

Roman War-Making and Expansion in the Mid-Republic: A Re-evaluation

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ABSTRACT

Rome's seemingly unstoppable march towards empire during the mid-republican period was a world-altering event. The story of Rome rising from a small city-state to becoming the mistress of the Mediterranean has been told and interpreted countless times, but it is a story often concerned only with Rome and gives little agency to the many other peoples that shared this geographical and temporal space with Rome.

The narrative of events of the mid-republican period has been interpreted as evidence for Rome's bellicosity and also for her desperation for defending herself and her friends. Historians find in the ancient sources the evidence to support their theories regardless of whether they are advocating an aggressive or a defensive posture of Rome. Either side of this argument is monocausal and lacks a certain amount of interpretive awareness of the inherent complexities and nuances involved in such historical events.

This study is an attempt to acknowledge the complex nature of any set of events that lead to war, and this is particularly so in the environment of the ancient Mediterranean. Many factors induced Rome towards war and conquest; these included concerns for defence, economy, and status. The ruling class, collectively and as individuals, also sought glory and fame by excelling at war and the Roman political system was focused on men serving the state, and the ultimate service to the state was to be successful in war.

Pressures from the interstate environment of the ancient Mediterranean and the internal culture interacted synergistically to guide the decision makers in Rome to determine on war in some instances rather than any alternative. In this study the ancient sources will be revisited and analysed without any preconceived theory. The goal is to let the ancient sources tell the story with all the complexities that, by their very nature, matters of war had.

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Introduction

Why should the topic of Rome's wars and expansion in the mid-Republic (ca. 264-133) be the subject of a thesis when the scholarly community seems to have moved away from the more old-fashioned and monocausal approaches of the past and, at first glance, has settled on a kind of (uneasy) consensus? There are several reasons why the topic of Rome's expansion in the mid-Republic needs to be revisited and rethought. It is fashionable these days to reject the thesis of Rome as extraordinarily aggressive and predatory in favour of several different subtle and sometimes less subtle versions of what is, in effect, defensive imperialism—the theory that Rome only fought to defend herself and her friends from hostile neighbours. There is not complete consensus here, and as we will see, some modern historians do still see Rome in this period as overtly bellicose. Nevertheless, the scholarly currents have ebbed and flowed into an ocean where Rome is seen in a less aggressive light. However, in many cases we have, it may be argued, merely swapped one monocausal thesis for another. Many historians are advocating a more inclusive and multi-causal interpretation of the sources in the introduction of their books, for instance, but rarely does this approach fully eventuate by the time they reach their conclusions.

What is more, several scholars have indeed highlighted that the majority of studies on Rome in the mid-Republic have focused, naturally enough, *only* on Rome. In doing so these studies have produced interpretations that do not consider the environment that Rome shared with numerous other states in and around the Mediterranean. The whole issue is exacerbated by the ancient sources as they are also focused on Rome and pay little substantive and unbiased attention to the other states. We simply cannot look to discover the impetus for Rome's many wars and her expansion during this period without serious consideration of the actions and decisions made by her friends and enemies. We need to interpret Rome's actions in the light of her contemporaries rather than handling Rome as if she were operating in a vacuum.

While some scholars have acknowledged that we need to produce studies that give more agency to Rome's friends and enemies, and that we need to consider the interstate environment more, few have actually produced studies that have given these points due

weight. Many of these same historians have also, rightly, advocated studies that included both cultural factors and environmental factors that potentially played their part in effecting Rome's decisions to go to war. Yet again, often these same authors do not quite give equal emphasis to these categories in their work.

Another motivational factor for this topic was to produce a study that clearly linked some of the modern theories to the ancient sources. The interpretation of the ancient sources will always be subjective to a certain degree, and that is to be expected. But, we must guard against using these sources just to prop up our particular favoured theses. In the end, we cannot necessarily accept the evidence at face value, but we must not let our preconceptions or our hypotheses dictate what parts of the evidence we accept and what parts we reject.

Thus the statement of purpose for this thesis in summary is: I shall attempt to produce a study on Roman expansion in the mid-republican period which takes into account the environment of the ancient Mediterranean and the interaction of the various peoples of this region, and not to focus exclusively on Rome. Concurrently, I need equally, to take into account the cultural, political and economic aspects of Rome that may have played a role in influencing the decision-making of the nobles. My aim is to approach the ancient sources with no preconceived biases towards any particular interpretation. It is also my intention to highlight the complexities of any decision made by Rome to go to war and not to attempt to simplify convoluted political situations in the name of producing a coherent narrative for easy consumption. And finally, I shall tackle the issue of whether Rome was indeed 'predatory' and 'bellicose' or whether she was merely defending herself and her friends from attack or alternatively, the distinct possibility she was both.

This thesis has attempted to avoid becoming too theoretical and, following scholars such as A. Eckstein, in adopting wholesale the interpretive framework and the terminology of the social sciences such as international-relations. Yet, it is unavoidable, and in fact beneficial, to utilize certain aspects of this academic discipline for its interpretive power and its ability to delineate the complex effect the environment had on Rome in her deliberations to go to war and to expand. I do not want to put undue emphasis on the interstate environment aspect of this thesis, for it is just one, albeit an important aspect among many, but it is

essential to clarify the minimal terminology and theories we need to fully comprehend this approach.

In short, following Eckstein, I have endorsed the theory that Rome (and crucially for my argument, every other state of the ancient Mediterranean) acted under a certain amount of pressure that was generated by the harsh interstate environment that she operated in. This harsh interstate environment is classified as anarchic.

The term 'anarchy' here is used to refer to an interstate world where there are a multitude of polities, often differing largely in their power, but with no obvious predominant state. There was little international law and few regulating apparatus. Each state is free, or even impelled to determine its own interests, often with little regard to its neighbouring polities. This is known as 'multipolar anarchy',¹ and this is the world Rome operated in. But equally, this was also the environment in which all of her competitors, neighbours, enemies, and friends existed. The same forces that exerted pressure on Rome also exerted themselves, *mutatis mutandis*, on all the other states of the Mediterranean basin.

Eckstein has argued that an anarchic state-system produces certain effects; ruthless self-help is merely one result of a lack of enforceable international law.² With no recourse to interstate regulations, a polity, whether large or small, must provide for its own security the best it can. The only effective way to do this is to possess (military) power. Thus 'grim self-help and power-maximizing behaviour become prevalent.'³ When a polity finds itself in such circumstances, the result can often be harsh reactions and interactions with other states, and, naturally enough, this can instil a desire in the polity for a growth in its power, in order to ameliorate natural and justifiable fears for its own security and for its self-preservation.

¹ Eckstein 2008: 8.

² See Livy 5.36.6; Plut. *Cam.* 17.5-6 for the claim the Celtic ambassadors broke 'the laws of nations', by carrying hidden weapons. While possibly not historical it does show that a form of international 'law' existed, but what was lacking was an independent body to enforce it. Also note that Eckstein's point could be applied to the domestic context. No one could argue that Rome was anarchic internally because the Romans had a set of laws and a developed legal system. But they never had a police force to enforce their laws.

³ Eckstein 2008: 8.

The seeking of power greater than others' is in fact a natural tendency in an anarchic system.⁴ This tendency is embraced by states in the effort to achieve balances of power and this involves the virtual management of other polities. This is a game inherently unstable and fraught with danger, but it was a task the Republic was impelled to commit to. However, as we will see below, the Romans also availed themselves of diplomacy in their search for, or maintenance of, equilibrium rather than just power maximizing, although the two can be closely related.

The theories so far offered by Eckstein seem to be hard to dismiss. The natural tendency for a polity to seek security through the use, or threat of force is ubiquitous to human society and is not circumscribed by geography or time. We are only left with the discussion on the degree of influence these forces asserted on a state.

Eckstein has also rightly observed that, in ancient times, there was no way of accurately assessing the military capabilities of other states.⁵ Polities and their military potential were often opaque to outsiders. Intelligence concerning a state's military capabilities was inaccurate, sporadic, and, at times, unintelligible; as such mistrust of intentions and motives was common. We can obviously see how paranoia about other states could develop. Enemies and potential enemies were always close at hand. For the Republic, the memory of Pyrrhus' and Hannibal's invasions and the various incursions by the Celts only instilled in the Romans the bitter experience that confirmed the perilous environment in which they existed.⁶

The above points are critical to my thesis but are only a part of it. This thesis also places an equal emphasis on the unit-level attributes of Rome and the other states of the time. The phrase 'unit-level attributes' refers to the internal culture of the peoples of polities, clans, or groups. These factors can range from the education of the young, the political systems in place, to more intangible concepts such as prevailing psychological attitudes to war and the like. This thesis attempts to place equal weight on both the theory of environmental

⁴ Eckstein 2006: 16.

⁵ Eckstein 2006: 17.

⁶ See Polyb. 6.10.14 for the significance of the bitterness of Rome's experiences and her ability to bear such experiences.

pressures and of internal-cultural forces which constantly and synergistically influenced one another.

The issue that remains today is that many studies continue not to present the evidence as it actually is; complex and nuanced. Historians are often still, implicitly or otherwise, endorsing an interpretation that shows Rome as exceptionally bellicose or one that paints her as defending herself and her friends, and lacking any desire for expansion. Historians are maintaining this dichotomy and even if some profess to be presenting a more balanced study it seems that they do so rarely. A few perfunctory paragraphs on the one or the other theory do not address the imbalances in many of the texts that are produced.

The ancient sources are, of course, problematic, and often cannot be accepted at face value. My approach to this issue is that I am going to use the ancient evidence without a concern to prove either the defensive hypotheses, or to confirm the bellicose interpretation of Rome's policies. That is, I will not let my reading of the evidence be shaped by a commitment to some (preconceived) interpretation.

Now we have the justification for the writing of this thesis we should briefly take note of the structure I have used. Following this introduction, chapter one will explore the historiography of the subject of Roman expansion in the mid-Republic, with important emphasis on the theory of defensive imperialism. I hope to trace the development of the defensive imperialism theory and then its quite dramatic rejection and the movement to a 'bellicose imperialism' theory. This chapter will show how modern historiography seems to create a dichotomy between these two theories and how the rejection of one or the other seems to create more extreme theories endorsing the opposite theory. While certainly many historians of this day and age are not presenting such monocausal theories things are still falling short of truly rounded and nuanced interpretations.

Chapter two takes into account the internal culture of Rome that potentially had a major effect on the Romans who made political and military decisions. We will throughout this thesis give due weight to the environment in which Rome existed but chapter two is about the government, governmental elites and individual statesmen, which all had a certain amount of agency and made individual choices. The political system, education, concepts such as glory and fame, and the freedom of choice for the general in the field are all

analysed so as to gain some insight into the culture and its role in determining Rome's actions.

Chapter three is an attempt to add context to the discussion. In this chapter there is an analysis of various other Mediterranean states that Rome shared its environment with. The purpose of this chapter is to test the extent to which Rome was exceptional. Undoubtedly Rome was aggressive, but was she exceptionally so? Or was she just a reflection of the prevailing attitudes to, and actions of many or all other states of the age? This is critical in gaining a true insight into possible causes of Rome's actions and her motivations for these.

The final chapter attempts to draw together the threads of the argument in the preceding chapters and to test these theories through a detailed analysis of a selection of case studies. This final analysis, I maintain, should establish the major premise of my thesis that the wars the Republic fought in the mid-Republic had various and complex reasons for their outbreak.

This thesis is a tribute to all the great historians who have contributed to this world-altering period when Rome pushed her sphere of influence out from Italy. It is my humble attempt to add a kind of balance to the scholarly debate and in no way is it an attempt to repudiate wholesale the theories of these great historians. However, a sense of balance and also a sense of the immense complexities involved in the decisions of Rome to go to war often simply do not come through in many studies on this subject. In the end, this is my simple goal. It is a mistake to simplify such complex phenomena that were involved in Rome's decision to go to war, and to do so is to present only part of the story.

Chapter 1: Theodor Mommsen and Defensive Imperialism

Theodor Mommsen is the modern originator, and to many the holy patron,¹ of the thesis of defensive imperialism that once held a pre-eminent place as *the* explanatory theory of Roman expansion from the mid-republican period onwards. From the nineteenth century until the 1970s the view that Roman imperialism was defensive in nature was repeatedly put forward to explain Rome's unprecedented rise from a city-state with territory only in central Italy to a city-state in possession of an empire that stretched across the Mediterranean.² The principal factor in Mommsen's thesis to account for Rome's vigorous expansion was a fear of powerful or potentially powerful neighbours. In order to understand the state of current scholarship on this topic, it is necessary to take the longevity and extraordinary influence of this thesis into account. As I will attempt to demonstrate, Mommsen's thesis continues to exert an influence even today.

It is useful to take a closer look at two famous pages from the second volume of Mommsen's *Römische Geschichte* in which he expounds his thesis.³ First, Mommsen sets out what he believes Rome's goals to have been:

It is evident to everyone whose observation is not superficial, that the Roman government during this whole period wished and desired nothing but the sovereignty of Italy; that they were simply desirous not to have too powerful neighbours alongside them; and that— not out of humanity towards the vanquished, but from the very sound view that they ought not to suffer the kernel of their empire to be stifled by the shell—they earnestly opposed the introduction first of Africa then of Greece, and lastly of Asia into the sphere of the Roman protectorate, till circumstances in each compelled, or at least suggested with irresistible force, the extension of that sphere.⁴

¹ Linderski 1984: 133.

² Polyb. 1.1.15. 'After all, is there anyone on earth who is so narrow minded or uninquisitive that he could fail to want to know how and thanks to what kind of political system almost the entire world was conquered and brought under a single empire of the Romans, in less than fifty-three years.' Polybius is referring to the period between the beginnings of the Second Punic War, which he thinks began with the siege of Saguntum in 219 BC, to the end of the Third Macedonian War in 168/7 BC.

³ Mommsen 1913: Vol. 2, pp. 520-522.

⁴ Mommsen 1913: 521.

Earlier in the same work, Mommsen had asserted that Rome had acquired her empire simply as a result of these concerns, and not because of a conscious desire for empire.

If in conclusion, we glance back at the career of Rome from the union of Italy to the dismemberment of Macedonia, the universal empire of Rome, far from appearing as a gigantic plan contrived and carried out by an insatiable thirst for territorial aggrandizement, appears to have been a result which forced itself on the Roman government without, and even in opposition to, its wish.⁵

Like everyone, Mommsen was a product of his experiences and environment. Demonstrably influenced by G.W.F. Hegel, Mommsen espoused a theory of historical development, 'leading necessarily through toil and trial, from lower to higher stages of human existence.'⁶ In the view of J. Linderski, Mommsen's grandiose narrative of Roman expansion combined principles of historicism and a romantic vision of the past, but the guiding force behind his *Römische Geschichte* was the 'painful experiences of the revolution of 1848'.⁷ For Mommsen, the nation was the pre-eminent subject of history and the ultimate goal of the national state. The undeniable greatness of ancient Rome was in her achievement of unifying the Italian peninsula.⁸ Linderski suggests that Mommsen saw a strong analogy between Rome's role in Italy as the unifier, and the role of Prussia in Germany, which he, in a patriotic and idealized manner, expected to lead Germany to a similar greatness.⁹ Linderski seems to have drawn this conclusion from Mommsen's premise that Rome's greatness resided in her unification of Italy,¹⁰ and Mommsen's implication that the ultimate subject of history is the national state.

For Linderski, Mommsen saw in the Romans a desire to rule over Italy and unification of the peninsula under the Romans was the highest point of ancient history. But, from this

⁵ Mommsen 1913: 520.

⁶ Linderski 1984: 133.

⁷ Linderski 1984: 133. There were multiple revolutions in 1848, a series of political upheavals throughout Europe. These revolutions were democratic in nature with the aim of removing the old feudal structures and creating independent national states. In Germany, liberals and nationalists attempted, but failed, to unify the 39 German states. These themes of unification and nationalism are pervasive throughout Mommsen's work.

⁸ Linderski 1984: 133.

⁹ Linderski 1984: 134.

¹⁰ Mommsen 1913: 1.6.

point of unification, Rome was seized by fear of aggressive neighbours as she sought to maintain the 'nation state' of Italy.¹¹

Linderski's final analysis of Mommsen's fundamental motivation for offering defensive imperialism as the explanation for Roman expansion does have some force. However, he goes too far when he suggests that Mommsen does not explain Rome's expansion but looks to explain it away by attempting to exculpate Rome and shift the responsibility on to her neighbours.¹² Mommsen *did* offer an explanation which denied that the acquisition of an empire was Rome's immediate goal, and suggested it was the result of defensive concerns. There was no grand plan for expansion beyond Italy; it was merely foisted on Rome by the unfortunate circumstances she found herself in.

According to Mommsen, Roman foreign policy was conceived by the senate which did not possess an intense desire for self-aggrandizement beyond Italy. It was not endowed with either desire or an instinctive aptitude for conquering once Italy was 'united'. Rather it was seized by a sense of fear of powerful neighbours who had the very real potential to suffocate Rome. Mommsen believed that the decisions and policies implemented throughout the whole period of transmarine expansion were predicated on Rome's desire for the sovereignty of Italy. This led to a fear of neighbours that were powerful enough to threaten this sovereignty. As such, every instance of Roman expansion was primarily driven by the desire to create a stable and benign territory contiguous to Roman lands. Eventually, the whole Italian peninsula became the senate's prime defensive responsibility. The defensive ring surrounding Italy was broken in Africa, in Greece, and in Asia,¹³ not because of the implementation of a consciously conceived policy of expansion, but due to circumstances which compelled the senate, or 'suggested' with 'irresistible force' that an extension of the realm was imperative for the security of Rome and Italy. Over time, the Republic was forced to enlarge this area of involvement in order to maintain the status quo because of either aggression directed towards the city-state itself or by 'an unparalleled disturbance of the existing political relations.'¹⁴

¹¹ Linderski 1984: 137.

¹² Linderski 1984: 136.

¹³ Linderski 1984: 137.

¹⁴ Mommsen 1913: 520-521.

For Mommsen the definition of a genuine expansionist policy must include a desire to annex territory for its own sake and (presumably) not because of concerns such as defence. There must also be a desire for world domination. He found both of these aspects in his interpretation of Roman 'foreign policy' to be absent. Yet, presumably, on this view, Rome did indeed have an expansionist policy, since Rome did not always control Italy. Once Rome had acquired Italy, her desire, evidently, was simply to hold the Italian peninsula and not expand beyond it. Mommsen noted, as many other historians have ever since, the apparent reluctance of Rome to annex foreign territories.¹⁵ This view has long been a source of significant debate.¹⁶

Mommsen's perceptions of history, and his own environment, allowed him to introduce and develop concepts such as 'accidental' or 'defensive' imperialism. These concepts, in turn, can be and were used, to deny the existence of any conscious policy of expansion or a collective will to forge an empire on the part of Rome. Such 'apologist' approaches, if that is what they are, are now less fashionable and the idea that Rome had an ideology that supported the expansion of Roman territory is argued more widely.¹⁷ Nonetheless, the defensive imperialism theory has had a long and distinguished academic career, taking various forms and being invoked by a wide range of scholars and it is still very much present in varying forms and degrees in some modern works.¹⁸

The first great inheritor of Mommsen's theory was Maurice Holleaux. We can succinctly adumbrate Holleaux's views. He maintained that, until 200, Rome had never possessed a formulated or systematic policy towards the Greek world.¹⁹ This was a mere symptom of Rome's complete indifference to the Greek east. Roman intervention in Illyria and the Macedonian wars was due to a chain of accidents. Moreover, as soon as these conflicts were resolved, the Romans disengaged from these regions expeditiously.²⁰

¹⁵ Mommsen 1913: 520.

¹⁶ For the first and most significant sustained attack on this interpretation see Harris, 1979: 131-254.

¹⁷ Hanson 1997: 67.

¹⁸ See Frank 1909; Holleaux 1921; Badian 1958, 1968; Walbank 1963; Gruen 1970: 1-3; Errington 1972, for the more standard defensive imperialism interpretations. See below for examples of more modern, 'degenerate' interpretations.

¹⁹ Holleaux 1930: 136.

²⁰ Holleaux 1930: 136, 137, 237, 238, 239, 240. Walbank 1963: 1.

More specifically Holleaux claimed that Rome would never have crossed the Adriatic in 229 to intervene in Illyria had it not been for the provocation of Queen Teuta. In 214 the Romans would not have set foot on Greek soil, had they not needed to counter the alliance between Philip and Hannibal, and they would not have felt compelled to look eastward again if they had not learnt of an 'unholy' alliance between Philip and Antiochus.²¹ For Holleaux, the Republic perceived threats to its sovereignty when in reality these threats did not necessarily exist.²² Under (perceived) pressure from circumstances, and only to ward off imminent danger, Rome entered the east but, once the threat was removed, she promptly withdrew.²³ This, according to Holleaux, is incontrovertibly expressed by the Republic's manifest lack of desire for territorial expansion. In Illyria, after the Romans had effectively pacified the region they only acquired the two island dependencies of Zacynthus and Cephallenia. Even more telling is the fact that, in Greece, Macedonia, and Asia, where the Romans might have annexed at will, they acquired nothing.²⁴

In a final analysis of Holleaux's thesis, the motivation for the Republic's intervention in the Greek east was primarily defensive due to the (imagined) threat posed by several states, leagues, and dynasts in this part of the Mediterranean world. This irrational fear was a result of a general ignorance of the east as well as a proclivity for believing unsubstantiated rumour. Rome was easily swayed by foreign influences.²⁵ Holleaux opines that Attalus and Rhodes were the real instigators of the Second Macedonian War; while Eumenes was the person who was most responsible for the war with Perseus.²⁶ Holleaux's thesis enjoyed remarkable success and, particularly due to the chapters he wrote for the *Cambridge Ancient History* on the first two Macedonian wars and the Syrian war, it would become the orthodox 'doctrine' prevalent in England, France, and indeed in most of the scholarly world.²⁷

²¹ Holleaux 1930: 239.

²² Holleaux 1930: 239.

²³ Holleaux 1930: 137.

²⁴ Holleaux 1930: 237.

²⁵ Holleaux 1930: 240.

²⁶ Holleaux 1930: 240.

²⁷ Walbank 1963: 2. See Holleaux 1930: 116-239.

