year waiting period for Consuls to take their provinces. While the law seemed legitimately designed to curb electoral corruption\textsuperscript{54}, it also left Caesar

\textsuperscript{52} Dio 40.51.3.  
\textsuperscript{53} Plut Pomp. 54  
\textsuperscript{54} Dio 40.30.1
incredibly vulnerable. He could now be replaced in his provinces as early as 49 from the pool of available proconsuls, leaving him without imperium or public office for a full year before he could assume the consulship.\textsuperscript{55} Cato had long before sworn to prosecute Caesar immediately upon his loss of imperium, and it was obvious to everyone involved that this would be the undoing of the man, should it come to pass.

Caesar himself was doing all he could to fully pacify Gaul before that time came, as he wanted to be able to give undivided attention to politics when that day came.\textsuperscript{56} He knew that Pompey would not support him for much longer, and though he hoped otherwise, he was preparing for the worst.

From Pompey's third consulship onwards there can be little doubt as to where his priorities lay. Though he did secure Caesar the right to stand for consul in absentia, he essentially nullified that with his anti-corruption legislation.\textsuperscript{57} Furthermore, he passed a resolution whereby Caesar and he would each give up one legion to pursue the defense of the East.\textsuperscript{58} While seemingly fair, both legions were in fact to come from Caesar's own army, as Pompey had, years prior, lent one of his Spanish legions to Caesar.\textsuperscript{59} This last act in particular stands as an obvious act of reducing Caesar's power so as to limit his options. It seems that civil war was a constant worry of the senate, and though Pompey found the idea preposterous\textsuperscript{60} he was always willing to increase his own power in relation to his rival.

The true irony of Pompey's political position is that he never would have

\textsuperscript{55} Gelzer 1968, 153
\textsuperscript{56} Meier 1982, 329
\textsuperscript{57} Though he did add an addendum to the bronze tablet on which the law was inscribed exempting Caesar, the addition was not binding, as neither the senate nor the tribunes had ratified it. Suet. Caes. 28.3
\textsuperscript{58} Though there was no active threat from Parthia at this time, it served as a convenient excuse.
\textsuperscript{59} Plut. Pomp. LVI
\textsuperscript{60} Sihler, E.G. Annals of Caesar. New York: G.E. Stechert & co., 1911, 182
been in control of so much power were it not for the perceived threat of Caesar. In Pompey the *optimate* senators saw someone that would guard them against Caesar’s ambitions, so long as they fed his ego and abolished his insecurities. While Pompey thought that he was finally part of the inner elite that he had striven his entire life to become, he was simply a tool. As illustrated by Cato’s willingness (albeit reluctant) to back Pompey, the *optimates* saw him as *safe and controllable* power, far from the dangerous enigma that was Caesar.

By 50 the Triumvirate was truly gone, in name and reality. All that was left was for the *optimates* and Pompey to goad Caesar into crossing the Rubicon, sparking the second civil war in half a century. In the past pages I have endeavored to explain the pivotal events that led to this dissolution, focusing on the personalities of two men. It is all too easy to blame the rift between Pompey and Caesar upon simple events, avoiding entirely the most important question: Could these men, with their goals of power and substantial egos, have gotten along indefinitely had events been different? Certainly not. Both lusted for the same *dignitas*, the same recognition, but both could not have it: there could be only one First Man in Rome. Pompey, though he thought he had achieved this honor, was in fact a mere puppet to the *boni* who showered him with platitudes to gain his support. The *populus*, to whom Pompey was still a popular hero, did still more to reinforce his illusion that he was in command of Rome. The adulation that Caesar received from his troops was no illusion: he was a leader that inspired true respect. He knew this, and demanded to be treated accordingly. When he was not, he was left without options; he would not bow to the opposition. There was only one possible result. First there were three men, then two, and finally there was only Caesar.