It has been claimed that Holleaux 'slavishly'²⁸ followed Polybius in certain assessments and even biases in relation to Roman expansion. Regardless of whether or not one takes such a view, it is impossible to deny the huge debt that he owes to Polybius in his reconstruction of Roman policy during the critical years of expansion in the mid-republican period.²⁹ Holleaux correctly identified an inconsistency in Polybius' thesis, however;³⁰ he argued that Polybius' putative Roman imperial strivings are in opposition to his assessment of individual wars.³¹ But, in general, Holleaux accepts and elaborates on Polybius' interpretations of individual wars as systematic and coherent as well as adducing them as evidence for Rome's lack of desire for involvement in the Greek east.³²

Regardless of whether Holleaux is seen as adhering excessively to Polybius or not, there can be no denying that his premise that republican Rome lacked an imperialist policy for the Greek east eventually 'acquired a life and a momentum of its own.'³³ As we have seen Mommsen was inspired by German nationalism. Holleaux was likewise a product of his environment; he was inspired by a French admiration for Rome to produce a defensive interpretation of Roman expansion.

Tenney Frank was one of the earliest historians to use the word 'imperialism' in the title of a book in English pertaining to Rome's expansion.³⁴ Frank's Rome reflected the America of McKinley and Roosevelt and his own pacifism. His *Roman Imperialism* portrayed a Rome that was not aggressively seeking expansion, but a Rome that was generous yet surrounded by pugnacious and unruly tribesmen as well as thankless Greeks.³⁵ Frank offered the fetial institution as proof the Romans were not aggressive or expansionist. He claimed that 'the Roman *mos maiorum* did not recognise the right of aggression or desire for more territory as just cause for war.'³⁶ That is, 'the custom of ancestors' did not recognise the desire for expansion as justification for war; there was no precedent for such war-making. The fetial institution acted as, albeit imperfectly, a brake on aggressive wars of expansion.

²⁸ Linderski 1984: 141.

²⁹ Walbank 1963: 1.

³⁰ Holleaux 1921. Also see Walbank 1963: 5. See Derow 1979, for a rather weak attempt to explain this inherent contradiction away.

³¹ Holleaux 1921. Walbank 1963: 1-13; Gruen 1984: 2. n.2.

³² See Golan 1989 and Thornton 2013: for a different perspective.

³³ Linderski 1984: 143.

³⁴ He was the second. The first was W.T. Arnolds' *Studies of Roman Imperialism*, Manchester, 1906.

³⁵ Linderski 1984: 148. See Frank 1914.

³⁶ Frank 1914: 9.

The fetial institution, the priestly college and its rites, have been used by many scholars since Frank, not only to support the view that Roman imperialism was defensive in nature but also to support the view the Romans were actually aggressive and expansionist in nature.³⁷ This important matter of religious rites and the potentially significant concept of the *bellum iustum*, the 'just war' will be assessed in more detail in the next chapter.

Significantly, Mommsen, Holleaux, and Frank did allow some scope for the Romans to be conquerors, exploiters, and imperialists, but only in the west. For these scholars, the legions brought culture to the west, and Roman intervention was essential for the history of progress. It was a completely different situation in Greece and the Greek east.³⁸ This policy towards the Greek world was conceived of as a 'sentimental' policy by both Mommsen and Frank.³⁹ Roman actions were analysed through a filter of philhellenic sentiments as well as an intense desire for acceptance by the Greek world facilitated by the championing of Greek freedom.⁴⁰

In contrast to Mommsen, Holleaux, and Frank, the great Italian historian Gaetano De Sanctis offered a slightly more nuanced interpretation of Roman expansion. De Sanctis' *Storia dei Romani* was the grand counterpart to Mommsen's *Römische Geschichte*, and imperialism was at the centre of his conception of Roman history.⁴¹ Although the doctrine of defensive imperialism never took hold in Italy there still remain aspects of correlation between De Sanctis' thought and that of the three pre-eminent protagonists of this doctrine.

De Sanctis also perceived Rome's transmarine expansion through 'two sets of glasses',⁴² one for viewing expansion in the west and one for the east. In De Sanctis' opinion, Rome's conquest of the west was a remarkable achievement if one considers the humanitarian and cultural aspects. This was a victory for progress.⁴³ De Sanctis perceived a difference between colonisation and imperialism; the former was potentially positive while the latter was

³⁷ See Harris 1979: 166-174; Sherwin-White 1980: 177.

³⁸ Linderski 1984: 145.

³⁹ Mommsen 1913: 520-521; Frank 1914: 157-59. See Badian 1967: 90 for repudiation.

⁴⁰ Philhellenic sentiments: Gruen 1984: 6; desire for acceptance: Frank 1914: 138-189.

⁴¹ Linderski 1984: 148.

⁴² Linderski 1984: 159.

⁴³ De Sanctis 1976: 9-38.

disaster for all concerned.⁴⁴ For De Sanctis Rome's conquests in the west were colonisation which, in the interests of progress and humanity, were wholly justified.

In the case of the Greek east, De Sanctis diverged sharply from Mommsen's and Holleaux's 'reluctant interventionist' theory. For him the Romans' intervention in Greek affairs was unprovoked and completely unjustified. The Hellenistic monarchies were impotent and presented no substantive threat to Rome.⁴⁵ In fact, for De Sanctis, it is likely that Rome prevented Greece from progressing to a total unity and reaching its full potential.⁴⁶ Militarism had prevailed in Roman society; it was now driven by an insatiable thirst for power and conquest. This moral degeneracy presaged the ultimate demise of the Republic.⁴⁷ The explanation of Roman expansion offered by De Sanctis seems to be an initial rejection of the defensive imperialism thesis, at least to a degree, and it was to influence others in the future.

In more recent times there have been various opponents of defensive imperialism,⁴⁸ but the first sustained attack was mounted by William Harris in 1979.⁴⁹ This rejection of the defensive thesis can be imputed to the influence, directly or otherwise, of Edward Said's book *Orientalism*.⁵⁰ Some scholars⁵¹ have linked defensive imperialism to what they perceive as the pro-imperial mind-set of earlier classical scholars, if not classical studies in general. David Mattingly asserts that the major issue with modern literature concerned with Roman imperialism is that 'it is itself part of an imperialist discourse of remarkable longevity in a post-colonial age.'⁵² For Mattingly, and other scholars who share similar interpretive frameworks, the more traditional assessments of Roman expansionism and colonialism are intimately connected with a conscious or a subconscious support for western imperialism.⁵³

As we have already seen, it has been suggested that the defensive imperialism thesis is one which is sometimes used to exculpate Rome from any responsibility for her expansion;

⁴⁴ Linderski 1984: 150.

⁴⁵ De Sanctis 1969: 4.1.23. Linderski 1984: 150.

⁴⁶ Linderski 1984: 150.

⁴⁷ See this interpretation in Gruen 1984: 6.

⁴⁸ See below.

⁴⁹ Harris 1979. See below.

⁵⁰ Said 1978. Said maintained that the discourse on Orientalist scholarship was inextricably connected to the imperialist societies that produced it.

⁵¹ E.g. Hingley 1993; Harrison 2005.

⁵² Mattingly 1997: 8.

⁵³ Mattingly 1997; Adler 2008: 189.

it has been argued that this is due to the desire to vindicate modern colonialism.⁵⁴ But among proponents of defensive imperialism there are seldom any systematic comparisons with modern empires.⁵⁵ It would seem this charge rests solely on intuition instead of empirical evidence.⁵⁶ Moreover, it is decidedly difficult to assess the true political leanings of historians in general and, as a result, some modern historians have resorted to generalised estimations of earlier scholars' intellectual environments.⁵⁷ Indeed, our discussion of Mommsen and Frank has likewise done this and the potential benefits and inherent dangers of such an approach must always be borne in mind.

This whole charge, that defensive imperialism is an 'apologist' approach, is a complex debate and one that would take us too far afield to analyse in depth. How accurate this view is hard to know, but it is safe to say that it is far too simplistic and does not provide any true indication of the nuanced complexities involved in the defensive imperialism thesis.

I have briefly outlined the development of the thesis of defensive imperialism and also discussed the position of some of its most eminent advocates. The hypotheses of Mommsen, Holleaux and Frank, in particular are certainly possible ways of explaining the history of Roman expansion in the mid-Republic. Their hypotheses have been, and continue to be, tested against the evidence. Their status as possible explanations of the process of Roman expansion has, in some cases, endured in various forms and in other cases they have been repudiated and replaced by new hypotheses, one that possesses increased consistency, coherence, and illuminative power.⁵⁸ The predominant questions I will attempt to answer in this thesis is whether the ancient sources truly support the theory of defensive imperialism, whether they, to the contrary, suggest that Rome was more aggressive, or whether they allow for a more multi-causal reading.

⁵⁴ Adler 2008: 190.

⁵⁵ See Badian 1968: 16-17 for a notable exception.

⁵⁶ Adler 2008: 192.

⁵⁷ Adler 2008: 193.

⁵⁸ White 1987: 4.

WILLIAM HARRIS AND 'BELLICOSE IMPERIALISM'

We turn now to Harris' hugely influential and paradigm shifting text *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*. As has been alluded to above, Harris' book was ground-breaking in its repudiation of the defensive imperialism thesis, and its achievement as J. North recognised, 'is surely that it makes this view [defensive imperialism] virtually untenable in the form' it had taken previously.⁵⁹ The defensive imperialism thesis would never be stated again in quite the same terms as Mommsen and Holleaux had used; where it has not simply been abandoned altogether, it has had to undergo significant alteration on the account of Harris' critique.

We can summarise the major premises of Harris' book thus: Republican Roman society and culture were dedicated to regular warfare, and in fact, war was expected and desired by Romans of all statuses: a good proportion of Romans, particularly those making political decisions, were well aware of the profits warfare and expansion offered; and finally, according to Harris, expansion was publicly stated as an aim and it was not circumscribed at all by the ideology of the *ius fetiale*.⁶⁰ That is, unlike what Frank proposed, Harris claimed the institution of the fetial law did *not* inhibit Rome from waging an aggressive war.⁶¹ We could add that Harris proposes that the Republic's wars were aggressive in intent and form.

The impact Harris' thesis had on the academic community is undeniable. Even for those who continue to advocate some form of the old 'defensive' interpretation, the initial chapters of this book are indispensable.⁶² However, as with all academic work, Harris' thesis has been criticised, and in a range of different ways. Some criticisms are more justified than others. In the interest of a more complete representation of Harris' thesis it is worth quoting from the preface Harris wrote for the paperback edition of 1984:

So I ought perhaps to reiterate that I do not maintain that the Romans planned the construction of their empire long in advance, or that they were the 'aggressors' in every war they undertook during the middle Republic (I admit, however, that I find nothing absurd in the notion

⁵⁹ North 1981: 1.

⁶⁰ Harris 1979: 1-130. North 1981: 1.

⁶¹ Harris 1979: 166-175.

⁶² See Sherwin-White 1980: 177.

that in this period Rome was an exceptionally aggressive state). I do not even deny that the Romans sometimes fought defensive wars.⁶³

The above quote is worth keeping in mind as we explore our theme of Roman expansion in the mid-Republic.

Harris justifiably suggests that the Roman *cupido gloriae*, or the desire for glory,⁶⁴ played an important role in Roman bellicosity. As the following will explicate, the political system of the Republic fostered and intensified this desire. Harris concludes from his evidence that Roman imperialism has 'dark and irrational roots' and the regularity of warfare in the mid-republic gave it 'a pathological character.'⁶⁵ Yet even if there is some validity in such an assessment, which is tendentious, the issue is that this may also be true of Rome's neighbours.

It is certainly hard to repudiate Harris' judgement that the Republic was aggressive and assertive, at least from a modern perspective. Yet the question of Roman exceptionalism looms large. For Harris Rome was exceptional in her aggression and 'pathological' in nature:

The significance of Roman ferocity is hard to gauge. In many respects their behaviour resembles that of many other non-primitive ancient peoples, yet few others are known to have displayed such an extreme degree of ferocity in war while reaching a high level of political culture. Roman imperialism was in large part the result of quite rational behaviour on the part of the Romans, but it also had dark and irrational roots... As far as the symptoms are concerned, Polybius gave an accurate description: writing about the First Punic War, but using the present tense, he says that it is a Roman characteristic to use violent force, βία for all purposes.⁶⁶

Harris is able to present Rome as exceptionally aggressive by selectively using the ancient sources that strengthen his thesis and by emphasizing material that presents Rome as highly bellicose: but a severe distortion results. Rome is presented as an especially aggressive state possessing a 'pathological character' within its society and culture.⁶⁷ As such, Harris, in the opinion of A. Eckstein, does not recognise the need to investigate in detail the 'equally aggressive and belligerent conduct of other large polities in their

⁶³ Harris 1979: Preface to Paperback Edition of 1984.

⁶⁴ Sall. *BC* 7.3-6. See page 36 below.

⁶⁵ Harris 1979: 53.

⁶⁶ Harris 1979: 53.

⁶⁷ Eckstein 2006: 188.

interaction both with each other and with Rome.⁶⁸ The militant nature of the other states of the ancient Mediterranean is disappointingly ignored and Rome and her political and military conduct are presented in isolation. There is certainly some substance to Eckstein's criticism, but with some qualification: Harris' book would need to be rewritten as a more general analysis of the ancient world and we need to acknowledge that he was seeking to overturn the model of defensive imperialism as it pertained to Rome only.

There are several other issues that scholars have raised concerning Harris' text that we should mention briefly. A.N. Sherwin-White accuses Harris of lacking a certain amount of interpretative awareness.⁶⁹ One particularly pertinent point made by Sherwin-White is that Harris does not give any prominence to the collective historical experiences of the Romans. Throughout the republican period many significant events occurred that must have contributed to the ideology and mentalities of the Roman people. Significantly there is no recognition of the tremendous impact the invasions of Pyrrhus, Hannibal, and the Celts must have had on the Roman people.⁷⁰ Without any explicit acknowledgement of the impact of these experiences, the Republic's collective mentality seems to 'acquire a neurosis of fear'⁷¹ regarding its posture towards other polities. Of course, to acknowledge such fears would be to legitimise the position of defensive imperialism. This point is connected to the failure of Harris to take into account the interstate environment and only focusing on Rome.

Harris' theory is based on a unit-attribute approach, which is to say it examines the internal characteristics of Rome (the unit) in order to explain the origin of its empire.⁷² In a unit-attribute theory, the internal forces within a particular state are what produce most external outcomes; there is little room for the external geo-political environment (the interstate system) to influence the progression and events that shape all relationships between states. The interstate system of which the Roman Republic was a part was merely, following Harris' approach, an outcome of the internal forces that Harris focused intensely on in his book.⁷³

⁶⁸ Eckstein 2006: 183.

⁶⁹ Sherwin-White 1980: 177.

⁷⁰ Sherwin-White 1980: 178.

⁷¹ Sherwin-White 1980: 178.

⁷² Eckstein 2006: 27.

⁷³ Eckstein 2006: 27. See Waltz 1979: 18-37.

One final point about Harris' thesis needs to be made. His view on imperialism had a powerful appeal to many. It seems to accord well with common sense, in that Roman republican culture patently valued military achievement above all others and therefore it would be improbable to claim the republic did not aggressively seek and foment war to win glory in battle.⁷⁴ And, as J. Rich has noted, the perception of mid-republican Rome as being highly bellicose fits well with contemporary attitudes and preconceptions,⁷⁵ and is therefore easily conceptualised as the predominant impetus for republican expansion. This brings us to the final point. Like Mommsen's and Holleaux's work, Harris' book is a product of its times. It is hard to deny the influence that the intellectual and political climate must have had on this Englishman living in America during the Vietnam War. In general, during the period in which Harris developed the thesis of exceptional Roman aggression, the horrors of war were for the first time being seen daily on television. War was being universally condemned as abhorrent and a futile waste of lives.

Since Harris' thesis appeared there have been numerous reworkings of it by other scholars. These subsequent works have also often failed to consider Rome's interstate environment and her cultural attitudes together with those of other contemporary states.⁷⁶ Let us look at a small selection of advocates of 'bellicose' imperialism.

Robert J. Rowland claims that, from the beginning of the Republic, fighting defensively was not at all the prominent mode of conflict. Conflict 'followed a repeated pattern of behaviour outflanking allies and potential enemies, *provoking* hostile responses, and reacting to those responses as if the Romans were the aggrieved party.'⁷⁷ For Nathan Rosenstein republican Rome's relentless warfare profoundly affected the Roman people, 'yet what most impelled and sustained this massive undertaking was nothing less than the very character of the Republic itself.'⁷⁸ Rosenstein saw the link between conquest and profit as a fundamental incentive for leading Romans to advocate war almost annually. He, like Harris, also stressed that the *nobilitas*' self-definition was premised on office holding and the display of *virtus* or manly excellence. *Virtus* was displayed in the pursuit of *gloria* and

⁷⁴ Rich 1993: 41.

⁷⁵ Rich 1993: 41.

⁷⁶ Eckstein 2006: 184.

⁷⁷ Rowland 1983: 761, my emphasis.

⁷⁸ Rosenstein 1999: 193.

fama which were acquired by service to the *res publica*. War constituted the most significant and important public business and offered the best opportunity to win *gloria* and hence *fama*.⁷⁹ This was a significant incentive for regular war.

For B. Campbell, evidence presented in Livy illustrates the exceptional brutality of Rome's legionaries.⁸⁰ He suggests that 'the Romans seemingly had a pronounced willingness to use violence against alien peoples.'⁸¹ P. Derow traces Roman activity in the Po valley and highlights the aggression exhibited by the Romans after 238 and then after 225.⁸² But this is presented without any mention of the serious and large scale raids by Celts on the Roman colony of Ariminum in 238 and Italy proper in 225.⁸³

All of the above scholars see Roman expansion as exceptional in its degree of aggression and its relentlessness. I will conclude this section by noting a few of the more extreme propositions some scholars have offered to describe Roman expansion, to illustrate how monocausal, unbalanced, and unsophisticated hypotheses can distort representations of complex historical phenomena to an unacceptable degree.

K. Raaflaub asserts that, in the formative years of the Republic, because of a constant pressure from warlike neighbours, the Romans adopted the characteristics of a militaristic society in order to survive. After this present and real danger abated they maintained their military potential and the militaristic ideology of their culture for its capacity to facilitate expansion.⁸⁴

T.J. Cornell proffers the question 'why was Rome so belligerent?'⁸⁵ The question should perhaps have been phrased 'was Rome belligerent?' Unfortunately, Cornell does not look at other cultures to assess Rome's bellicosity and therefore the answers he gives which confirm Rome's bellicosity, are potentially unbalanced. His book, quite obviously, is about

⁷⁹ Rosenstein 1999: 200.

⁸⁰ See, e.g., Livy 31.34.14 for the horrific wounds and deaths inflicted by the Romans with their 'Spanish' swords.

⁸¹ Campbell 2002: 169.

⁸² Derow 2003: 53-54.

⁸³ Eckstein 2006: 184; Derow 2003: 53-54. Derow also discusses Philip V's peace with Aetolia in 206 without highlighting the devastation he inflicted in his invasion of Aetolia that year; on pp.63-64 he presents Antiochus III's invasion of Greece—despite repeated warnings issued by Rome—as *not* the cause behind the Syrian War.

⁸⁴ Raaflaub 1991: 576.

⁸⁵ Cornell 1995: 365.

Rome, yet he needed to take into account other cultures of the day, so that Rome's belligerence is measured by the standards of the day, and not by our standards.

L. Keely, when describing aggressive societies that raid and attack other peoples in their geo-political sphere, colourfully labelled such societies as 'rotten apples'. Republican Rome is one such a rotten apple and is listed with other western nations that were 'especially belligerent'.⁸⁶

Finally, to illustrate that Harris' thesis of exceptional Roman bellicosity still has pride of place in some scholar's work even now we need look no further than R. Waterfield's book *Taken at the Flood*, published in 2014. Waterfield claims the Romans were belligerent and arrogant and were 'natural imperialists'.⁸⁷ He exclaims Rome was 'warmongering'⁸⁸ and the legionaries were consistently more brutal than their opponents.⁸⁹ Waterfield argues that the Romans were savage on the battlefield in comparison to the Greeks. He also explicitly advocates Harris' thesis of exceptional bellicosity and Rome's penchant for warfare which had little to do with defence or systemic factors.⁹⁰ Overall, Waterfield's assessment is fairly uncompromising in its advocacy of the thesis that the Republic was predatory and excessively aggressive.

To balance our overview of recent scholarly debate on the nature of Roman expansion we need to look briefly at the advocates of a more 'defensive' imperialism thesis since the publication of Harris' book. In the opinion of E. Gruen it is merely simplistic to postulate a uniform explanation for expansion during the mid-Republic. The theories we have just seen, those of sheer aggression and militarism are too simplistic.⁹¹ Gruen utilizes the ancient evidence to illustrate the Republic's many refusals given to Greek states for intervention, Rome's declining of requests and denials of numerous opportunities, hesitation and delays, as well as the frequent recourse to mediation which all, potentially, belie the theory of extreme bellicosity.⁹² Rome's intervention in the Greek east was quite sporadic and in fact often frustrated the Greeks who expected her to act as hegemon. Here lies the strength of

⁸⁶ Keely 1996: 128. Rome is still presented as exceptional for her time though.

⁸⁷ Waterfield 2014: 20.

⁸⁸ Waterfield 2014: 18.

⁸⁹ Waterfield 2014: 58.

⁹⁰ Waterfield 2014: X-XL.

⁹¹ Gruen 1984: 725.

⁹² Gruen 1984: 725.

Gruen's study and the weakness of many advocates of straightforward 'bellicose' imperialism. Gruen does not analyse the Republic in isolation, and actually views her from a Greek perspective.

J.A. North makes the incisive comment that Harris seems to be seeking a simple formula that can be applied to all cases,⁹³ a criticism that can be justifiably directed at many studies on both sides of the debate. He also rightly opines that wars begin from complex situations in which 'aggression, mutual fear, confusion, and accident, bad communications, personal and political ambitions and many other factors play a part.'⁹⁴ This point is infinitely reasonable and yet often ignored by advocates of an exceptionally aggressive Rome as well as by those pushing defensive imperialism as the singular cause of expansion.

Finally, to complete this short overview of some of the more significant scholarship published since Harris' book came out we need to acknowledge A. Eckstein's immense impact on current debate. Firstly, Eckstein suggests that Roman commanders in the field had a substantive and fundamental influence on the Republic's relations with foreign communities due to the *ad hoc* decisions they were allowed to make.⁹⁵ Secondly, rather than focusing solely on the internal culture of Rome to explain her expansion, Eckstein highlights the severe pressure on *all* states in the interstate system that prevailed in the ancient Mediterranean.⁹⁶ This approach has the major advantage that it does not isolate one state but takes into account the environment as a whole in which that polity existed. As will be suggested in due course, while the Roman Republic's internal culture was idiosyncratic in many ways, in function it was not exceptional, and thus cannot be the sole cause of Rome's aggressive expansionist posture.

The scholars mentioned above have all contributed to the debate and I am in no way repudiating wholesale their theses or hypotheses. It is often all just a matter of emphasis. Indeed in this thesis I am looking for a 'layered' approach where I can find a subtle balance between attributes and the system, as they both simultaneously and synergistically influence each other. In short, it will simply not do to look for a monocausal explanation for

⁹³ North 1981: 2.

⁹⁴ North 1981: 2.

⁹⁵ See Eckstein 1987.

⁹⁶ Eckstein 2006: 28.

such a complex historical phenomenon which unfolded over a long period. To complete this chapter I would like to explore how the defensive imperialism thesis and the 'bellicose imperialism' thesis have been applied to the same historical event by various scholars, to see how these theses work on the ground and to explore the possible strengths and weaknesses of each. To do this, I will look at the outbreak of the Third Macedonian War.

THE CAUSES OF THE THIRD MACEDONIAN WAR

The causes and motivations behind the outbreak of the Third Macedonian War are difficult to assess and the possible origins of this conflict have been debated and discussed almost as frequently as those of the war with Philip V.⁹⁷ As with most aspects of republican Rome, almost all of our information is from Polybius and Livy. What is striking when one analyses these ancient sources, particularly Livy, is that the general narrative contains obvious contradictions and thus easily allows for interpretations of specific events that can be diametrically opposite. It is little wonder that some scholars have found in this evidence support for the view that Rome's position was defensive while others have found support for the view that Rome was the aggressor.

The extant fragments of Polybius' book 25 mention several possible antagonistic actions by Perseus towards Rome. The king, after renewing his friendship with Rome,⁹⁸ began a campaign of winning hearts and minds in Greece.⁹⁹ There is also a brief mention of Perseus' marriage to Laodice, the Seleucid princess and the granddaughter of Rome's old enemy Antiochus III.¹⁰⁰ According to Polybius, Rome was 'stirring up' conflict between Rhodes and Lycia with the goal of exhausting Rhodes' resources. This was done after the Romans had been made aware of the Rhodians' part in escorting the king's bride to him.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Gruen 1984: 408.

⁹⁸ Polyb. 25.3.1.

⁹⁹ Polyb. 25.3.1.

¹⁰⁰ Polyb. 25.4.9; Errington 1973: 202-203.

¹⁰¹ Polyb. 25.4.9.

Livy's narrative contains a list of Perseus' supposed crimes, yet it is contradicted by the king's indefatigable quest for a peace that would not cost Macedonia her sovereignty and prestige. In 173 Roman ambassadors sent to Aetolia and Macedonia were not permitted an interview with Perseus. They also reported that preparations for war were far in advance.¹⁰² War with Rome had apparently been planned prior to the death, in 179, of Perseus' father, Philip. It would also seem that the Romans harboured a hatred for Perseus as was expressed to the Achaeans when trying to elicit their support.¹⁰³

In 172 King Eumenes of Pergamum arrived in Rome ostensibly to warn Rome of the designs of Perseus.¹⁰⁴ Eumenes emphasized that Perseus had been long preparing for war, and this prospective war with Rome was a legacy inherited from his father.¹⁰⁵ Perseus was revered in Greece and he had brokered treaties and friendships with various peoples and had raised huge military resources.¹⁰⁶ Livy then relates the remainder of Eumenes' speech which lists specific crimes Perseus had perpetrated.¹⁰⁷ These included expelling friends of Rome from Macedonia,¹⁰⁸ and executing an Illyrian ally of Rome merely for communicating with Rome.¹⁰⁹ Two leading Thebans who declared they were going to inform Rome of the Macedonian king's actions were 'done away with'.¹¹⁰ Perseus had broken his treaty with Rome by making war on Dolopia and he had travelled through Thessaly and Doris under arms.¹¹¹ Eumenes alleged that the Macedonian king planned to cross to Italy and bring war to Rome.¹¹² We are told that Eumenes' speech made a profound impact on the senators but that this information was, for a time, kept from the public.¹¹³

According to Livy, several days later the senate listened to Perseus' ambassadors, who stated the king's case, but the *patres* had already been swayed by Eumenes and so they rejected the 'excuses' given.¹¹⁴ Perseus was incensed by Eumenes' accusations and allegedly

¹⁰² Livy 42.2.1-3.

¹⁰³ Livy 42.6.2.

¹⁰⁴ Livy 42.11.3.

¹⁰⁵ Livy 42.11.5-7.

¹⁰⁶ Livy 42.12.5-8.

¹⁰⁷ Livy 42.13.1-11.

¹⁰⁸ Livy 42.13.5.

¹⁰⁹ Livy 42.13.6.

¹¹⁰ Livy 42.13.7.

¹¹¹ Livy 42.13.8.

¹¹² Livy 42.13.11.

¹¹³ Livy 42.14.1.

¹¹⁴ Livy 42.14.1-4.

employed two Cretans to assassinate him, but they failed.¹¹⁵ Now C. Valerius arrived back in Rome from his investigatory mission to Greece. He confirmed all aspects of the charges that had been brought against the Macedonian king and had also been accompanied by the man who sheltered those who had attempted to assassinate Eumenes at Delphi and an individual from Brundisium who had been approached by Perseus to poison any Roman generals or ambassadors who might avail themselves of his hospitality.¹¹⁶

More Roman envoys returned confirming Macedonia's preparations for war.¹¹⁷ These envoys had drawn the king's attention to his violation of the treaty that forbade him to lead his army beyond his own territory as well as wage war on Roman allies.¹¹⁸ Perseus replied in writing to the envoys opining that the treaty between Rome and Macedonia was his father's doing, not his, and that he had renewed it because he was compelled to when he assumed the throne. He was still open to a treaty with Rome but it needed to be on terms of equality.¹¹⁹ The envoys rejected the king's pleas and renounced their friendship. The Roman people voted for war¹²⁰ yet war could still have been prevented, had Perseus rendered satisfaction to Rome, Livy says.¹²¹ Perseus did send more envoys to Rome but they were not admitted into the city. In fact Perseus showed remarkable perseverance in attempting to find a peaceful solution even after he had soundly beaten the Romans in the opening battle of the war.¹²² This brief overview does not do justice to the complexities as well as the frequent incoherency in Livy's narrative. This is, however, the material historians have worked with to produce their various interpretations of the causes of this war.

Mommsen stressed Philip V's thirst for revenge as recounted by Polybius.¹²³ Mommsen also stressed the allegation that Perseus came to the throne eager for war and determined to fulfil his father's desire to defeat Rome.¹²⁴ He maintains that Perseus devised comprehensive plans and helped Macedonia become a significant power again.¹²⁵ In fact he

¹¹⁵ Livy 42.15.3-10.

¹¹⁶ Livy 42.17.1-6.

¹¹⁷ Livy 42.25.1-3.

¹¹⁸ Livy 42.25.4.

¹¹⁹ Livy 42.25.10-11.

¹²⁰ Livy 42.30.11.

¹²¹ Livy 42.31.1.

¹²² See Livy 42.43.1-2; 42.57.4, 9.

¹²³ Polyb. 22.18.36; Mommsen 1913: 487.

¹²⁴ Mommsen 1913: 489.

¹²⁵ Mommsen 1913: 490.

claims that Perseus' kingdom was twice as powerful as Philip V's, despite lacking a significant navy. As will be discussed below, the opaqueness of ancient interstate relations meant that it was very difficult for a state to acquire any kind of accurate assessment of another state's military capabilities. Mommsen, however, certainly sees Roman fear of Macedonia as reasonable.

As for the flurry of diplomatic activity that transpired between Rome, Macedonia, and various other states of the Greek world, Mommsen generally adopts a credulous stance with regard to the many allegations made against Perseus.¹²⁶ He explicitly summarises the real grounds for the war: it was 'that Macedonia was seeking to convert her formal sovereignty into a real one, and to supplant Rome in the protectorate of the Hellenes.'¹²⁷

Another early advocate of the defensive interpretation of the Third Macedonian War was Tenny Frank. He claimed that 'Perseus was rapidly gaining strength and sympathy.'¹²⁸ Frank's interpretation of the situation at Rome is explicit:

The only question was whether to wait for Perseus to act and accept war at a disadvantage, or be forehanded, make a demonstration upon the boarder of Macedonia, and exact terms that would leave the king harmless.¹²⁹

Frank, as a pure advocate of the defensive imperialism thesis takes, we can suggest, many of Livy's propositions at face value and he portrays Perseus as largely responsible for his own demise. The king is depicted as scheming and cowardly and Rome as genuinely fearing for her security and her position in the interstate system.

R.M. Errington, also basing his argument on Livy's account, charges Perseus, due to his youth and diplomatic inexperience, with being far less careful than his father in avoiding offending the senate at Rome.¹³⁰ He suggests that the alleged diplomatic exchanges between Macedonia and Carthage in 174 unfortunately coincided with the renewal of Rome's suspicions of Punic intentions. The result was Rome sending another commission to

¹²⁶ '...and threads of intrigue ramified in all directions from the court of Pydna.' Mommsen 1913: 492.

¹²⁷ Mommsen 1913: 497.

¹²⁸ Frank 1914: 203.

¹²⁹ Frank 1914: 203.

¹³⁰ Errington 1973: 204.

Macedonia to investigate the current relationship between the two states. This action is deemed 'clearly provocative', even if it did not violate the treaty with Rome.

Errington also cites what he interprets as provocative actions, many of which Harris, and those who espouse the 'bellicose imperialism' thesis, repudiate. Concerning Perseus' intervention in Dolopia he claims that 'his intention was clearly aggressive.'¹³¹ The king's march from Dolopia to Delphi was part of his systematic and deliberate policy to acquire friends and undercut Rome's influence and standing in the Greek world. In Errington's defensive interpretation the underlying issue Rome had with Perseus was that, from her vantage point, the king was not behaving as a client of Rome, but as an equal. The senate 'regarded this as culpable and dangerous.'¹³²

Diametrically opposite is Harris' assessment of this war. Harris repudiates any defensive interpretation of the war with Perseus. He describes Polybius' claim that Philip was the true instigator of the war as wholly unsatisfactory.¹³³ Harris bluntly puts the blame for the war squarely at the senate's feet and accuses it of many diplomatic manoeuvres through the years leading up to the war, in a bid to undermine any attempts Perseus might make to strengthen his position.¹³⁴

As far as Harris is concerned, Polybius had failed to apply his professed science of causes to this particular war, which he knew intimately, simply because he regretted the war and the precarious position the Greek states now found themselves in.¹³⁵ Perseus, according to Harris, did not behave at all belligerently towards Rome, as Polybius knew, but the historian could not face the fact that the senate had consciously destroyed the political equilibrium that had existed.¹³⁶ Polybius resorted to some tortured logic to implicate the dead king Philip V, 'as the causes of the war must have existed before the death of the man who decided it.'¹³⁷

¹³¹ Errington 1973: 204.

¹³² Errington 1973: 212.

¹³³ Harris 1979: 227.

¹³⁴ Harris 1979: 227.

¹³⁵ Harris 1979: 227.

¹³⁶ Harris 1979: 228.

¹³⁷ Polyb. 22.18.11; quoted in Harris 1979: 228.

Harris dismisses any possibility that the senate voted for war because Perseus had attacked the Dolopians and the king of the Sapaeans. These charges, in Harris' view, were fictitious 'and suggested a shortage of avowable reasons for going to war.'¹³⁸ The many dubious pretexts that were suggested by Livy (and Polybius) are summarily dismissed by Harris. As we have seen already many certainly seem farcical and we have already seen the king's generally conciliatory posture towards Rome which seems to contradict the perfidious crimes he is accused of. Yet, we need to be cautious as reality can indeed be stranger than fiction. However, for Harris, Rome was simply predatory and was taking advantage of any pretext, no matter how tenuous, to begin a war with Perseus.

Following Appian, E. Gruen argues that Rome was vexed by the thought that the Greeks revered Perseus as a philhellene while they despised Rome because of the previous actions of her generals.¹³⁹ Gruen's work is substantially more nuanced than Mommsen's, as we would expect with a century or so of scholarly work intervening, yet their conclusions are remarkably similar. The themes of fear and security were intimately bound with the concept of prestige for Rome and all states existing in the ancient Mediterranean.

A. Eckstein tends to follow Polybius and Livy in their causes of the war. Eckstein looks at Philip's infuriation at Rome depriving him of his just rewards after the battle of Magnesia in 189. Philip's conquests in Thrace increased Macedonia's power and wealth. Perseus continued the Macedonian revival. Eckstein is implicitly apportioning the responsibility for the war on Macedonia becoming a peer-competitor to Rome.¹⁴⁰ Eckstein also apportions the blame for the Third Macedonian War squarely at the feet of Eumenes. However, Eckstein does balance his view with the claim that Rome became increasingly harsh in her negotiation with Perseus.¹⁴¹

To conclude this case study, we have seen that the ancient evidence can be made to support either position of defensive or aggressive imperialism. This means that the differing approaches to the sources are often aprioristic in their handling of the evidence. The evidence, by its very nature, is problematic, of course, but it is also problematic to handle it

¹³⁸ Harris 1979: 228.

¹³⁹ Gruen 1984: 418.

¹⁴⁰ Eckstein 2010: 239-241.

¹⁴¹ For the new harshness of Rome, called the 'hegemon's temptation'—the temptation towards harsh unilateral assertiveness—, see Eckstein 2010: 242.

so selectively, and to make it fit a preconceived view. In chapter four, I will attempt to assess the ancient evidence on its own merits with the mind-set that a historical event always has various causes and that a multi-causal explanation can better account for the contradictory interpretations of the various historians.

This chapter has given a brief survey of the evolution of the many explanations for Roman expansion in the mid-Republican period. We have seen how various historians emphasise, dismiss or repress information in the ancient sources to support their own views. The overarching theme of this thesis is that the complexities of any historical phenomenon do not allow for simplistic interpretations that seek to find a monocausal explanation. It is more likely that some wars fought by Rome were aggressive, others defensive, and more likely still that all wars had elements of both. Moreover we must take into account various other factors, such as competition for fame and glory and economic gain, as well as the influence of political structures. It is now time to take a closer look at the internal culture of the Roman Republic and the influence it had on Rome's war-making in our period.

Chapter 2: The Unit-Level Factors

This chapter will consider the critical position of unit-level factors,¹ or more basically, cultural factors, as ideational and influential forces on the conduct of the Roman people (predominantly the ruling class) in the mid-republican period. This chapter will analyse the internal structures of Roman society including most fundamentally aspects of culture, economy and religion that directly pertain to war-making. The overarching purpose of this chapter is to highlight the significant effect internal culture has on politics, a proposition generally acknowledged even by those who put the international context in the foreground. However, it would seem to be the case that, while many scholars on both sides of the 'systemic-unit divide'² prefer a more integrated explanation for Roman expansion, few produce work that truly reflects the synergistic influence both sides of the argument impart on each other. This chapter will explore the internal factors that potentially influenced the behaviour of the Roman republican state.

Before we begin our analysis of the unit-attributes of republican Rome, we should acknowledge explicitly the limitations of such an undertaking. As mentioned in the introduction, scholars of the mid-republican period are severely hampered by the paucity of contemporary evidence. We have a severe shortage of contemporary evidence for the second century BC, less for the third and virtually none for the fourth. While we do have a full account in Livy, his work is not contemporary. Moreover, any contemporary evidence we do have for our period is not the type that is helpful for answering the questions I am dealing with here. It is also important to bear in mind that the evidence we have generally focuses on Rome. While we do have plenty of archaeological evidence for the military interests of, for example, the Samnites and the Etruscans, there is no contemporary, literary evidence, and this has obvious significance for the comments that follow.

¹ See Eckstein 2006: 68 for an explanation of and discussion of 'unit-level factors'.

² That is, those that advocate a system-level theory or unit-level theory of state actions. Of course, many scholars do not consciously support one or the other interpretive framework, or are even aware of their presence in their work.

The unit-level approach (of which Harris' book is the paradigmatic example) has come under criticism from some scholars; some, but certainly not all, of which has been justified,³ and much of which has stemmed from Harris' tendency to focus on Rome alone. This oversight encouraged Harris to see republican Rome as a particularly vicious and voracious predator and its vanquished Italian and Mediterranean opponents as merely victims. This criticism notwithstanding, there can be little denying that individual actors, whether governments or individual statesmen, have real agency and always make their own decisions. The question is how much these individual choices are constrained by the material pressures that are produced by the interstate system. This question will be dealt with more fully in the following chapters; for now, we need to identify the various unit-level factors that likely shaped republican society and its relationships with other states.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE OFFICE-HOLDING NOBILITY

One major objection I have to many assessments of Roman expansion in the mid-Republic is the suggestion, explicit or otherwise, that Rome's bellicosity was exceptional in degree if not in kind. This view, as I hope to show in the following chapter, is untenable. Nevertheless, unit-level variables are, of course, often comparatively unique in form. For Polybius, the foundation of the Republic's emphasis on military activities was the political system.⁴ It seems more likely, though, that the system reflected interests (which it may in turn have helped to perpetuate), than that the system created those interests. This political system became highly competitive during the fourth century once the plebeians had gained access to high office and once nobility came to be based on office-holding and less on patrician status alone. Due to this development, the nature of the Roman nobility changed.

We can see an extraordinary development and emergence of a new political class that included plebeian members from the mid-fourth century. From this time on personal standing, individual qualities and success in politics became important for securing election to office, as plebeian magisterial candidates naturally lacked the traditional and hereditary

³ Eckstein 2006: 186.

⁴ Polyb. 6.11-18.

legitimacy of patrician candidates.⁵ Naturally the *nobiles*, those families that had held the consulship in the past, still generally maintained prestige and *auctoritas* greater than the plebeians who, at first, were all *homines novi*, those new to the ruling class. Nevertheless, the opportunity was now open for ‘new’ men to gain power and prestige and ennoble their families. During Rome’s continuous wars of expansion in Italy, battlefield performance and success—while remaining the traditional sources of *gloria* and *laus*, which in turn facilitated the acquisition of the highest offices—could, be very important for plebeians, as compensation for their lack of traditional legitimacy.⁶

The standards of excellence that are implied by the criteria for access to office bespeak of the ideology of service to the *res publica*. Well before the mid-Republic the connection between service to the Republic and aristocratic ambition and personal prestige existed.⁷ The aristocratic class desired recognition and reward for distinguished service to the state in the form of rank, reputation, authority and influence. Above all they desired *honores*—which included most importantly, election to political office—which in turn, generated more influence, power, and renown for the holder.⁸ Warfare offered the most abundant scope for service to the Republic and the most direct and efficacious route to honour and *honores*. To give one’s life in battle represented the highest form of self-sacrifice to the state, and in degree, seems fundamental to the ideology of *virtus*, perhaps more than in some other contemporary cultures.⁹ Polybius recounts Horatius Cocles’ self-sacrifice for the safety of Rome as the paragon of Roman service to the state.¹⁰

It was through dedication to the Republic, through deliberation and decision-making in the Senate, and most fundamentally, vigorous and successful service in warfare and politics, that the ruling class legitimized itself. Competition for the limited number of magistracies was intense and the necessity of gaining popular support to win elections intensified the

⁵ Hölkeskamp 1993: 22.

⁶ For plebeians gaining high office thanks to their military exploits see e.g. Livy 7.21.4, 7.22.7, 7.28.6, 7.38.9, 8.9.10 etc. on C. Marcius Rutulus. Livy 7.23.1, 7.25.1, 7.26.13 etc. on M. Popilius Laenas. Livy 7.34.3, 7.36.1-13, 7.37.1-3 etc. on P. Decius.

⁷ Rosenstein 2010: 370.

⁸ Hölkeskamp 1993: 26.

⁹ Polyb. 31.29.1.

¹⁰ Polyb. 6.55. It is necessary to keep Polybius’ Greek audience and his own agenda in mind. He is telling contemporaries about Rome—look at these people, this is what they are like...

competitiveness of the rulingclass.¹¹ And even though qualities such as *dignitas*, *gloria*, and *auctoritas* were inherited from one's forebears, they had to be reaffirmed and consolidated, and ideally increased.¹² This translated into pressure on young aristocrats to emulate their ancestors and win glory in battle and politics.

The competitive aspirations for status and reputation, the conspicuous display of achievement and the foundations of the legitimacy of the office-holding class thus merged in a complicated mix of interlocking factors, which made the whole edifice and its concomitant system remarkably self-stabilizing and self-reproducing.¹³ There can be little doubt that the Republic's remarkable political system originated from the importance of warfare and contributed fundamentally to warfare being a source of glory, power, and reputation.

POLYBIUS

Polybius' account—written in the second century and containing all kinds of problems—of the Roman 'constitution' holds significance in that it was intended (partially) to explain the Republic's successful expansion.¹⁴ Polybius connected the republican political system to Roman expansion by claiming it enabled Rome to be successful in her military endeavours. Moreover, for Polybius, the regime itself facilitated the concept of 'universal rule' in the first place.¹⁵ However, when Polybius predicates the Republic's expansion on the nature of her political system, it is critical we keep in mind that the Greek term used by him, *politeia*, is a much wider concept than simply 'constitution' or 'regime'. For Polybius, *politeia*

¹¹ Hölkeskamp 1993: 30.

¹² See, for the importance of the public opinion, Livy 6.6.9-10. For mention of 'masks' and 'glorious' surnames see Livy 30.45.7. For the inspirational effect of the ancestor masks on Quintus Maximus and Publius Scipio see, Sall. *Jug.* 4.5-7. For a family reputation tainted and the effect on holding political office, see Val. Max. 3.5. For family portraits in the home see Plin. *Ep.* 5.17.6. For the concept of a well-known name and an established ancestry, see Plin. *Ep.* 8.10.3. For the importance of a reputation for virtue and worthy deeds, see Cic. *Off.* 1.121. For ancestor masks, see Cic. *Leg. Ag.* 2. For continuing the great reputation of a family, see Cic. *Flac.* 25. For being worthy of a father's name, see Cic. *Phil.* 3.35. For 'answering' to the ancestral images, see Cic. *Planc.* 51. For ancestral images adorning the home and the loss of honour, see Cic. *Sull.* 88.

¹³ Hölkeskamp 1993: 38.

¹⁴ Polyb. 1.15.5, 1.64.2, 6.2.2-4. See Balot 2010: 484.

¹⁵ This is a Polybian supposition which is tendentious at best. Polyb. 3.2.6; cf. 1.2.3-6, 1.3.10, 6.18.4. Balot 2010: 488.

encompassed both customs or national character (*ethne*) and laws (*nomoi*).¹⁶ A city's 'political system', he said, is the 'wellspring, so to speak, which not only gives rise to all plans and practical initiatives, but also brings them to fulfilment...'¹⁷ Polybius is suggesting that the republican political system, as all good systems, not only provides for institutional stability, but also 'ethically educates the desire, intentions, aspirations, and judgements of citizens.'¹⁸

Polybius, when delineating the structure of his ensuing narrative at the beginning of book three, says he will give an account of the Roman constitution to demonstrate the 'vital contribution' its 'peculiar virtues' made towards Roman expansion.¹⁹ While Polybius' account of the Roman constitution is simplified and somewhat idealised, and it would be a mistake to press something as controversial as this too far, we can at least safely conclude that Rome's political system and her war-making synergistically interacted with each other.

Polybius discussion of Rome's use of a citizen army as opposed to Carthage's use of mercenaries does have interesting implications for our topic.²⁰ Polybius says that the Carthaginians are superior at sea because seamanship has been part of their national craft for a long time; the Romans, however, regard their land forces as more efficient and hence devote their energies to the infantry and cavalry.²¹ The Carthaginians, he claims, neglect the infantry and only pay slight regard to the cavalry because they employ mercenaries, whereas Rome uses citizens. For Polybius, the Roman citizen army was superior to a mercenary army, because the soldiers were fighting for their country and their children.²² This topic will be revisited in chapter three, but it will suffice to mention that the Roman citizen body, unlike Carthage's, did have a direct and participatory role in the military and hence it (ideologically, politically and culturally) affected the military and was affected by the military.

¹⁶ Polyb. 6.47.1-2; Balot 2010: 487.

¹⁷ Polyb. 6.2.9-10.

¹⁸ Balot 2010: 487.

¹⁹ Polyb. 3.2.6.

²⁰ Polyb. 6.52.

²¹ Polyb. 6.52.1-3.

²² Polyb. 6.52.6-9.

UPBRINGING

Roman nobles, presumably from a young age, would have had access to and been able to practice with their father's armour and weapons.²³ During the mid-Republic Roman soldiers were expected to provide and maintain their own weapons, armour, and even clothes, at great personal expense.²⁴ This martial equipment was stored at home. It seems reasonable to conjecture that the young men of the house were trained in the arts of war by their father using his personal armour and weapons.²⁵ It also seems likely that hunting played a part in the formative training of young men of many classes.²⁶ Moreover, like all warrior cultures, the family residence would have been the location in which many war-tales were retold by fathers, uncles, brothers, and grandfathers to the young male members of the family. Indeed, young nobles of the mid-Republic from birth were surrounded by a culture extolling the glories of war and tangible manifestations of *virtus*.

According to Polybius, Roman aristocrats' all-consuming ambition for honour and the competition to gain it started from an early age.²⁷ The fundamental feature of the aristocrats' education was the preparation for the men to fight in battle and display their manliness.²⁸ Plutarch attests to Cato the Elder as '...fashioning his son to virtue',²⁹ 'finding his zeal blameless, and his spirit answering to his good natural parts.'³⁰ Cato also, it is claimed, trained his son in the arts of equestrian skills, javelin throwing and wearing armour in battle.³¹ It is not unreasonable to extrapolate from this that Roman sons received from their fathers or other male members of their family, some kind of martial training. From the

²³ See Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 20.4.

²⁴ Polyb. 6.39.15. Gaius Gracchus passed legislation making the state responsible for soldiers clothing in the 120s, see Plut. *C. Gracch.* 5.1. The issue of pay and the supply of equipment is a tendentious one.

²⁵ McDonnell 2006: 187.

²⁶ Green 1996: 226.

²⁷ Polyb. 6.53-55. Rosenstein 2010: 365.

²⁸ McDonnell 2006: 181.

²⁹ Note, Plutarch says *arete*. The nearest Greek word for *virtus* is *andreia*; *arete* can cover the same ground (prowess, valour, etc.), but it also extends more generally to goodness, excellence, and even nobility. See Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 20.4,7.

³⁰ Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 20.6.

³¹ Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 20.4; McDonnell 2006: 181. The question could be asked whether Plutarch wrote about this because it was an exceptional education or standard. Yet, it seems reasonable, in a warrior culture, that this was a common form of education. The very survival of a state could depend on the ability of its military to defend itself. Moreover, we have already established the extremely important position the military had in Roman society as a source of prestige and as a tool to gain political success. However, we do need to be cautious using Cato, who was very deliberate and self-conscious in his posturing. Cato is attempting to show he still adheres to the old values of Rome as opposed to many of his contemporaries, who had become besotted with Greek culture. It is arguably a political stance we have here, and it could be exaggerated.

age of seventeen the young aristocrats' schooling had a heavy emphasis on warfare and military command,³² as they became eligible for military service. Naturally other skills were acquired, namely those pertaining to oratory and law, but these were not generally perceived as critical for an aristocrat's career until the second half of the second century.³³

The centrality of military service for any noble who aspired to hold the consulship can be vividly illustrated by the fact that according to Polybius, it was customary for individuals to complete at least ten years' service before standing for office.³⁴ A young man would begin his military service at seventeen or eighteen years old.³⁵ Those young aristocrats with a political future would generally be selected or elected to the office of military tribune.³⁶ In their role in the legions as military tribunes, the Republic's future leaders gained first-hand experience of combat; this was essentially a prerequisite for a successful political career.

For all Roman men, regardless of their social standing during the mid-Republic, the desire to display *virtus* in combat would seem to have been pervasive. Yet these displays were, ideally, distinct between the nobles and the ordinary citizen. However, Polybius remarks that the defining feature of an action worthy of reward is that an individual voluntarily put themselves in danger³⁷ and as such this distinction, in reality, may have not been so great in many instances.

Sallust also provides evidence for our assessment of the pre-eminence of achieving *laus* and *gloria* in warfare for the young:

So great was the desire for glory (*cupido gloriae*) that had affected men. As soon as the young were old enough for war, they learned the business of soldiering by toiling in armed camp, and they took their pleasure more in fine arms and cavalry horses than in whores and partying...courage (*virtus*) had gained complete control. But there was intense competition

³² Livy 25.5.8, 27.11.15. Harris 1979: 14.

³³ Gell. NA 15.11.1; Harris 1979: 14. Gruen 1990.

³⁴ See Polyb. 6.19.1-4; Harris 1979: 12.

³⁵ Livy 25.5.8, 27.11.15.

³⁶ Harris 1979: 13.

³⁷ Polyb. 6.39.2.

among them for glory: each of them hastened to strike down an enemy, to climb, and to be seen doing such a deed...³⁸

Spoils from victory were prominent in some aristocratic abodes. Some young men of aristocratic families also served in the cavalry. There were minimum requirements in terms of wealth for serving in the cavalry which ensured the man had the time and wherewithal to train. This martial equestrian training became a fundamental part of the elite's education and fostered a sense of camaraderie as well as social distinction.³⁹ This education continually focused a young man on martial prowess as the means to obtain *gloria* which begat fame, which in turn allowed a man to advance his political fortunes and those of his family.

To gain a perspective of the immense prestige accrued from successful campaigning and the display of *spolia* in the abode of an aristocrat we need look no further than Livy and his claim that following the disaster at Cannae there was a paucity of senators. To replenish the senate, first the newly elected censor, M. Fabius Buteo, named those from the old senate roll who had held a curule office since the censorship of Flaminius and Aemilius but had not yet been enrolled in the senate, 'as each had been earliest created.' He next chose those who had been aediles, plebeian tribunes, or questors; then of 'those who had never filled the office of magistrate, he selected such as had spoils taken from the enemy fixed to their homes, or had received a civic crown.

The conspicuous display of *virtus* in tangible forms could not but make a significant impact on young men and women as they developed into adult citizens. As well as the *spolia* won in single combat, officers and legionaries could be awarded decorations for valour displayed during the general melee of battle. These conspicuous marks of *virtus* were worn in various ceremonies and formed an important element in one's public image.⁴⁰ Polybius extols the Roman army's system of incentives that had a motivational effect on the men in battle.⁴¹ While no fixed system existed, Polybius listed some examples of deeds and

³⁸ Sall. *BC* 7.3-6. The context of this does need to be taken into account. Sallust begins by talking about the problems with kings (jealous of, and threatened by, others' achievements), and then draws a contrast with the Republic, in which people freely compete. This is, to an extent, an ideological reconstruction, so it is not easy to take everything just at face value.

³⁹ McDonnell 2006: 194.

⁴⁰ Polyb. 6.39.1-10. Rosenstein 2010: 366.

⁴¹ Polyb. 6.39.2.

rewards: for wounding an enemy, a soldier would receive a spear; for killing and stripping an enemy of his armour and arms, a medal; a cavalryman would be awarded a harness medal for the same deed. These acts had to be conspicuous in their exposure of the awardee to individual and serious danger.⁴² The first man to scale the walls of a town or city under siege was presented with a golden crown, and those who saved another's life in battle were presented with a crown from the individual they saved.⁴³ All of these tangible manifestations of *virtus* would add to an individual aristocrat's *fama* and *gloria* as well as to that of his family. The recipients of these awards were honoured not just at the time, but for the remainder of their lives and often beyond.⁴⁴ They would be used to present the achievements and *virtus* of the man publicly and this public presentation, in turn, set the standards and had an inspirational effect on the youth⁴⁵ who comprehended from an early age that success in battle was paramount to an aristocrat's life.

BEING A GENERAL

As service to the state was the ultimate task for the ruling class, and military service was the quintessential form of service, an analysis of Rome's leading men in the field is essential for understanding the nature of the political structure, and therefore the culture of the Republic. In reality, the magistrates in the field were heavily relied on by the senate to make *ad hoc* decisions and there was significant room for individual initiative.⁴⁶ These decisions could, indeed, be critical to the future of many foreign communities, and therefore they had a substantive influence on Rome's decisions for war, peace, and expansion.

P. Scipio and Cn. Scipio, for instance, made various important political decisions in Spain when the senate, occupied by Hannibal in Italy, had yet to develop a strong interest there. They attacked the traditional enemies of Saguntum, the Torboletae, burnt their town and sold the population into slavery.⁴⁷ While this was probably a contrived act of propaganda

⁴² Polyb. 6.39.3.

⁴³ Polyb. 6.39.3.

⁴⁴ Polyb. 6.39.9.

⁴⁵ Polyb. 6.53-54; Sall. *Jug.* 4.

⁴⁶ Eckstein 1987: XII.

⁴⁷ Livy 24.42.10-11.

demonstrating Roman *fides* to friends, it seems clear the Scipios acted on their own perceptions of what would be advantageous for the Republic.⁴⁸

As commanders in the field had some latitude in their decision making, (although bearing in mind that the senate would need to ratify their decisions), it was inevitable that political aspirations would sometimes influence political determinations. Livy presents P. Cornelius Scipio's ultimate goal of destroying Carthage as one he had had from the very beginning of his preparations for the expedition to North Africa.⁴⁹ But, in the end he changed his mind and accepted peace. One reason was certainly that a protracted siege could be time-consuming and costly in both lives and money. He presented quite harsh terms to the Carthaginians which allowed him to conclude the war in a suitably glorious manner. Also according to Livy, Scipio claimed the greed of Ti. Claudius and then Cn. Cornelius had prevented him from completing the destruction of Carthage because of their 'thirst for fame.'⁵⁰ It seems safe to infer Scipio feared a new consul would supersede him in 202 and gain the glory of ending the war and so he was quite amenable to the Carthaginian peace initiatives of 203.⁵¹ It would seem Scipio's desire for *gloria* had a significant impact on the politics of the Republic.

T. Quinctius Flaminius' desire for glory is a major theme in the portrayal of him by Plutarch, and he does indeed seem to have been extremely ambitious. In 198 Flaminius acquiesced to peace talks with Philip of Macedonia.⁵² Livy claims he was anxious about whether he would be appointed the following year; if so he could fight on, if not he needed to bring about peace and gain glory in that way.⁵³ Flaminius had a vested interest in the complete withdrawal from Greece after he had won *gloria* at Cynoscephalae. To do so he down-played the potential threat from Antiochus so the withdrawal could be enacted and his victory complete.⁵⁴ Clearly individual magistrates in the field possessed potentially a decisive influence over state policy. Of course, having a general such as Flaminius

⁴⁸ Eckstein 1987: 203.

⁴⁹ Livy 29.1.13. Eckstein 1987: 248. See also Scipio's (private friendship) relationship with Masinissa, Livy 30.14.4-6 etc.

⁵⁰ Livy 30.44.3.

⁵¹ Eckstein 1987: 249.

⁵² Livy 32.32.5-8.

⁵³ See also Polyb. 18.11 for Flaminius' friends influencing Greek envoys to appear before the senate to air their grievances against Philip to facilitate Flaminius' reappointment to Greece.

⁵⁴ Eckstein 1987: 309. Livy 34.33.14, 34.43.1-3, 34.43.4-5. Of course, this is only one interpretation, and one that those that advocate a defensive interpretation may well reject.

manipulating political situations does not necessarily make Rome belligerent or militaristic. It may, in fact, prove more that these generals were selfish and self-serving. Yet, it would be wise to keep in mind that the prevailing source of glory was the battlefield and the victories won there.

The generals in the field, who were, of course, members of the ruling class, tended to make decisions in the field that they believed would be broadly acceptable at Rome. This was partly simply a necessity due to primitive communication but these decisions were what the magistrates in the field were expected to make.⁵⁵ This brief discussion has allowed us to view the personal and political ambitions of the generals in the field as sometimes significant factors in Rome's decisions to go to war and negotiate for peace and thus an important factor in republican expansion.⁵⁶

The conspicuous display by the ruling class of achievement in war culminated in the ultimate expression of *virtus* and *gloria*: the triumph. Polybius describes the triumph thus, 'For a triumph, as they call it, is an opportunity for a consul to display his brilliant achievement before the eyes of his fellow citizens...'⁵⁷ This magnificent display of military success developed significantly from the late fourth and third centuries as it became progressively more elaborate and refined. Appian's description of Scipio Africanus' triumph in 201 is hardly typical but nevertheless illuminating, as an example of a new form of triumph.⁵⁸ There is an emphasis laid on the spoils of victory: gold and silver coin and bullion, chariots embellished with various designs, crowns, precious stones; a picture of unheard of luxury. The citizenry had acquiesced to a vastly increased bestowal of prestige on the victorious general.⁵⁹

The triumphing general crossed the *pomerium* and progressed through the city with the spoils of victory and his army until reaching the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus. The triumph was quite probably the greatest achievement in the competitive environment in which the

⁵⁵ Livy 31.48.10, 26.31.10.

⁵⁶ The two need not follow each other of course. Flamininus declared Greece free and evacuated all Rome's forces; he thus prevented Roman campaigning there. See Polyb. 18.48; Livy 33.32.

⁵⁷ Polyb. 6.15.8.

⁵⁸ App. *Pun.* 8.66. Also see Plutarch's account of Aemilius Paullus' triumph in 167. Plut. *Aem.* 34.

⁵⁹ Bonfante Warren 1970: 64. Beard 2009.

ruling class functioned.⁶⁰ Certainly, the competitiveness of Rome's generals in seeking a triumph can be seen in Valerius Maximus' claim that, due to certain men claiming a triumph from insignificant battles, a law was enacted that stipulated that the prerequisite for the ceremony was at least five thousand enemy slain on the battle field.⁶¹ According to this, the basis for a triumph was not the strategic importance of the battle but simply the number of enemy killed. The triumph must surely have been the one public display that most impressed on the youth the glory that could be won from martial success. It represented the collective system of ideals and goals that the political class had and those that wanted to be part of this group should also possess. The triumph expressed the set of values which was the means by which individual success was judged. It also implicitly (eventually, explicitly) stipulated what kind of military achievements would meet the requirements for a triumph and thus be acknowledged publically.⁶²

The cultural practice of a victorious general adopting a *cognomen* after the location of his victory was significant and played a self-aggrandizing role.⁶³ Names such as 'Messala', 'Africanus', and 'Calenus', in a very public way, attested to a noble's martial credentials. Some adopted *cognomina* expressed a man's Hellenization, so it is important to bear in mind that martial glory was not the sole concern here, but it was certainly an important one. The language used publicly to extol successful individuals is also very significant and attests to the primacy of military and political achievements as well as the public nature of the celebration of success. The consul of 251, L. Caecilius Metellus triumphed after his victory at Panormus. His son Q. Metellus delivered his father's funerary speech (*laudatio funebris*) and proclaimed his achievements: he had been consul twice, dictator, master of the horse, one of the *quindecimviri*, *pontifex maximus*, and in the First Punic War he had been the first to lead elephants in his triumph. His desire was to be the foremost warrior (*primarius bellator*), an excellent orator (*optimus orator*), and a powerful commander (*fortissimus imperator*). He had achieved these superlative desires and so achieved *maximus honor* and pre-eminent wisdom (*summa sapientia*), and subsequently he became the principal senator

⁶⁰ Hölkeskamp 1993: 29.

⁶¹ Val. Max. 2.8.1.

⁶² Hölkeskamp 1993: 29.

⁶³ Harris 1979: 21.

(*summus senator*) and the noblest personage in the state (*clarissimus in civitate*).⁶⁴ This list is not exhaustive, but the point to note is that the common ground to all the things lauded was service to the state. That inevitably comes first in any list, and military achievement is, of course, a prominent component of that. Caecilius' outstanding achievements within the competitive environment of the ruling class are 'emphatically stressed by the accumulation of superlatives.'⁶⁵

It may be observed from the above that, unsurprisingly, martial prowess and achievement take precedence in the *laudatio funebris*, but Quintus Metellus also extols his father's excellence as an orator (i.e. service to the state). As with all cultural constructs, the pre-eminence of martial achievements was not immutable and as such the ideology and conceptions developed and changed progressively. Polybius attests to the eighteen year old P. Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus expressing his frustration at lacking true Roman *virtus*. In this case, Scipio's lack of *virtus* stems from his lack of participation in the law courts.⁶⁶ He opines that he is thought of as being a 'mild' and 'effete' individual, diametrically opposite to the true Roman character.⁶⁷ It is indeed possible to conceive of service as an advocate in the courts (again, service to the state; but also a good place to win supporters) as a form of ritualized combat and another possible source of *laus* and *gloria*.⁶⁸ While other services to the *res publica* were indeed possible sources of renown and glory, during the mid-Republic martial achievement was still the pre-eminent activity to gain glory and in turn to excel in the domestic politics of Rome.

ROMAN *VIRTUS* AND THE IDEOLOGY OF MONOMACHY

Naturally the display of *spolia* in the ancestral home spoke of an individual noble's *virtus*, and this concept was fundamental to the ruling class' sense of self-worth and justification for their position as leaders in the community. It would seem incontrovertible that displays of courageousness in battle were fundamental in republican Roman society but this is, of

⁶⁴ Plin. *HN* 7.139-140.

⁶⁵ Hölkeskamp 1993: 29.

⁶⁶ Polyb. 31.23.9-12.

⁶⁷ Polyb. 31.23.9-12.

⁶⁸ Rosenstein 2010: 368.

course, a ubiquitous phenomenon in warrior cultures. However, Polybius claims that *virtus* (*andreia*) is 'nearly the most important thing in every state, but especially in Rome'⁶⁹

The word *virtus* is notoriously difficult to translate. It has been rendered variously as 'aggressive courage',⁷⁰ 'valour',⁷¹ or simply the literal translation of 'manliness'.⁷² It is not unreasonable to conjecture that all of these translations are reflective of the concept of *virtus* while acknowledging the meaning of the word itself would have been subject to change over time.⁷³ It would seem that well before becoming a soldier a young noble man (as well as those from the wider citizen body) received encouragement to display *virtus* and the ways of Roman manliness which was principally centred on martial achievements.⁷⁴ This edification was effected by such private acts as the above mentioned display of war trophies in the home but there was certainly more to a young man's education than this.

As we have seen, the indoctrination of a young Roman to martial ways began in the ancestral home more or less from birth. Spoils of victory which had been won in battle and single combat were displayed throughout the most public parts of the house. Spoils taken from general combat could be seen, touched, and examined by the sons of a household. These spoils of combat became permanent accessories to the outside and doorways of houses, and were not permitted to be removed even after the ownership changed hands. These houses 'celebrated eternal triumphs even if the master changed.'⁷⁵

The trophies of monomachy (single combat) displayed in the ancestral home attest to the importance of this form of combat and the ideology that it entails. Polybius describes how the Roman desire for glory (*eukleia*) had induced many '...to engage in single combat so as to decide a whole battle, and not a few have chosen certain death, some in war to save the lives of their countrymen, others in times of peace to ensure the safety of the Republic.'⁷⁶ S.P. Oakley has assembled all the known examples of monomachy in an article

⁶⁹ Polyb. 31.29.1.

⁷⁰ McDonnell 2006: 71.

⁷¹ Rosenstein 2010: 366.

⁷² Kaster 2005.

⁷³ McDonnell 2006.

⁷⁴ Sall. *BC* 7.3-6. See McDonnell 2006: 184.

⁷⁵ Plin. *HN* 35.7.

⁷⁶ Polyb. 6.54.3-4.

that attests to the significance and frequency of this phenomenon in the Roman Republic.⁷⁷ The surprising aspect of Oakley's findings is that, even though single combat was quite frequent in the republican period, it was not prominent in the way things like triumphs were. This suggests that the triumph was conceived as an expression of service to the state and was believed to benefit Rome and her people more than single combat did.

The evidence presented by Oakley, excluded single combat that was not preceded by a formal challenge. This form of monomachy—preceded by a formal challenge—led to the Roman victor being presented with the very rare honour of the *spolia opima*, if the Roman general killed an enemy general.⁷⁸ There were of course, many other ways of gaining *laus* in combat.⁷⁹ The ancient sources, taken in their entirety suggest that during the mid-Republic at least one occurrence of single combat happened every year.⁸⁰ Some aristocrats could claim to have fought several monomachies; M. Claudius Marcellus, according to Plutarch '...was efficient and practised in every kind of fighting, but in single combat he surpassed himself, never declining a challenge, and always killing his challengers.'⁸¹

A MEMORIAL CULTURE

Some of the public aspects of vaunting *virtus* (see above) in republican society may be, in their details, unique to this warrior culture, at least in degree. The young men of Rome would have regularly participated in, and observed, impressive public ceremonies extolling martial *virtus*. Due to Polybius' arresting description of the components of the aristocratic funeral we are able to gain an insight into such an event. The first point emphasised in Polybius' description is that only those that had held office could have such an elaborate funeral. He also focused on their deeds in office (service to the state)—this aspect of

⁷⁷ Oakley 1985.

⁷⁸ This admittedly seems a rear occurrence with M. Claudius Marcellus seeming the most likely to have actually achieved this feat. See Plut. *Marc.* 2.1.

⁷⁹ See below

⁸⁰ Oakley 1985: 31.

⁸¹ Plut. *Marc.* 2.1.

republican culture is often cited as implying the fundamental place that *laus, gloria, virtus* and *auctoritas* possessed.⁸²

One of the more striking features of the funeral procession was the *imagines*. An *imago* was a wax mask that represented, in a realistic way, the face of a member of a family who had held political office.⁸³ An *imago* was produced during a man's lifetime. It then appears for the first time at the funeral of the family who had died after him and then at all subsequent funerals of family members who had held office.⁸⁴ These masks represented a mark of the ruling class and they worked on different levels; they provided a public and repetitious method of extolling and commemorating the great deeds and electoral victories of family members of the past. Not only did these *imagines* evoke the great achievements of the forbears of an aristocrat's family during the pageantry of a funeral procession, but more significantly, they spent the majority of time in the atrium of the family home.⁸⁵ The masks were generally enclosed in their wooden cupboards (*armaria*) in the atrium, together with inscriptions (*tituli*) alongside them, which set out the individual's achievements. However, during public festivals and family celebrations the cupboards were opened for all to see.⁸⁶ There can be little doubt that these images had an influence on the young members of the family and increased the pressure early placed on them to reach or even exceed the deeds of their illustrious forebears.⁸⁷

The *imagines* also reflected the solidarity of the ruling caste by being common to all those of the nobility who had held office, apart from new men.⁸⁸ Moreover, they also had a political aspect to them: to be successful in republican politics depended to a large extent on the image of status and prestige that a current or aspiring magistrate could convey and this could be enhanced by the nobility of previous office holders from the same family.⁸⁹ During a funeral procession the *imagines* were worn by men who bore a resemblance to the

⁸² E.g. see Harris 1979: 24-25. Polyb. 6.53-54.

⁸³ Flower 1996: 271. Polyb. 6.53.

⁸⁴ Naturally, his own body would be present at his funeral.

⁸⁵ Polyb. 6.53.5.

⁸⁶ Polyb. 6.53.4-7. Flower 1996: 272. Note Livy and Cicero claimed that funeral eulogies and *tituli* were sources of misleading information concerning battle victories and magistracies. Livy 8.40.4-5; Cic. *Brut.* 62.

⁸⁷ Cic. *Phil.* 2.25-26; Val. Max. 5.8.3; Sall. *Jug.* 4.4-6.

⁸⁸ Flower 1996: 271.

⁸⁹ Flower 1996: 270.

family member each represented,⁹⁰ and they were always clearly identified to the public.⁹¹ The procession made its way to the Forum where the *laudatio funebris* was delivered from the rostra in the form of a *contio*, like any other public speech. Together with the *titulus* which accompanied the ancestor masks, the funeral speech publicly presented and promoted the achievements of the office-holding members of a noble family; the military achievements as a proof of a man's *virtus* would have been the most prominent theme during the mid-republican period.⁹² This complex ceremony served continually to restate a family's military and political achievements and serve as enunciating the standards that younger family members need to aspire to.

The pageantry of the funeral procession also served the fundamental role of affirming Roman values and the social and political machinery of state.⁹³ The public that watched the spectacular procession was not a passive audience but participatory and acquiescent in its acceptance of the ruling class and its inherent internal competition.⁹⁴ And at this period political rivalry was premised on service to the state⁹⁵ which provided an accessible path to high reputation which in turn allowed for progressively higher offices.⁹⁶

Visual expressions of success in battle were part of a fundamental ideological and value system that had developed with increasing intensity from the fourth to the middle of the third century. From this time, the emergence of a set of social values and abstract moral concepts is mirrored in a variety of visual representations.⁹⁷

The first honorary statue erected by the state, according to Livy, was displayed in the *comitium* to honour Horatius Cocles.⁹⁸ The erection of statues during the Second Samnite War of the famous Greek figures Pythagoras and Alcibiades, symbolically alluded to the key concepts of fortitude and *sapientia*, which together with *virtus* formed the basis of the

⁹⁰ Polyb. 6.53.6.

⁹¹ Flower 1996: 274.

⁹² Plin. *HN* 7.139-40.

⁹³ Flower 1996: 278.

⁹⁴ Polyb. 6.53.1-4, 10. 6.54.1-4.

⁹⁵ This could, of course, include military achievement. Note that most junior offices, such as aediles and plebeian tribunes, did not involve military duties, so military achievement for them was not fundamental to reaching a higher office.

⁹⁶ Polyb. 6.53.10; Sall. *Jug.* 85.

⁹⁷ Hölkeskamp 1993: 26.

⁹⁸ Livy 2.10.12-13; Plin. *HN* 34.11. Unlikely to be historical.

aristocratic value system.⁹⁹ A column statue was erected to honour C. Maenius for his victory over the Latins in 338.¹⁰⁰ Successful commanders such as Maenius would advertise their victories in battle by adorning a public area such as the forum, which was ideally suited for public display. In Maenius' case he also adorned the rostra with the beaks of Antiatic ships.¹⁰¹ L. Papirius Cursor displayed golden shields in the forum in 310.¹⁰² In 293 Sp. Carvilius commissioned a statue of Iuppiter made of Samnite armour¹⁰³ and two thousand bronze *signa*, dedicated by M. Fulvius Flaccus, were placed at the northern boundary of the Forum Boarium.¹⁰⁴ C. Dullius also received a column statue for his naval victory over the Carthaginians in 260.¹⁰⁵ This emphasis on visual expression of martial success continued and by the second century, the area that ran from the Circus Flaminius to the Forum Boarium was replete with monuments dedicated to and erected by victorious generals.¹⁰⁶

New temples were also vowed and constructed by victorious military leaders. These magnificent structures, dedicated to the gods likewise played a didactic role and also reinforced the key notions of the aristocratic value system. Between the years 302 and 293, for example, the temples of Salus, Iuppiter Victor and Victoria on the Palatine and Bellona and Fors Fortuna¹⁰⁷ were erected and each conveyed strong ideological sentiment as well as expressing the glory Rome had obtained from success in war. The choice of the goddesses of victory and war is very instructive, although certainly not the only sentiment expressed as the temples all have a strong religious element too.

The manifestations of military achievement so far mentioned, the expressions of achievement, the artistic representations of glory and victory all share a commonality. All are consciously orientated towards, and also explicitly referred to an audience: the Roman people.¹⁰⁸ This reference to the people of Rome is a fundamental aspect of the 'meritocracy' that the ruling class participated in. The aristocracy could not simply take their social position as a given in the mid-Republic. In extolling his military achievements a victorious

⁹⁹ Hölkeskamp 1993: 27. Plut. *Numa* 8.20. Plin. *HN* 34.36.

¹⁰⁰ Plin. *HN* 34.11; Richardson 1953: 98.

¹⁰¹ Livy 8.14.12; Plin. *HN* 34.20.

¹⁰² Livy 9.40.16.

¹⁰³ Livy 9.40.16; Plin. *HN* 34.43.

¹⁰⁴ Plin. *HN* 34.34.

¹⁰⁵ Plin. *HN* 34.20

¹⁰⁶ Harris 1979: 21. Also see Plin. *HN* 34.30.

¹⁰⁷ Pliny *HN* 35.12; Livy 9.43.25, 10.19.17, 10.29.14, 10.33.9, 10.46.14; Hölkeskamp 1993: 28.

¹⁰⁸ Hölkeskamp 1993: 30.

general needed to refer to the *res publica* and to the glory and majesty of the Roman people as his only concerns. Service to the state was the ultimate type of service and, as the young men of the Republic saw triumphs and noble funerals, how could they not attempt to perform 'heroic feats of endurance for the common good, in order to gain the glory that accrues to the brave'?¹⁰⁹

ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

Economic considerations, it could be argued, were ever present in some form when the Romans made the decision to go to war. Massive areas of land were acquired, huge sums of gold and silver were appropriated and enormous numbers of slaves were transported to Rome during the mid-Republic. Economic considerations were certainly not the only reason to impel Rome to go to war, and maybe it was never the predominant impetus for the decision for war, but these considerations *did* undeniably exist in various forms. As Harris makes clear, the Romans could not dissociate the expectations of gain from the expectations of successful warfare and expansion.¹¹⁰ And this claim could be made for all ancient cultures. And even if economic gain from warfare was not explicitly admitted as a factor in going to warfare, it was taken for granted as a natural outcome of victory.

Booty was an important source of income for soldiers and officers in the army, as well as the Roman state.¹¹¹ In Polybius' translation of the second treaty between Rome and Carthage, the first clause suggests that plundering was a regular activity by Rome and that it was under state control.¹¹² In 264 the consuls convinced the people to go to war by, among other things, pointing out 'the plunder which each and every one would evidently derive from' the expedition to Sicily.¹¹³ When the Romans faced the Celts in 225, the soldiers noticed the gold necklaces and bracelets the warriors wore, and they hoped for a profitable victory.¹¹⁴ Polybius sees in the Roman plundering of Syracuse in 211, the natural behaviour

¹⁰⁹ Polyb. 6.54.1-5.

¹¹⁰ Harris 1979: 56.

¹¹¹ See Shatzman 1972: 177.

¹¹² Polyb. 3.24.4. Harris 1979: 59.

¹¹³ Polyb. 1.11.2.

¹¹⁴ Polyb. 2.29.9.

of a people seeking an empire.¹¹⁵ Cn. Manlius Vulso brought back large sums of booty which helped the state repay debt that was owed to many citizens primarily because of the Second Punic War.¹¹⁶ Aemilius Paullus also returned to Rome with massive amounts of booty from Macedon.¹¹⁷

Through victory in war, slaves were often brought back to Italy in huge numbers. For instance, according to Diodorus, at Agrigentum in 262, 25,000 people were enslaved.¹¹⁸ Polybius mentions that in Africa in 256, 20,000 people were forced into slavery;¹¹⁹ and at Panormus in 254, 13,000 were stripped of their freedom says Diodorus.¹²⁰ The numbers could be huge, and the effect on the economy significant.

When the Romans took possession of the mines in Spain, and finally made use of them, the profits were huge.¹²¹ Rome, through victory, also received huge indemnity payments from her defeated foe.¹²² The conquest of new territory could also bring new land and taxes. War could be very profitable.

While many historians of the past have opposed any economic interpretations of Rome's wars and expansion in the mid-Republic,¹²³ on the balance of the evidence, and common sense, this repudiation is futile. War, potentially, offered something for many citizens in the form of booty and land. Economic considerations, even if generally a secondary issue, were taken into account by citizens of all classes. The policy makers in Rome were fully aware of the economic advantages that were gained through successful warfare.¹²⁴

¹¹⁵ Polyb. 9.10.

¹¹⁶ Polyb. 21.36, 38; Livy 38.12-27.

¹¹⁷ Polyb. 18.35.4.

¹¹⁸ Diod. Sic. 23.18.5.

¹¹⁹ Polyb. 1.29.7.

¹²⁰ Diod. Sic. 23.18.5.

¹²¹ Polyb. 24.9.9.

¹²² E.g. Polyb. 1.62.9, 1.88.12 etc.

¹²³ E.g. Frank 1914: 277-297.

¹²⁴ Harris 1979: 104.

OTHER FACTORS

Harris uses Polybius' assessment in book one of his history as evidence of the reality of Roman bellicosity: 'Generally speaking', Polybius says, 'the Romans rely on force for everything.'¹²⁵ But force does not mean the same as aggression nor does the use of force necessarily imply aggressive actions, and it does not rule out defensive imperialism. Polybius goes on to say this reliance on aggression generally brought success, although failures were experienced with some frequency too. This is a comment on how the Romans operated more generally but, as we will see, it is not exclusive to their culture, as aggression and expansion were normative in the ancient world.

The *fetiales*, Roman priests with responsibilities for the preliminaries of war, and their activities, played some part in the Republic's dealings with, and attitudes towards, other states.¹²⁶ Yet, this important institution has been used both to show Rome's righteous and generally pacific nature¹²⁷ and also to show her exceptional aggression.¹²⁸ Frank sees in the fetial college an institution that, if it acted correctly and in good faith, proved that peace was the normal condition between Rome and her neighbours; and war was considered justifiable only after an unjust act. Frank goes on to admit that the fetial rule did not invariably secure justice, but the important point for him was that the institution became *mos maiorum* and so (in theory) prevented the Romans from viewing the right to aggression or a desire for more territory as a justification for war.¹²⁹

Harris, on the other hand, refutes any claim that the fetial law acted as some brake on Roman aggression.¹³⁰ He makes several pertinent points on our sources' lack of representations of the procedure before war and its changing form.¹³¹ Harris claims the demand for the *rerum repetitio* was akin to blackmail and the Romans expected it to be

¹²⁵ Polyb. 1.37.7. Harris 1979: 17.

¹²⁶ Rich 2011: 253.

¹²⁷ Frank 1914: 8.

¹²⁸ Harris 1979: 166-175.

¹²⁹ Frank 1914 8-9.

¹³⁰ Harris 1979: 166.

¹³¹ Harris 1979: 166-167.

rejected.¹³² The fetial procedure by our time became perfunctory if actually performed and merely a means of self-reassurance.¹³³

The institution itself is intimately linked with the Roman concept of the *bellum iustum piumque*, the 'just and righteous war'.¹³⁴ The whole topic is complex and is fraught with a multitude of differing interpretations, with much of the argument based on Livy's famous exposition of the regal period's preliminaries to war.¹³⁵ Needless to say the extreme ends of the spectrum between Rome fighting only defensive wars and Rome being singularly aggressive lead to perverse interpretations. The fetial rite required an injury to have been alleged and the gods were invoked to witness the injustice perpetrated by the enemy.¹³⁶ But it seems overconfident to suggest that we can detect motivation from these facts for 'aggressive powers have never found it difficult to find opportune grievances or to convince themselves of their rectitude.'¹³⁷

The concept of *fides* may have also been a factor in the Republic's conduct towards her neighbours. The concept of *fides*, the quintessential moral bond, was prevalent in domestic relationships¹³⁸ and it is possible to find in the ancient sources an image of Rome as a captive of her own reputation as the impartial arbiter *par excellence*.¹³⁹ This concept was linked with that of *amicitia*, or friendship, which is how many international relationships were described.¹⁴⁰

Rome may have become caught up in her own rhetoric. This could well have been the case with the rhetoric of defending friends and allies—that bit of rhetoric (which is crucial for the thesis of defensive imperialism) may have forced the Romans to go to war. Rome's fame for its *fides* apparently made an impression on the Hebrews of Judaea.¹⁴¹ This reputation for helping the weak needed to be earned and nurtured.¹⁴²

¹³² Harris 1979: 167.

¹³³ Harris 1979: 171.

¹³⁴ Rich 1976: 56-73.

¹³⁵ Livy 1.32.

¹³⁶ Rich 2011: 252.

¹³⁷ Rich 2011: 253.

¹³⁸ Burton 2011: 22.

¹³⁹ North 1981: 7. See Harris 1979: 34 for a more cynical evaluation of Roman *fides*.

¹⁴⁰ See Gruen 1984: 76-95 for numerous examples in the ancient sources.

¹⁴¹ 1 Macc. 8.

¹⁴² North 1981: 7.

As J. Burton has pointed out, we may have to distinguish between Rome's intentions and the consequences of her behaviour in some situations.¹⁴³ It was certainly in Rome's interests to make herself seem an attractive international partner for the sake of gaining allies and maintaining stability in the Mediterranean. Rome's *fides* was demonstrated by patiently entertaining requests and listening to the procession of embassies that arrived at Rome; by the sending of delegations to international friends; by the bestowal of gifts on foreign embassies; and also by helping *amici* by the use of force. Naturally, self-interest was the compelling factor in giving help but we cannot discount the moral imperatives and the maintenance of Rome's reputation as having some influence.¹⁴⁴

We may present the fall of Saguntum as a possible example of the moral imperatives at work. The Romans went to war after the city fell, and then proceeded to search and buy back the Saguntines that had been sold into slavery and restored them to their city in 212/11.¹⁴⁵ Surely this would have been completely unnecessary if Rome's own reputation was of no importance to her. Moral imperatives may also have come into play with Rome's decision to go to war against Philip V in 200 after failed attempts to dissuade the king from attacking Roman *amici*.¹⁴⁶ Rome reserved the right of 'response-flexibility', which meant she had the right to respond to calls for help in the way she felt was best for her. Yet, it was in her interests to respond in some way to requests for succour to maintain her reputation for *fides*. And although self-interest was the driving factor, and Rome's responses to appellants were more often than not tardy and ineffectual, moral imperatives and reputation did, in differing degrees, potentially play a part in some of Rome's decision to go to war.

Rome experienced a litany of embassies coming to Rome from the east in the second century. Some of these applicants may have hoped to manipulate Rome's authority to serve their own ends and pressure her with her reputation for good faith.¹⁴⁷ It is not inconceivable that various states did try to take advantage of Rome's paternalism and pressure Rome to take actions to benefit them at the expense of other states.

¹⁴³ Burton 2011: 243.

¹⁴⁴ Burton 2011: 243. See the senate's position on the question of helping the Mamertines, Polyb. 1.10.1-9.

¹⁴⁵ Livy 24.42.9-10. Of course, this example is complicated by the fact that Rome appears to have abandoned her friend earlier, when Hannibal was laying siege to Saguntum.

¹⁴⁶ See Livy 30.26.4, 30.42.8, 31.6.1 etc.

¹⁴⁷ Gruen 1984: 119-129.

In conclusion, this chapter has highlighted several of the most significant aspects of Roman culture that could have exerted an influence on the Republic's decisions to initiate, or take part in war. The above is not exhaustive, and surely there are other factors that played their part. Certainly Roman culture was geared for war, like her neighbours, and certainly her military and political system proved to be more successful than others in her ability to facilitate the construction of a successful military force. All of these factors worked in combination with the systemic or environmental factors which were not, of course, unique to Rome. In the next chapter we will look at other nations as a comparative study to Rome and also to reconstruct something of the wider context in which the republic functioned.

Chapter 3: The Bellicose Neighbours

In the previous chapter some of the aspects of Roman republican society were analysed, that conceivably had some influence on its bellicosity. The first point that must be expressed unambiguously is that the Roman Republic was indeed a heavily militarized and assertive state, as Polybius claimed.¹ It is an incontrovertible fact that the Republic, relative to most modern polities, was extremely aggressive and its internal aspects (unit-attributes) were often focused on, and contributed to, a culture that saw in war and violence, a legitimate method of conflict resolution and interstate interaction, albeit sometimes as a last resort. This much can be endorsed from the theses offered by Harris and his followers. But was Rome exceptionally bellicose in the context of the ancient Mediterranean world? Even a quite cursory survey of our ancient sources adumbrating the political interactions and unit-attributes of Carthage, the *poleis* of Classical Greece, and the Hellenistic states for instance, reveals that all of these polities, and many others of lesser stature, were likewise bellicose, militarized, and often assertive and, if the circumstances availed themselves, expansionist. Republican Rome was far from exceptional in this regard.

The success of the Republic's political and military institutions cannot, of course, be equated with exceptional aggression. Bellicosity was endemic in the ancient Mediterranean and was necessary for survival, but it was not in itself sufficient for expansion on the scale the Republic experienced.² Rome's exceptionalism stemmed from her highly efficient and stable political and institutional infrastructure that harnessed and focused its ruling class and the populace in general, on serving the state. Another telling factor in the Republic's success, perhaps *the* telling factor, was the Roman 'settlement' after the Latin War of 340-338.³ From this point, because of grants of citizenship, both with the vote and without, to outside communities (in addition to the soldiers supplied by Rome's allies), the Republic was exceptionally large for an ancient city-state in both population and the size of her territory.⁴ The Republic based membership of the polity not on geographical location (nor on ethnicity,

¹ Polyb. 1.3.6, 3.2.6.

² Harris 1979: 225-254. Harris' classic thesis purports internal culture and economic pressures were exerting an ineluctable force on the Republic's militarized aristocracy and its superb war-machine and pushing them both on a path particularly brutal and aggressive. See Eckstein 2006: 188.

³ Livy 8.14.

⁴ Eckstein 2006: 311.

which was never really a factor), but on varying political statuses, as non-Roman allies (*socii*), citizens without the vote (*cives sine suffragio*), and full citizens (*cives*).⁵ The Romans could be relatively generous in bestowing these categories of participation and as such they could gain the loyalty of much of the Italian population, or least their acquiescence, by giving them a vested interest in the survival and prosperity of Rome⁶ No less significantly, Italian states were generally left autonomous by Rome and as such Roman rule does not seem to have been unpopular until much later. Naturally, the divide between military potential was significant, and continued to widen, which also played a part in keeping the Italians remarkably loyal. However, the Republic's capacity for inclusion, combined with its considerable (although often dilatory) diplomatic and political skill rather than bellicosity, was what made the Roman Republic exceptional.

The majority of studies of mid-republican expansion often suffer from a one-sided perspective. That is, scholars have tended to focus on the 'aggressor' state and then move outwards to the perceived victims of the aggression. This methodology is even more attractive to succumb to due to the nature of our sources for our period. While we can make informed assessments of the nature of the Classical Greek states, when it comes to the polities and cultures of Carthage, the Hellenistic states and many other peoples, we are almost wholly reliant on Roman or Greek sources that are often focused on Rome. Throughout the following chapter this point should be borne in mind. Much of the ancient information on other cultures is presented in a specific light, to illuminate Rome (and the Greek world), and is not overtly interested in giving a fair representation of those other cultures. That being so, I hope, nonetheless, to show, that the Republic was merely one polity in a large international system. This system was composed of a multiplicity of simultaneously interacting and often aggressive units. The nature of the system was not dictated by a single unit (even one as powerful as the Republic) and many complex forces and factors were involved in the events that transpired between polities. To give agency back to some of Rome's competitors we need to assess their cultures vis-à-vis warfare and

⁵ Livy 8.14; Last 1945: 30-48. Note also the Roman practice of granting citizenship to manumitted slaves, see Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 4.24.4-6; Cornell 1995: 60

⁶ Eckstein 2006: 311. It is possible to interpret the bestowal of partial participatory rights as more of a punishment than an act of generosity, but I tend to think this is unduly cynical.

expansionist ambitions, for, as will be argued here, in these respects the Republic was far from unique.

GREEKS AND PERSIANS

While not exactly contemporary cultures of mid-republican Rome, mention should be made of Greek and Persian attitudes to war. War and success in warfare were paramount in Persian culture. Cyrus the Great created a vast empire by conquering many peoples and created the Achaemenid Empire which would endure for some two hundred years.⁷ According to Herodotus, during the battle of Salamis in 480 King Xerxes watched the engagement observing those that fought with merit and those that displayed cowardice. If the great king observed an officer that fought with distinction his secretaries would write his name down, together with his city and parentage.⁸ Reputation won from warfare was critical to gaining a higher position in society. We hear of Orontas, who was related to the king and was reckoned the best of the Persians in matters of war. He advanced to a high position because of his martial prowess.⁹ While there is little doubt that our Greek sources often attempted to emasculate Persian culture in their representation of it, even with this distorted view we have inherited, it is clear Persian culture was bellicose and militaristic, and the size of the Persian Empire attests to the expansionist policies of this culture.

The sources for Greek bellicosity are numerous and go back as far as Homer's *Iliad*. An obvious place to start in our assessment of Greek militarism is Sparta. Famously, it is claimed the Spartan education was directed towards 'prompt obedience to authority, stout endurance of hardship, and victory or death in battle.'¹⁰ Thucydides posits Athenian imperialism was connected to the national character of the people.¹¹ But imperialism itself was merely a reflection of a universal compulsion, the compulsion of power and of human nature.¹² Famously, Thucydides has the Athenians claim that, by acquiring and maintaining

⁷ Hdt. 1.125-1.128.3.

⁸ Hdt. 8.86-90.

⁹ Xen. *Anab.* 1.6.1.

¹⁰ Plut. *Instituta Laconia* 4. The case for Sparta as bellicose is somewhat unique in that her society was focused almost exclusively on war, yet she consistently avoided embroiling herself in conflict throughout her history.

¹¹ Thuc. 1.70.7, 1.75.1, 1.76.3, 1.77.2, 1.144.4, 2.39.4, 2.43.1.

¹² Forde 1986: 432.

their empire, they have done no more than any other polity in their position would do.¹³ It is the natural impulse for states to rule others¹⁴ and for the weaker to be ruled by the stronger. This principle was very much a part of the ancient Mediterranean world.

Warfare in Classical Greece between *poleis* was endemic. The nature of warfare itself was brutal and uncompromising. As with all cultures, brutality was an unexceptional part of Greek warfare.¹⁵ The implication that Roman brutality was an index of the extreme bellicosity of the Republic is completely erroneous and is contradicted by the ancient sources that present Greek as well as other ancient Mediterranean polities as capable of perpetrating similar atrocities during conflict.¹⁶

THE ITALIAN PEOPLES

Let us first take into account some of the peoples of Italy. The Samnites were undoubtedly a warlike people who frequently made war on various other states and tribes of the Italian peninsula. Like most warrior cultures, hunting was a prominent part of Samnite culture not for merely getting food, but for honing martial skills and creating a bond between young warriors. According to Silius—a poet of the imperial period (so many of his premises are tendentious at best)—the Hirpini lived by hunting and lived off the land.¹⁷ Moreover, tomb paintings discovered in Campania, from the fourth century, attest to the practice of gladiatorial games in this region.¹⁸ A passage in Livy would seem to indicate that gladiatorial games were appropriated by the Campanians from the Samnites.¹⁹ An anonymous Roman historian claimed the Roman infantry adopted the oblong shield and javelins from the Samnites and these helped Roman arms become more successful.²⁰

¹³ Thuc. 1.75-76; 5.105.

¹⁴ Thuc. 1.76.3, 5.105.2.

¹⁵ E.g. see Thuc. 2.5.6, 3.68; Xen. *Hell.* 2.1; Law 1919: with sources.

¹⁶ See Harris 1979: 40 for an assessment of the brutality of Roman war methods.

¹⁷ Sil. *Pun.* 8.571.

¹⁸ Salmon 1967: 60; Doberstein 2014: 30.

¹⁹ See Salmon 1967: 60; Livy 9.40.17. Some ancient sources suggest the games reached Rome from Etruria; some suggest they came from Campania. For our purposes it is enough that the Campanians got them from the Samnites.

²⁰ See Cornell 1995: 170 for a translation of the text.

Many wars between the Republic and the Samnites were fiercely fought between c. 350-c. 271 and proved the Samnites to be a formidable foe.²¹ The First Samnite war is sometimes labelled as a non-event, but Livy's account is one that presents a determined enemy to Rome.²² The Second Samnite War was broadly offensive²³ from the Romans but culminated in the disastrous defeat at the Caudine Forks in 321.²⁴ In fact, the Samnites appear to have advanced deep into Latium at one stage, probably in 315, to mount an attack.²⁵ However, overall, the Samnites displayed a level of bellicosity no more or less than any other culture. The mounted troops of the Samnites were highly regarded by the Romans.²⁶ The formidable reputation of the Samnite warrior would seem to be much deserved. They were a people that had become hardened and warlike through the constant use of arms and participation in warfare.²⁷

The ancient sources have numerous accounts of Samnite savagery including the execution of captives by burning them alive,²⁸ as well as general mistreatment of surrendered soldiers.²⁹ Livy describes the oath taken by Samnite recruits. They were accompanied to an altar more like the victims of a sacrificial rite. Then each soldier was compelled to take an oath whereby, if he broke his oath of loyalty, a curse would descend on him and his family. If he refused to follow his generals into battle or fled from the melee he would be cut down. If any recruits refused to take the oath they were beheaded.³⁰ This evidence attests to the discipline needed for linear combat and the focus on the military for this culture.³¹ As horrific and brutal as this description of Samnite culture is, it is of course, not exceptional. The Romans themselves were guilty of slaughtering captives and meted out their own form of unforgiving punishment to troops who were found guilty of cowardice.³²

²¹ Cornell 1995: 345-7 with sources. Livy 7.29.1-2. Also see the *Fasti Triumphales*.

²² Livy 7.32-35.

²³ Livy 8.30.

²⁴ The modern argument is there was a period of peace after the Caudine forks. Livy has the Roman state rejecting the peace made by the consuls. See Livy 9.9-12.

²⁵ Strab. 5.3.5, 5.4.11; Cornell 1995: 354.

²⁶ Livy 8.38.3, 8.38.5, 9.27.5, 10.20.13, 10.41.11; Plut. *Pyrrh.* 13.

²⁷ Livy 7.29.5.

²⁸ Livy 9.12.8. Caution is, of course, needed with Livy's evidence as he portrays the Romans as generally doing no wrong and her enemies regularly transgressing acceptable conduct.

²⁹ Livy 9.43.1.

³⁰ Livy 10.38.11-12.

³¹ And is *not* necessarily evidence for Samnite bellicosity.

³² See Polyb. 6.38 for a description of running the gauntlet as a form of execution for those found guilty of dereliction of duty. Also see Livy 2.59.10-11, 9.31.8.

Discipline was crucial for linear combat so this kind of punishment may well have been widespread among ancient cultures. As the Samnites were the Republic's enemies our sources predictably focus on perceived violations of normative conduct and behaviour, but interestingly we can find examples of Rome also perpetrating the same actions.³³

In Polybius' description of the Celts of the Po valley we are left in no doubt that warfare was predominant in this society. In fact, he claims the Celtic people only practised farming and warfare.³⁴ Cato also notes the prominence of warfare in Celtic society, as well as rhetoric.³⁵ The Romans certainly, at times, feared and loathed the Celts due to their military successes.³⁶ For Greek and Roman writers, not only did Celtic people display an innate belligerence but also they had 'a tendency to practice and cultivate their military skills.'³⁷ Quite ironically some moderns direct the same charges towards republican Rome! As mentioned previously, militarism and aggressiveness were characteristics of both Celtic culture as well as Roman, but for the Romans and Greeks, Celtic culture—and many others—were bellicose in an aberrant way. They were aggressive in their militarism and thus lacking a balanced attitude to warfare.³⁸ They were responsible for causing chaos and destruction to both the Romans and the Greeks. But for our purposes the differentiation is irrelevant; the fact is the Celts were bellicose and expansionist and the Republic's fear of them is patent testimony to this.

Diodorus Siculus paints a vivid picture of some of the practices of Celtic warriors. They sever the heads of their enemies and tie them around the necks of their horses. The heads of the most distinguished enemies are embalmed and carefully preserved in a chest and exhibited to guests. These grisly trophies were proof of the owner's valour in battle and not to be sold for any price.³⁹ Human sacrifice was enacted before battle, for they believed 'human life must be rendered for human life.'⁴⁰ However, we need to be cautious. Diodorus

³³ For the Lucanians mutilating the enemy, see Livy 8.24.14. On the Romans and their violent battle practices Livy 31.34.4-6. See Salmon 1967: 111 for more examples and sources.

³⁴ Polyb. 2.17. See Williams 2001 for an analysis of Polybius' negative assessment of Celtic culture.

³⁵ Cato *Orig.* 2.3; Chassignet=Williams 2001: 79.

³⁶ Livy 5.33-50 for the sack of Rome.

³⁷ Williams 2001: 87 with sources.

³⁸ Williams 2001: 91.

³⁹ Diod. Sic. 5.29.

⁴⁰ Caesar *B Gall.* 6.16. Again, Caesar is writing in the mid-first century, as was Diodorus, and leaves us with several conundrums as evidence of Celtic culture. Can this evidence really be applied to Celtic culture centuries earlier than Caesar's time? Moreover, Celtic culture encompassed many different peoples and it is obviously

relied heavily on earlier, now lost, sources and writing in the late Republic; there is a need to be careful in the use of his text. His evidence is perhaps best used as a reflection of intellectual and political attitudes of the time.⁴¹ Modern excavations have shown human sacrifice of the enemy to be a prominent practice of this culture.⁴² Taken in isolation, this archaeological evidence may only indicate religious practices, but taken collectively it has an accumulative effect. Celtic culture was obsessed with war and developed its own institutions and practices that would, to their mind, best facilitate success in battle, just as the Republic did.

The Etruscans were, for several centuries, a dangerous and determined enemy of Rome.⁴³ Thucydides mentions the effectiveness of the Etruscans in battle during the expedition to Sicily between 415-413.⁴⁴ This Greek evidence suggests that the Etruscans were perfectly capable on land and at sea. An indication of the warlike nature of the Etruscans can be seen in the accounts in Livy of the wars between Rome and the great city of Veii in the fifth century.⁴⁵ These conflicts had complex political and economic causes as both states desired to control major lines of communication on the western flank of the peninsula.⁴⁶ There is also evidence of aggression between Etruscan cities in the *Elogia Tarquiniensia*, a series of Latin inscriptions from the early imperial period.⁴⁷ It would seem that particularism was a characteristic of Etruscan cities and tension and antagonism between them were common.

There is an abundance of archaeological evidence for the prominence of warfare in Etruscan culture. Many iron heads for spears have been found in tombs in Etruria. For example the spear heads in the *Tomba del Guerriero* at Corneto.⁴⁸ The *Tomba dei Rilievi* at

potentially tendentious to make sweeping generalisations about them all from evidence limited in its scope. These difficulties apply equally to Livy who wrote later in the Augustan age but purports to be presenting evidence on the Celts as early as the 5th century. The apologist and propagandist elements also need to be navigated through.

⁴¹ See Sacks 1990: 3-5.

⁴² See Brunaux 2001: 54-57.

⁴³ See Livy e.g. 1.14-15, 1.27, 2.9, 2.42-51, 6.2.2, 6.9.3-6.10.5, 7.12.6-7 etc. Some of these accounts are legendary stories which are probably only evidence for later views. Also see the *Fasti Triumphales*.

⁴⁴ Thuc. 7.53-4. Also see 6.103 for the Etruscans supplying three ships.

⁴⁵ See Livy 5.1-23.

⁴⁶ Cornell 1995: 309-310.

⁴⁷ Cornell 1995: 312.

⁴⁸ McCartney 1915: pl.53, fig. 3.

Cervetri had several swords of the third to fourth century. There have also been examples of helmets, shields and armour uncovered in tombs.⁴⁹

There are many specimens of representational evidence that depict warriors. A bucchero vase from Narce shows warriors with swords.⁵⁰ There is a sixth century painting on a terracotta slab from Caere that depicts warriors complete with spears.⁵¹ We have examples of bronze figures that show the highly developed hoplite armour of the Etruscans from an early time. For example, the figures made at Brolio from the sixth century include three warriors. We have fully armoured warriors that form the handle of one of the Loeb tripods found near Perugia and the famous Avle Feluske relief sculpture of the mid-sixth century, which depicts a warrior with a double axe. These are merely a selection of Etruscan artefacts that are directly related to warrior culture and warfare but the implications seem incontrovertible: warfare was an important aspect of Etruscan society.

The warlike nature of many of the Italian people is expressed numerous times in our ancient sources.⁵² The many incursions of Sabines, Aequi, and Volsci into Latium were part of a wider phenomenon of migrations in the fifth century and these movements created many conflicts.⁵³ The Volscians occupied many cities in southern Latium in the 490s. The Sabines repeatedly attacked Roman territory and the cities of Tibur, Pedum and Preneste were threatened by the Aequi.⁵⁴

The Aequi held several hill forts and from them they launched raids into the Latium plain.⁵⁵ During the fifth century the Romans appear to have fought campaigns against the Volsci and the Aequi virtually every year.⁵⁶ While the literary evidence we have is highly rhetorical and perhaps, more myth than fact, there is no reason not to accept the obvious conclusion that the Italian people, including Rome, were warlike and often bellicose.

⁴⁹ See McCartney 1915: pl.54, fig. 3 etc.

⁵⁰ McCartney 1915: pl. 54, fig. 1.

⁵¹ McCartney 1915: pl. 52, fig. 1.

⁵² See the *Fasti Triumphales*. From the founding of the Republic to the middle of the third century BC various Italian people were continually at war with Rome.

⁵³ Cornell 1995: 305.

⁵⁴ Cornell 1995: 304.

⁵⁵ For the hillforts see Livy 2.48.4.

⁵⁶ Cornell 1995: 305. Note that often this will have consisted of raiding and not warfare of the nature and scale that Livy presents it.

CARTHAGE

The Republic's inveterate enemy from the third century, Carthage, was the dominant power in the western Mediterranean until the conflict with Rome attenuated its position. Frustratingly, no written documents are extant from this culture apart from some epigraphic material.⁵⁷ We are left to assemble an image of Carthaginian culture from our Roman and Greek sources which, particularly in the case of the Roman are marred by a natural bias against a hated enemy. As often was the case of peoples perceived as barbarians by the Greeks and Romans, the Carthaginians were the recipients of a smear campaign often to justify the policies of the Republic.⁵⁸ Livy claimed Hannibal exhibited the essence of the Punic character: a lack reverence for the gods, no compunction for the breaking of an oath, and no regard for the truth or integrity.⁵⁹ For a significant number of ancient writers Punic cruelty was a truism and seemed to be characteristic of that culture and its people. However, it is manifestly obvious there is much more to this state than Hannibal's putative treachery.⁶⁰ For a nation to have dominated North Africa and the western Mediterranean for so long and to have resisted the might of Rome as well as the Greeks so resolutely attests to her tenacity and her imperialistic designs.⁶¹

The most productive area to begin our assessment of Carthaginian bellicosity is Polybius' accounts of the several treaties enacted between the Republic and Carthage. The first treaty is said by Polybius to have been struck in the first consulship after the expulsion of the kings, that is, in 509. Polybius provides a translation which suggests that the Carthaginians considered Sardinia, Libya, and parts of Sicily as their own.⁶² The second clause mentions the sale of merchandise by Romans in Libya and Sardinia, and the third clause states that the Romans shall enjoy the same rights as anyone else in the Carthaginian 'territories in Sicily.' These statements are fairly innocuous, but they clearly attest to Carthaginian imperialism. Rome was also restricted in her activities and movements around

⁵⁷ See Cornell 1995: 213; Scullard 1955: 101.

⁵⁸ However, Polybius does say that Philinus was biased in favour of Carthage, see Polyb. 1.14.

⁵⁹ Livy 21.3.9. See Hoyos 2015: 371.

⁶⁰ For example: Livy 21.3.9, 21.2.7, 21.6.3-5, 22.6.11-12; App. *Pun.* 5.28, 8.32; Sil. 1.55. etc.

⁶¹ Scullard 1995: 101.

⁶² Polyb. 3.23.5-6. There is also plenty of evidence for Carthaginian campaigning on Sicily against the Greeks. See Hdt. 7.158, 7.163, 7.165-7, 7.166.1 etc. Diod. Sic. 11.24.1, 11.26 etc.

North Africa, Sardinia, and the Punic controlled areas of Sicily.⁶³ The fifth clause, forbidding the construction of Carthaginian forts in Latium, implies that the Carthaginians had been building forts there; otherwise, there would be no need for such clauses. The fourth clause specifies that certain Latin cities, and any other communities subject to Rome, shall not be harmed by the Carthaginians.⁶⁴ These cities were all on the coast of Italy, which suggests the Carthaginians had been raiding coastal towns.

Another treaty followed in the fourth century (348?). The Carthaginians had more geographical restrictions placed on the maritime movements of Rome to protect her growing empire.⁶⁵ One clause maintains that, if the Carthaginians capture any city in Latium not subject to Rome, they shall keep the valuables and the men, but give up the city.⁶⁶ This clause would be unnecessary if the Carthaginians were not capable or inclined to such aggressive action. In fact, we can justifiably presuppose raids on Latium had already occurred and hence the explicit prohibition on such acts.

In the early years of Punic expansion we have allusions to a certain Malchus, a general who had conquered a portion of Sicily and had also won great renown by his military exploits in Africa.⁶⁷ We also have mention of one Mago, a great general who greatly increased Carthaginian territories, power and military glory.⁶⁸ Mago accrued immense prestige and was an authority on account of his military success; on his death he left two sons, Hasdrubal and Hamilcar who continued their father's policies. Herodotus informs us that Hamilcar led a famous expedition to Sicily in 480,⁶⁹ and that he had become king 'by virtue of his valour.'⁷⁰ Evidently Hamilcar was very successful in warfare as he enjoyed four triumphs and held eleven dictatorships.⁷¹ These are only a few great Carthaginian generals that have come down to us through our Roman and Greek sources. It is certainly not inconceivable there was a lengthy and proud military tradition from Carthage that is unfortunately unrecoverable.

⁶³ Polyb. 3.22.4-8, 3.22.1-4.

⁶⁴ Ardea, Antium, Laurentium, Circeii, Tarracina. Polyb. 3.22.11.

⁶⁵ Polyb. 3.24.1-2.

⁶⁶ Polyb. 3.24.5-6.

⁶⁷ Just. Epit. 18.7.1.

⁶⁸ Just. Epit. 18.7.19.

⁶⁹ Hdt. 7.165.

⁷⁰ Hdt. 7.166.

⁷¹ Just. Epit. 19.1.1.

It must be acknowledged that the Carthaginian's prominent use of mercenaries and mercenary commanders suggests that warfare may not have been a concern at all times in their history.⁷² Polybius explicitly attests to the Carthaginian habit of employing hired soldiers.⁷³ However, a case could be made for the fact that the very reason mercenaries were used was because of the critical position war played for Carthage. Since the death of Alexander war in the Mediterranean had intensified and war-methods had increased in sophistication which demanded professional troops.⁷⁴ Carthaginian citizens served as officers or in elite units in the army and crewed the naval fleet. For major naval operations, the fleet could number as many as two hundred warships,⁷⁵ again, a testament to the centrality of the military to Carthage.

Maritime trade was the life blood of Carthage and the Carthaginians' reputation is one of traders and businessmen. Indeed, the clauses in the three treaties between Rome and Carthage suggest trade was the primary concern for them.⁷⁶ Yet, to protect their trade industry and expand it in the Mediterranean, a powerful military was needed and war and expansion were, for these reasons, necessary and natural. While in the treaties Rome does not appear particularly concerned with trade, in contrast to Carthage, we need to acknowledge that trade also played an important role in the Republic. This contrast in the clauses could simply reflect the fact Carthage was the more powerful state at the time or simply a reflection of different ideas of statehood and interests. However, the clauses do prove trade was taking place and both sides were engaged in it. The main point is that trade and warfare are not mutually exclusive.

It is worth noting that traditional Roman attitudes to trade and the traditional criteria for what is worthy of inclusion in historical works, mean that Roman trade gets underplayed, while warfare is an obvious focus of Roman historians. These concerns make Rome look more bellicose by comparison, when in fact the Romans were also engaged in trade. Not only are these other states bellicose like Rome, but Rome too, engaged in other activities other than war; the differences have been overplayed.

⁷² See Polyb. 1.32.1-36.4, 1.66.1 etc.

⁷³ Polyb. 1.71.1.

⁷⁴ Hoyos 2007: 8.

⁷⁵ Hoyos 2014:22.

⁷⁶ Polyb. 3.23-25.

It is significant that, in the many attempts to blacken the name of Carthage made by various authors, the events cited as evidence of Punic perfidy and brutality can easily be construed as not only standard military practice, or at least sound opportunism, but also as evidence of the warlike nature of Punic society.

Hamilcar Barca, the father of Hannibal, built his reputation on his military successes which in their own right were extremely impressive. He was a young man when he took command of a Punic army in Sicily. He was uncompromising and never gave ground to the enemy in battle. He would often avail himself of any opportunity to attack his foes and he gained much success.⁷⁷ Hamilcar defended Mt. Eryx with his forces with tenacity. He had determined not to lay down his arms and return home in disgrace as this would be unworthy of his own courage.⁷⁸ Whilst common sense prevailed and his forces withdrew, according to Polybius he determined to find a pretext in the future to continue war with the Republic.⁷⁹

Hamilcar was given the command of the Punic forces in Spain where he accomplished great deeds and he vanquished 'mighty and warlike nations...'⁸⁰ He gained a great reputation for his martial deeds and, as he gained territory, Punic desire for empire increased exponentially.⁸¹ He acquired a great reputation for his military successes and the people came to believe he could conquer Spain due to the great general's military reputation.⁸² Hamilcar finally met his end in battle as he fell to one of the most feared and warlike tribes in Spain.⁸³ Hamilcar exemplifies the importance of military accomplishment in Punic society. Like Rome, the path to prestige and glory could rest on military achievement. Far from being the preserve of an exceptionally bellicose Roman culture, this cultural phenomenon was ubiquitous in the ancient world.

⁷⁷ Polyb. 1.56-1.62.

⁷⁸ Nep. *Ham.* 22.2.5.

⁷⁹ Polyb. 3.9.6-8. The 'Barcid Vendetta.' The concept of vengeance does tend to be present in the ancient accounts of the Second Punic War and may indeed be overstated in them, yet, to dismiss it totally as *one* of the causes of this war, and many others, is a mistake.

⁸⁰ Nep. *Ham.* 22.4.1.

⁸¹ App. *Hann.* 7.1.2. The official line was Carthage expanded in Spain to secure money to pay her indemnity to Rome. See Dio fr. 48.

⁸² App. *Hann.* 7.1.2.

⁸³ Polyb. 2.1.7. Again, a certain amount of caution needs to be exercised as these kinds of assessments of Carthaginian generals have been made by Greek and Roman writers not Carthaginian. Greek and Roman concerns have likely shaped the material and its interpretation to some degree. Polybius, for instance, may think highly of such attributes but we cannot be sure the Carthaginians would have.

To furnish all the evidence for Hannibal Barca's bellicosity and expansionist designs would take up too much space and is in any case unnecessary. There can be little doubt that he was always destined to be a warrior and he would have begun his military training at an early age.⁸⁴ Hannibal's brother likewise was raised as a warrior and is described by Polybius as an energetic man with a 'precocious gift for warfare...'⁸⁵ As youths, they were both initiated into the ways of warfare and possibly witnessed the practice of crucifying failed generals in the city square. This stern punishment was, for instance, meted out to the Punic general who abandoned the citadel of Messana to the Mamertines in 264. The unfortunate general was found guilty of cowardice and poor judgement and crucified.⁸⁶ Military failure in Carthage was often attended by swift and severe punishment. The Republic also systematized and institutionalized an elaborate system of rewards and punishments for conduct in warfare; this concept itself was common to Carthage and many other cultures of the Mediterranean.⁸⁷

It seems from our sources that military reputation may have been significant in Carthaginian culture,⁸⁸ but exactly how significant and whether to a similar degree as in Rome is just too hard to say given the paucity of evidence. Moreover, all we have is the fact that Carthage produced some great generals, which is not the same as proving she was as bellicose as Rome. But there is no doubt Carthage could be aggressive and imperialistic and could certainly fight tenaciously. We merely have to look at the First Punic War and the Carthaginians' tenacity to fight on while under immense pressure. Rome's tenacious character is proverbial, but in reality most ancient societies, including Carthage, were also quite capable of being steadfast. The dire consequences of military defeat made this only natural.

Carthage had hegemonic control over a range of communities in western Sicily and Sardinia,⁸⁹ and from 237 Hamilcar crossed to Iberia and started to build Carthaginian

⁸⁴ Gabriel 2011: 8.

⁸⁵ Polyb. 3.71.

⁸⁶ Polyb. 1.11.5.

⁸⁷ See Polyb. 6.37-39 for the punishment of officers and legionaries. Note the people and senate thanking Varro after his defeat at Cannae. Livy 22.61.13-15.

⁸⁸ Gabriel 2011: 6.

⁸⁹ Hoyos 2014: 16.

authority there after she had lost the rest of her western Mediterranean empire to Rome.⁹⁰ The Carthaginian 'Empire' was a testament to her aggression and expansionist designs.

The Punic state was a leader in the employment of mercenaries, which for Roman and Greek authors, was the antithesis of the citizen-soldier⁹¹ and was another source of a somewhat negative view of Punic society. But, in the final analysis, Carthage was evidently militaristic, assertive, and expansionist. In many respects certain aspects of Punic militarism are comparable with the Republic's. Punic expansionism was relentless and dynamic as she increased her territory.⁹² While Punic culture maintained a focus on commercialism and colonization inherited from the mother city of Tyre, she was also endowed with a capacity for empire that Phoenicia lacked.⁹³ Carthage's policies were aggressive and, by the early third century, she was already the leading power in the western Mediterranean.⁹⁴

Rome practised pragmatic ruthlessness as did Carthage. Livy details the slaughter of inhabitants of cities and towns;⁹⁵ the plundering of a surrendered city;⁹⁶ the slaughter of civilians including babies;⁹⁷ and a veritable catalogue of other unsavoury conduct perpetrated by the Roman army. Apparently the divide between the Republic and Carthage in the matters of warfare and expansionism was significantly smaller than some scholars, both ancient and modern, advocate.

HELLENISTIC KINGS

Polybius was also very familiar with the Macedonian army which he intimates had no equal in the categories of individual courageousness and naked aggression.⁹⁸ In Polybius' assessment the Macedonians 'delighted in war as they would in a feast.'⁹⁹ They would carry out orders with alacrity and they were not only superb in their roles in set-piece battles but

⁹⁰ Polyb. 2.1-2.

⁹¹ Polyb. 6.52. See Williams 2001: 91, in the context of Celtic society.

⁹² Polyb. 3.39.

⁹³ Wolters 1952: 192.

⁹⁴ Hoyos 2014: 7.

⁹⁵ Livy 23.18.10; 24.38-39.

⁹⁶ Livy 25.31.9-10.

⁹⁷ Livy 28.19-20.

⁹⁸ Polyb. 5.2.5-6. Eckstein 2005: 487.

⁹⁹ Polyb. 5.2.6.

they were perfectly ready to serve at sea if circumstances demanded it.¹⁰⁰ They also applied themselves to the onerous tasks of constructing camps and digging ditches with enthusiasm.¹⁰¹ The warrior culture of Macedonia would seem to be a product of the constant exposure to her less culturally advanced and bellicose neighbours.¹⁰² Livy simply proclaims that the Macedonians were 'more ferocious' than ordinary men.¹⁰³ Macedonian bellicosity and expansionism were in many respects second to none in the ancient world. Moreover Macedonian weapons and tactics were, at times, superior to most.¹⁰⁴

Diodorus also wrote about the qualities of the Macedonian war machine. We hear of brave Persian resistance to Macedonian spirit and valour:¹⁰⁵ the king Dareius was said to have been haunted by dreams of the fighting qualities of Macedonians.¹⁰⁶ Diodorus extols the Macedonian phalanx under Philip II and also claims the soldiers attacked Theban forces more 'fiercely than is normal in war.'¹⁰⁷ Manifestly, this was a warrior culture *par excellence*. Let us take a closer look at Macedonia and its role in the interstate system of the Mediterranean.

As with Carthage, we are met with the name of one of the ancient world's greatest warriors which casts a significant shadow over the history of this culture. It is profitable for our purposes to take into account some aspects of Alexander's and his father Philip's, lives as they were a part of a continuing tradition of Macedonian aggression and expansionism.

Philip II was arguably the greatest warrior of his age and possessed a burning desire for expansion.¹⁰⁸ He increased Macedonian territory significantly and forged his forces into the most effective fighting force the world had seen.¹⁰⁹ Philip was renowned for his strategic adroitness, bravery, and the brilliance of his personality.¹¹⁰ He led by example in battle and possessed the scars to prove it. He had lost one eye, broken a collarbone, maimed a leg, and

¹⁰⁰ Polyb. 5.2.4-6.

¹⁰¹ Polyb. 5.2.6.

¹⁰² Eckstein 2005: 487.

¹⁰³ Livy 45.30.7.

¹⁰⁴ For example at the battle of Atrax, 198; see Livy 17.11-18.

¹⁰⁵ Diod. Sic. 17.20.1.

¹⁰⁶ Diod. Sic. 17.30.7.

¹⁰⁷ Diod. Sic. 17.11.4; 17.70.3-5.

¹⁰⁸ Polyb. 3.6.5, 3.6.12.

¹⁰⁹ Fredricksmeyer 1990: 300.

¹¹⁰ Diod. Sic. 16.1.6.

was generally covered in scars of battle.¹¹¹ While Philip was waging war in Byzantium Alexander, then merely a sixteen-year-old boy, was subduing rebellions and besieging cities.¹¹² Alexander, like Philip and all Macedonian aristocrats, had a typical upbringing consisting of an education with a heavy emphasis on physical activities such as fighting, riding and hunting.¹¹³

No man could recline to eat at a banquet until he had killed a boar without the aid of a trap and a young soldier was expected to wear a rope and sash around his waist until he had killed his first man in battle.¹¹⁴

Alexander's stupendous military and imperialist achievements have been the staple diet of western historiography since ancient times and will be passed over here, but a few points will be furnished as emblematic of Macedonian martial culture. At the siege of Tyre (332) we hear of the king engaging in hand-to-hand combat on the ramparts,¹¹⁵ then giving the order that all except those seeking refuge in temples should be slain and the houses burnt to the ground.¹¹⁶ Alexander's siege and destruction of Thebes in 335 are indicative of the ancients' potential for merciless warfare. Arrian imputed this orgy of blood lust to the Macedonians and more so to the Phocians, Plataeans, and Boeotians. Regardless of the veracity of this claim the Thebans were slaughtered irrespective of age or gender.¹¹⁷ Alexander wanted to instil fear into the other Greeks, an often-used weapon in the ancient world. Also, according to Plutarch, he wanted to gratify his allies that had made complaints against Thebes.¹¹⁸

Alexander's imperialism would have far reaching effects not only on western history generally, but more specifically on Macedonian military potential. The anabasis would take a good proportion of a generation away from Macedonia never to return and would eventually lead to a lack of manpower and the enfeeblement of the kingdom.¹¹⁹ This premise might point to the divergence between the success of the Republic and the slow

¹¹¹ Dem. *De cor.* 11.22.

¹¹² Plut. *Alex.* 9.1.

¹¹³ Worthington 2014: 27. See Plut. *Alex* 4.11: 23.3-4 for royal hunting and Alexander's love for hunting.

¹¹⁴ Arist. *Pol.* 132b. Worthington 2014: 17.

¹¹⁵ Arr. *Anab.* 23.4; Curt. 4.4.11.

¹¹⁶ Curt. 4.4.13 for what it is worth.

¹¹⁷ Arr. *Anab.* 1.8.8.

¹¹⁸ Plut. *Alex.* 11.5-6.

¹¹⁹ Bosworth 1986: 2.

decline of Macedonia rather than any anomaly in Rome being particularly aggressive, merciless, or warlike.

From the beginning the *Diadochoi* (successors), according to the ancient sources, sought to increase their power, prestige and territory. Cassander aimed for supreme power over Alexander's Empire,¹²⁰ while Ptolemy sought supreme power by marriage to Alexander's sister, Kleopatra.¹²¹

The Hellenistic world that the Roman Republic progressively became more involved in was shaped by war. In fact, the genesis of this world was found in the violent expansion of Alexander the Great.¹²² The frequency of war involving the Roman Republic is often cited as evidence for the bellicosity of Roman culture,¹²³ but so too, it is evidence of the bellicosity of the Hellenistic kingdoms. Between the expansion of Alexander and the traditional, but artificial, terminal point of the Hellenistic age (the battle of Actium in 31 BC) there was almost no geographical region in the Mediterranean world which was not directly or indirectly affected by military conflict.¹²⁴ Like the Romans (and most other peoples of the ancient world) the Hellenistic Greeks were surrounded by images of war. Coins presented images of kings in battle accoutrements, weapons and divine patrons of war. For instance, Demetrius the Besieger minted silver coins after his victory in 307, which portrayed Nike on the prow of a ship.¹²⁵ Public spaces were adorned with statues of war heroes and memorials to great victories such as the honorary decree for Euphron of Sikyon in Athens which was decorated with images of Athena and Euphron in military dress.¹²⁶ War booty was publicly dedicated to the gods¹²⁷ and military parades were an integral aspect of public ceremonies and celebrations. Moreover, tombs were often adorned with images of war and military themes.¹²⁸ This culture was fully immersed in war. And war was the primary means for resolving differences. As the Antigonid kings of Macedonia, so too the other Hellenistic kings

¹²⁰ Diod. Sic. 18.49.2.

¹²¹ Diod. Sic. 20.37.3-4.

¹²² Chaniotis 2005: 2. Baker 2007: 375.

¹²³ E.g. Harris 1979: 9-12 as the most obvious example.

¹²⁴ Chaniotis 2005: 2.

¹²⁵ Chaniotis 2005: 3, fig. 1.1.

¹²⁶ Chaniotis 2005: 3, fig. 1.2.

¹²⁷ See Polyb. 5.8 for the Aetolian sanctuary of Thermon with more than 15,000 shields dedicated by victorious soldiers.

¹²⁸ Baker 2007: 196 Fig. 10.1.

‘followed a more or less imperialist strategy by fighting amongst themselves’ for various territories as well as taking their penchant for conquest to faraway territories.¹²⁹

The battle of Salamis in 306 between Ptolemy and Demetrius was projected to be the showdown for full control of the empire. Antigonos had his own early designs on supreme power.¹³⁰ Plutarch says he possessed a huge ambition in 323 when he was still merely the satrap of Phrygia.¹³¹ Antigonos, like all Macedonian kings after Alexander, harboured desires to reunite and rule the great king’s empire. Antigonos’ imputed love of power was apparently a characteristic in keeping with Macedonian royal ideology.¹³²

As a way of comparison we shall analyse kings contemporary to the Republic. The tradition of warrior kings and expansionism would be part of Macedonian culture from before Philip II and Alexander the Great until the final dissolution of the kingdom. This royal ideology of bellicosity was deeply embedded in the Antigonid tradition,¹³³ and was inherited by the other Hellenistic kings.¹³⁴ The great rival of the Republic, Philip V, saw himself as a new Alexander and it seems his prodigious ambition and aggressiveness were proverbial and taken seriously.¹³⁵ As we have seen above, Macedonian resources attenuated considerably since Alexander’s time, but with conquest came financial rewards and an influx of potential manpower.

Polybius mentions several instances of Philip explicitly or implicitly expressing his desire for world domination. Demetrius of Pharos recommended to Philip that he launch a strike on Italy as it would be the first step towards world conquest,¹³⁶ and he was soon seduced by this invitation. Of course, the value of this kind of evidence is inevitably problematic, but nevertheless it does add to our picture of Philip. For Polybius this could only be expected from a king who was young and daring as well as from a royal house that had always ‘fervently aspired to world dominion.’¹³⁷

¹²⁹ Baker 2007: 375.

¹³⁰ See below.

¹³¹ Plut. *Eum.* 3.3.

¹³² See Diod. Sic. 18.50.1; Plut. *Dem.* 28.2.

¹³³ Plut. *Aem.* 12.5. The Antigonid family erroneously claimed descent from Alexander and Philip.

¹³⁴ Eckstein 2010: 230.

¹³⁵ See Eckstein 2010: 230; *Anth. Pal.* 9.518.

¹³⁶ Polyb. 5.101.5-6.

¹³⁷ Polyb. 5.102.1, 5.105.1, 5.105.5, 5.108.4-7.

We find better evidence of Philip's expansionist designs by looking at the treaty struck between him and Hannibal in 215 after Cannae when the Republic looked close to collapse.¹³⁸ The treaty states that once Rome is defeated various cities in Illyria shall be returned to Philip's close ally, Demetrius. Philip was availing himself of the dire straits the Republic was in. While Rome was occupied with Hannibal, he was free to operate against his neighbours in Illyria.¹³⁹ Evidently the king was looking to increase his influence (through his close and dependent ally, Demetrius) using diplomacy and opportunism.

While the treaty attests to Philip's imperialist designs, Livy says that Philip did not consider the fortunes of Rome to be waning until after the battle of Cannae.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, it seems implausible that Philip would seriously contemplate an invasion of Italy as his own kingdom was under attack at this stage by Scerdilaidas, the principal dynast in Illyria.¹⁴¹ What is more, he did not have a single harbour in the Adriatic.¹⁴² Nevertheless, there can be little doubt Philip V continued the Macedonian royal tradition of harbouring imperial designs and of bellicose posturing and actions towards other polities. While E. Gruen argues that Philip's confidence lay in the expectation of Roman inactivity and matters of pride¹⁴³ as factors in the First and Second Macedonian Wars respectively, Philip's activities extended far beyond his conflicts with the Republic, which he seems to have often avoided.¹⁴⁴

Our ancient sources are replete with claims for Philip V's aggrandizement and expansionist policies in the Mediterranean. It would seem that the king's ambition was insatiable as he combined deft diplomacy with the other major powers and naked aggression to facilitate the extension of the Macedonian kingdom and its sphere of influence.

In 214, for instance, the king, with a combined army and navy, assaulted the cities of Apollonia and Oricum in southern Illyria.¹⁴⁵ His campaigns between 213-212 were stunningly successful as Philip took control of a huge swathe of territory in Illyria and

¹³⁸ Polyb. 7.3.

¹³⁹ Gruen 1984: 376.

¹⁴⁰ Livy 23.33.1-4. See Gruen 1984: 374.

¹⁴¹ Polybius has Demetrius advising Philip on certain steps to take before an invasion of Italy can be attempted. See Polyb. 5.101.8-9, 5.108.1-4.

¹⁴² Gruen 1984: 375, 374.

¹⁴³ Gruen 1984: 397.

¹⁴⁴ Gruen 1984: 375; Polyb. 5.110; Livy 23.33.6.

¹⁴⁵ Livy 24.40.2-3.

pushed Macedonian hegemony all the way to the Adriatic coast.¹⁴⁶ From 204-201 Philip progressively increased the bellicose posture of his kingdom and deployed his forces around the Mediterranean.¹⁴⁷ At this time Philip may have agreed to a private pact with Antiochus III, the Seleucid king, which would facilitate the aggrandizement of both of their kingdoms at the expense of Ptolemaic Egypt.¹⁴⁸ In 192/1 Antiochus and Rome both courted Philip's allegiance. The king opted to support the Republic¹⁴⁹ and he received assurances that any Thessalian cities captured by Macedonia in the war against the Aetolians, would be incorporated into his kingdom and he was free to extend his hegemony over Athamania.¹⁵⁰ Now Macedonia extended its territory with Rome's sanction and over the next three years the king made substantial conquests.¹⁵¹ As seen in chapter one and according to Livy, Philip's son Perseus, looked to wage a war with Rome that his father had planned prior to his death.¹⁵² While our ancient sources have numerous problems, there seems little doubt that Perseus was looking to continue Philip's programme of augmenting the power and size of the Macedonian kingdom.

This lengthy but far from exhaustive, description of Philip V's imperialist campaigns in the late third and early second centuries should prove sufficient to demonstrate the sheer bellicosity of the Macedonian kingdom. My focus on Philip and Perseus finds its impetus in their contemporaneity to the mid-Republic, but to reiterate, they were merely part of a long tradition of Macedonian kings.

Antiochus III's 'imperialistic appetite was insatiable.'¹⁵³ His energy and aggressiveness created a significantly different situation in the East at the end of the third century. For instance, in 204 Seleucid influence was extended to coastal areas in Asia Minor.¹⁵⁴ The Fifth Syrian War, c. 202-199 allowed Antiochus to appropriate Coele Syria and Phoenicia from

¹⁴⁶ Polyb. 8.13-14; Livy 27.30.13, 28.12.3, 29.12.3, 29.12.13.

¹⁴⁷ Eg. Polyb. 13.3-5, 15.21-23, 18.2.4, 18.4.7, 18.5.4 etc.

¹⁴⁸ Polyb. 3.2.8, 15.20.2, 16.1.8; Livy 31.14.5; App. *Mac.* 4; Just. *Epit.* 30.2.8. See Gruen 1984: 532. This is a controversial subject with some scholars rejecting the 'pact' and others professing agnosticism, see Eckstein 2005: 228-242. I see nothing innately absurd about the idea of this pact but conclusive evidence of its existence seems beyond us.

¹⁴⁹ Livy 36.7-8.

¹⁵⁰ Livy 36.10.10, 36.13-14, 38.1.2, 39.23.10, 39.25.5; also see Gruen 1984: 400.

¹⁵¹ E.g. Livy 36.33, 39.23.11-12, 42.25.4 etc.

¹⁵² Livy 42.5.1.

¹⁵³ Gruen 1984: 613.

¹⁵⁴ Polyb. 11.34.14.

Ptolemaic Egypt. Then in 198, the king made progress in Asia Minor and stripped the key city of Ephesus from the Ptolemies.¹⁵⁵ The king used the sloganeering of ‘freedom’ as he defeated various peoples and then magnanimously gifted them a degree of sovereignty. He also assiduously avoided antagonising Rome but continued aggressive acts around the Mediterranean.¹⁵⁶ Antiochus—while possibly still trying to avoid war with Rome—crossed to Greece in the autumn 192 under the propagandist (and well used) slogan of the champion of Hellenic liberty. Yet, the king must have known the distinct possibility of war was real and he must have been prepared for it if it eventuated. It is patently obvious that Antiochus III continued the great Hellenistic tradition of aggrandizement and war-making. Antiochus IV Epiphanes determined to continue Seleucid imperialism and to extend the kingdom’s sphere of influence from Coele Syria to Egypt itself.¹⁵⁷

The Ptolemaic empire reached its acme in the third century B.C. as it progressively spread its power and influence over the eastern Mediterranean and the Levant. The reigns of Ptolemy II and Ptolemy III witnessed Egyptian hegemony extend over Syria and Phoenicia, Arabia, Libya, Ethiopia, Caria, Lycia, Pamphylia, Cilicia, and the Cycladic isles. Polybius likewise opines the power of these two great monarchs.¹⁵⁸ They controlled Coele Syria as well as Cyprus. The coast of Pamphylia to the Hellespont and Lysimacheia as well as various Asian cities and islands were under their sway. They also exerted a perceptible influence in Thrace and Macedonia.¹⁵⁹ Ptolemy II and Ptolemy III displayed a great energy and voraciousness for overseas conquest, and particularly their possession of Coele Syria allowed them to threaten the kings of Syria constantly.¹⁶⁰ There were certainly other successful Ptolemaic kings that extended or revived the power of Egypt such as Ptolemy Epiphanes, but again for our purposes to extend this discussion is unnecessary. The Ptolemies were unexceptional in their bellicosity and imperialist designs.

In this chapter I have endeavoured to show that, when it comes to war-making and belligerence, Rome was not in any way exceptional. Once again, to reiterate, Rome *was* bellicose, militaristic and politically assertive but *not* exceptionally so. In the previous

¹⁵⁵ Livy 33.38.5-7.

¹⁵⁶ E.g. see Polyb. 21.13.3; Diod. Sic. 29.7; Livy 34.57.2, 34.59.4. etc.

¹⁵⁷ Diod. Sic. 30.14, 30.16; See Gruen 1984: 652.

¹⁵⁸ Polyb. 5.34.5-9.

¹⁵⁹ Polyb. 5.34.5-9.

¹⁶⁰ Polyb. 5.34.5-9.

chapter we saw the internal culture of the Republic in all its uniqueness. Each ancient culture possessed its own ideology and institutions for harnessing, fostering, and directing the bellicosity of its people. These were warrior cultures. This individualism of unit-attributes of cultures was coupled with 'sameness' at the state level. This was a function of the interstate environment. To survive and prosper ancient polities had to be able to defend themselves and, when the opportunity presented itself, aggressively attack other polities. This was the ancient Mediterranean world and the Republic was no more or less a paragon of this environment. Rome's exceptionalism is in her success, but the conduct, ideology and vision of her own environment were simply standard. It is now incumbent on us to analyse the Republic's conduct and relationship with the wider Mediterranean in an attempt to weave together all the threads we have so far spun.

Chapter 4: What the Sources Say

INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter I will attempt to offer an explanation for Rome's dramatic expansion during the mid-republican period. My thesis is a synthesis of several different hypotheses and my aim in this chapter is to offer a much more subtle picture of the Republic as it existed within its political environment of the Mediterranean. It will be suggested that concerns for the security of the Republic were, indeed, significant for many Roman policies. At times, these concerns for security were, ironically, expressed by naked aggression towards Rome's neighbours. But such was the environment of the ancient Mediterranean that the best form of defence was often attack.

Defensive concerns were certainly not the only motivation for policy decisions, even if it could be argued they were sometimes the primary ones. And this is where many scholars of the past have failed to present a more nuanced picture of the Republic's expansion. In short, I maintain that, over such a lengthy period as the 'middle Republic' (as it is traditionally defined, that is, as 264-133 BC), there is room for interpreting some wars as being more defensive in nature but others as more offensive. There is nothing inherently contradictory about the Republic in one instance being assertive or aggressive and in another being conciliatory and pacific. This possibility has been largely ignored by those scholars who seem intent on melding *all* the many events of this period into a form that supports their theories; consequently Rome has been depicted either as an exceptionally aggressive polity or one beset by a paranoid concern for security. There can be little doubt, in the end, that 'defence' of the Republic was often a foremost consideration. However, defensive actions can take a multitude of forms, some of them overtly aggressive. What is more, wars of expansion and aggression can be perceived by their instigators as 'defensive' in nature. It must also be acknowledged that concerns for stability and security sometimes induced the Romans to seek out peaceful solutions, such as when they were playing the role of

mediator,¹ something which shows the Romans occasionally sought political stability by means other than war.

It must also be accepted that many of the wars fought in the mid-Republican period were affected by the desire of the nobility to seek *laus* and *gloria* and to win a triumph or *ovatio*. But this is not necessarily an alternative to defensive imperialism, nor does it suggest Rome was always aggressive. In the chaotic and violent world of the ancient Mediterranean, the nobles' desire for military glory could have been, in any number of instances, an almost separate issue. Generals in the field, at times, were the ones making significant decisions as individual initiative dramatically increased on campaigns abroad. And these determinations often exerted a significant influence over subsequent state policy.² Finally, as we have seen, other variables could exert pressure on the Romans' decision-making, such as economic factors, and moral and religious obligations and these too, must be considered.

A major premise this thesis rests on is one advocated by several scholars: that is, while some individual wars appear to have been driven by genuine and actual defensive concerns and while others seem to have found their impetus in designs more aggressive—although still possibly defensive in a more indirect way—the fact remains that the evidence to support the theory that the Roman state pursued a single, long-term policy is thin indeed.³ The evidence suggests instead, that many of Rome's decisions and policies were *ad hoc* in nature, and consequently could change with the circumstances. As such, each 'policy' decision needs to be taken on its own and no attempt should be made to impose coherency on a multitude of complex historical phenomena that, in reality, had none.⁴ However, while it does seem axiomatic that during the entire mid-republican period, a period of more than 100 years, there was no grand plan for empire, despite what Polybius may say,⁵ this does not mean that every individual action taken towards other states was *ad hoc*, unplanned, or merely reactionary. As we are dealing with such a long period we need to ensure that we

¹ E.g. in 194 Roman ambassadors charged with settling the quarrels of Syria and Egypt: Polyb. 18.49.3. Also the senate's attempts to mediate conflict in Asia: Polyb. 23.1.4, 23.3.1; Livy 39.46.9; Just. *Epit.* 32.4.8 etc. See Gruen 1984: 111-119 with further references.

² Eckstein 1987: XII-XIII.

³ See, Polybius 3.2.6 for the claim the Romans conceived of the idea of worldwide domination after defeating Carthage. Polybian evidence can never be lightly dismissed but in this case the subsequent events do not substantiate this claim.

⁴ See, Eckstein 1987: XI-XXI.

⁵ Polybius 1.3.6, 3.2.6; See Walbank 1963: 5.

are not blinded by the extent of change that occurred. It is also worth noting that the Romans were dealing with a variety of different peoples, some of who had developed highly advanced cultures, but some who had not; some of who lived sedentary lives, but some who were migratory. We can hardly have expected Rome to deal with Athens, for example, in the same manner as migrating Celts. These issues are often exacerbated by the nature of our sources which are frequently anachronistic.⁶ In the end we must see each mid-republican war not as part of an extensive plan for empire, nor as driven by a single outlook, but instead as impelled by a range of factors, some more planned than others, some more defensive than others, and some more successful than others.

According to Polybius' political theorizing, the Republic's bitter experiences of suffering in its relations with foreign peoples, led to the creation of a superior constitution.⁷ Does Polybius' theory have any basis in fact? This is, of course, a difficult question to answer, yet Rome's experience of disaster and defeat, we can suppose, probably did produce a fear of destruction by an external enemy. Polybius made use of the theme of external threats as the impetus that impelled the disparate elements of the political apparatus to cooperate and overcome her enemies, or potential enemies.⁸ In sum, if we are to give Polybius' analysis of the Republic's expansion any credence, and it would be unwise to repudiate his general assessments without good reason, we must understand the prominent position fear played in the ancient Mediterranean. My thesis espouses a multi-causal understanding of Rome's (or any other polity's) motivation to go to war, and as such, I hope to show by analysing the ancient texts that, indeed, this position is supported in them. The decision to go to war was always a complex intersection of motivations.

⁶ See, e.g., Livy 6.12.2-6: after narrating many wars between the Romans and the Volsci, Livy contemplates how the Volsci and the Aequi managed to put army after army into the field. It clearly never occurred to him that the nature of combat and campaigning in the early fourth century had been very different from his own day. Also see, e.g., Wiseman 1979: 42-45; Cornell 2005: 47-74, 59-60.

⁷ Polyb. 6.10.14.

⁸ Balot 2010: 490. See Polyb. 6.18.

CASE STUDIES: THE ANCIENT EVIDENCE

THE PUNIC WARS

In order to show the complexities involved in Rome's wars of the mid-republican period and also to move away from a monocausal thesis, an analysis of some of the more pertinent sections of the ancient evidence is essential.

Let us begin with Polybius' account of the outbreak of the First Punic War (264-241).⁹ An important preliminary to the start of this war, were the actions Rome took towards the city of Rhegium. The people of Rhegium, fearing an attack from Pyrrhus, and also the Carthaginians, appealed to Rome for a garrison. The garrison of four thousand sent by Rome, however, eventually took control of the city by force. Those members of the garrison that were not killed during the capture of Rhegium were sent to Rome where the consuls paraded them through the Forum and then they were publicly scourged and beheaded in 271.¹⁰ Polybius says the reason for this punishment was so that the Romans could recover their reputation for good faith.¹¹ This form of motivation for Roman actions, as we have noted previously, should not be summarily dismissed as mere apologetic; indeed, it would seem Roman *fides* was often a genuine concern for the Republic.

Around the same time a group of Campanian mercenaries called the Mamertines had gained control of Messana on Sicily, and initially, according to Polybius, enjoyed a kind of alliance with Rome as well as with the garrison that had occupied Rhegium.¹² The Mamertines proceeded to cause trouble for the Carthaginians and Syracusans, who between them controlled a good majority of Sicily. After Rhegium had been taken by the Romans, the Mamertines lost the support they had enjoyed from that city's garrison and they were also coming under increasing pressure from Syracuse. They, therefore, appealed to both Carthage and Rome for succour.¹³

⁹ Polybius' account derives from Fabius Pictor's and Philinus' accounts, of whose limitations he was well aware of. See Polyb. 1.14-15. Also see Diod. Sic. 23.

¹⁰ Polyb. 1.7.6-13.

¹¹ Polyb. 1.7.13.

¹² Polyb. 1.8.1.

¹³ Polyb. 1.10.1-2. The wording indicates the Mamertines offered *deditio* (absolute surrender) to the senate. But essentially this must have meant the acceptance of Messana into Roman *amicitia*. See Eckstein 1987: 77. Polyb. 3.26.6.

The appeal put Rome in a conundrum. The Roman army had taken Rhegium and killed the rebel garrison. The occupiers of Rhegium had been fellow citizens, and now the Mamertines, who were not citizens of Rome, and who were guilty of a similar offence to the garrison at Rhegium, were appealing for assistance. Rejecting the appeal would have been the most consistent course of action.

Yet the political environment was such that other considerations had to be taken into account. Polybius presents the conundrum the Romans found themselves in. They were fully aware of the inexcusable hypocrisy should they accept the Mamertines into their *fides* and then assist them,¹⁴ but they were also aware of the Carthaginians' increasing empire.¹⁵ The Romans, if Polybius is correct, felt great apprehension at the possibility of Carthage now becoming dominant in Sicily if the Carthaginians successfully came to the aid of Messina. They would be a dangerous neighbour, threatening Italy from close proximity and from various locations.¹⁶

Polybius' text emphasises the senate's long debate over strategic considerations and the risk of appearing inconsistent and opportunistic. The strategic considerations were clear: not to allow the Carthaginians to possess a 'bridge' for crossing over to Italy.¹⁷ Yet the senate still did not sanction the proposal for many did not believe the appearance of inconsistency was a fair price to pay for any advantages gained by intervention.¹⁸ Clearly this debate presented two legitimate concerns, neither of which was simply a desire for aggrandizement or expansion.

Polybius, at this point in the text, introduces several other factors in the process of the Republic's decision to intervene in Sicily. The people of Rome were weary of war that had raged almost continually in Italy and were in a state of hardship. They listened to the consuls who not only presented the strategic considerations but who also enunciated the general advantageousness of the proposed war. The consuls highlighted the potential plunder that would be gained from a successful war, spoils that everyone would benefit from.¹⁹ This

¹⁴ Polyb. 1.10.4.

¹⁵ Polyb. 1.10.5.

¹⁶ Polyb. 1.10.6.

¹⁷ Polyb. 1.10.9.

¹⁸ Polyb. 1.11.1.

¹⁹ Polyb. 1.11.2. See Tan 2013.

presentation of the benefits of intervention convinced the people who passed the measure for war and then appointed the consul Appius Claudius to cross to Messina.²⁰

In Polybius' account, the senate debates the issues of strategy (and defence) and the protection of the image of the Republic. It reaches a decision in favour of non-intervention but the consuls did not like it. Thus, the consuls took the matter to the *populus Romanus*, who, after some persuasion, nominated Ap. Claudius to cross to Messina. There is some debate on the accuracy of Polybius' account regarding who was actually responsible for the final decision,²¹ but fortunately for our purposes our focus is purely the motivation for the war. This is a paradigmatic example of multifarious issues compelling Rome towards war. There are three parties to consider here: the senate; the consuls who took the issue to the people who overturned the senate's decision; and the people. It would seem the people were convinced by the strategic argument, presumably centred on Rome's security and the prospect of profit.

Polybius also maintains that, after the war had broken out and after the Romans had captured the city of Agrigentum, they hoped they could drive the Carthaginians from Sicily entirely and thus greatly augment their own power.²² They were no longer merely satisfied with relieving the Mamertines or with what they had gained from the conflict so far. Evidently the desire for greater security, money, power etc. became a more prominent factor and they focused their attention on plans that would facilitate this goal. This should not be understood simply as an exceptionally aggressive state looking to deliver destruction for the sake of gratifying a ruling class that gained glory and reputation from war.

While it is clear that an element of glory-seeking was always present in the decision to go to war in Sicily,²³ no less prominent is the influence of the interstate environment. Seeking security for one's nation often meant an offensive, pre-emptive war to neutralize a perceived future enemy. It was often simply good politics to destroy or neutralize powerful

²⁰ Polyb. 1.11.3.

²¹ See Eckstein 1987: 80; Tan 2013.

²² Polyb. 1.20.1.

²³ Appius Claudius Caudex's subsequent actions after lifting the siege of Massana are instructive regarding the motivation behinds the consuls taking the vote for war to the people. Claudius proceeded to raid Syracusan land and then besieged Syracuse itself. See, Polyb. 1.11-12. For Duilius and his naval victory in 260 see, Livy *Per.* 17.2; Plin. *HN* 34.20. For Metellus and his triumph with elephants see, Plin. *HN* 7.139. The nobles made much of their achievements. Note that some of this could be opportunism after the fact.

or potentially powerful states to ensure your state's survival. Obviously, the senate's original decision in favour of non-intervention in Messina seems to suggest that strategic concerns were less important than those of reputation. The people and at least some of the senate, however, were convinced of the strategic concerns. We should also acknowledge the ever present economic aspect: Sicily was a very rich island.²⁴

The strategic and defensive considerations in 265/64 were real.²⁵ Carthage was, at the time, the most powerful 'empire' in the western Mediterranean, notwithstanding the fact that this empire's wealth and influence were based on trade. Carthage possessed a formidable military capacity and, like all ancient polities of significant size, a desire to expand. If the entire island of Sicily came under control of Carthage, there can be little doubt this would have affected Rome adversely, economically and politically.

The causes of the Second Punic War have been debated since antiquity, yet it would seem incontrovertible that these causes were similarly multiple and complex. At the completion of the First Punic War, Polybius' focus is on the indignation felt by Hamilcar Barca who had remained undefeated while stationed on Sicily during the war.²⁶ While there is nothing inherently unbelievable about this proposition, we are on safer ground taking into account Polybius' assertion that it was Rome's conduct towards Carthage after the latter had, with difficulty, just suppressed a mercenary rebellion in 238, which was a major catalyst for war. The Romans had initially observed the terms of the treaty of 241 by refusing the mercenaries on Sardinia—formally employed by Carthage—when they invited Rome to seize the island. Polybius also suggests the Carthaginians had shown good faith by returning captured Italian merchants in 240 or 239, and Rome looked to return the favour.²⁷ However, eventually an expedition to Sardinia was undertaken by Rome which angered the Carthaginians who then prepared to punish the Sardinian mercenaries.²⁸ The Romans claimed the Carthaginians were actually preparing to go to war against Rome and they used

²⁴ Polyb. 1.11.2.

²⁵ However, as we have seen in 265, for the senate they seemed to have been a lesser concern than appearing inconsistent.

²⁶ Polyb. 3.9.6.

²⁷ Polyb. 1.83. Harris 1979: 190-191.

²⁸ Polyb. 3.27.3-4. Harris 1979: 191.

this as a pretext and voted for war.²⁹ Carthage, exhausted from war, yielded to Rome, who was more than likely in violation of the treaty of 241.

There can be little doubt that Rome's actions were aggressive. Yet she may have convinced herself that Carthaginian preparations for war were directed at them and not the rebellious mercenaries and therefore defensive concerns were present. The senate would undoubtedly have seen the strategic advantage, and potentially a defensive one, in taking Sardinia from Carthage, but these actions did sow the seeds of future conflict. Rome's aggressive action towards Carthage merely embittered the Carthaginians who would eventually look for war. For Polybius, this was part of the principal cause of the Hannibalic war—the 'Barcid vendetta'—but mentioned after Hamilcar's indignation over having to agree to peace at the end of the First Punic War.³⁰ According to Polybius, Hamilcar and his fellow Carthaginians felt outrage and indignation at Rome's appropriation of Sardinia in contravention of the treaty and then being forced to pay an additional sum of 1,200 talents³¹ over the initial war indemnity of 2,200 Euboic talents.³²

These developments set a chain of events in motion. Hamilcar focused on expanding Carthage's control over territory in Spain with the object, according to Polybius, of using the resources gained there for a war against Rome.³³ The success of Carthaginian operations in Spain is posited by Polybius as the third cause of the war. This success provided the resources for Carthage to resume the war with Rome. Had they failed, the Carthaginians could hardly have attacked Rome. In 228, according to Polybius, the Romans noted the increase in the power and size of the Carthaginian Empire and they determined to become involved in the affairs of Spain.³⁴

At about the same time the Romans were deeply concerned about the threat of a Celtic invasion of Italy and possibly Rome itself. Accordingly, they made a treaty with Hasdrubal whereupon the Carthaginians would not cross the river Ebro under arms.³⁵ Rome was

²⁹ Polyb. 1.88.10.

³⁰ Polyb. 3.9.6, 3.10.4-5.

³¹ Polyb. 1.88.12.

³² Polyb. 1.62.9.

³³ Polyb. 3.10.6. Again, the 'Barcid vendetta'.

³⁴ Polyb. 2.13.2.

³⁵ Polyb. 2.13.7.

certainly feeling threatened at this time by the Celts and her priority was dealing with this situation.

The picture becomes even more complex when we take into account the role of the Spanish city of Saguntum in the outbreak of hostilities. Saguntum was some 150 kilometres south of the Ebro and yet evidently a relationship had been formed between Rome and the Iberian city many years before the time of Hannibal, when Saguntum placed herself under the protection of Rome.³⁶ The language used by Polybius implies a formal surrender by the Saguntines³⁷ and proof of a substantive relationship is presented in the claim that, when a civil disturbance erupted in the Spanish city, the Saguntines asked Rome for assistance.³⁸ While there is much debate over Polybius' view that Saguntum possessed a formal agreement with the Republic, it would seem that the relationship was close enough that Hannibal resisted any temptation to attack the city to avoid giving 'a pretext for war until he had secured the rest of the country.'³⁹

The Saguntines sent repeated messages to Rome as they felt alarm at the rapid expansion and growing power of the Carthaginians. The Romans had paid little attention to the affairs of Spain but in 220 they sent an embassy to investigate.⁴⁰ The Carthaginians accused the Romans of unjustly executing some of the leading men at Saguntum during the civil unrest there and they claimed they could not overlook such a violation of good faith.⁴¹ For Polybius this was merely a pretext for war, whereas the unjust treatment by Rome over Sardinia was their true motivation.⁴²

Hannibal advanced on Saguntum and took the city after an eight month siege.⁴³ Polybius gives Hannibal's motivation for the attack as, among other things, the desire to deprive the Romans of any prospect of a campaign in Iberia and to raise funds for his projected expedition to Italy.⁴⁴ The Romans, when news reached them of the fall of Saguntum, did not

³⁶ Polyb. 3.30.1. See Richardson 1986: 22-24 for some of the difficulties in Polybius' interpretations of these events; Polybius' account is, however, still preferable to Livy's and Appian's.

³⁷ Richardson 1986: 22.

³⁸ Polyb. 3.30.2.

³⁹ Polyb. 3.14.10.

⁴⁰ Polyb. 3.15.1.

⁴¹ Polyb. 3.15.7-8.

⁴² Polyb. 3.15.10-11.

⁴³ Polyb. 3.17.8.

⁴⁴ Polyb. 3.17.5-7.

need to debate whether to go to war or not according to Polybius; the Roman position had been stated explicitly a year before when they had threatened Carthage with war if they set foot on Saguntine territory, and so the subsequent attack on Saguntum was a definitive *casus belli*.⁴⁵ Here we have, as mentioned in chapter two, an example of Rome's 'response-flexibility'. But as we have seen, moral imperatives would compel Rome to restore the Saguntines to their city in 212/211.⁴⁶

The Romans despatched ambassadors to Carthage giving them only one way to avoid war: they must surrender Hannibal and the members of his council.⁴⁷ The Romans were playing a dangerous game of 'compliance diplomacy'. Polybius has the Carthaginians attempting to justify their attack on Saguntum by citing the treaty made after the First Punic War.⁴⁸ But, in the end, it is hard to imagine that the Carthaginians did not know what the likely consequences of an attack on the Spanish city would be; Hannibal's early avoidance of Saguntum is enough to prove this.⁴⁹ Saguntum was likely a forward position for the Romans which was being used to watch over Carthaginian expansion in southern and eastern Spain.⁵⁰ It was strategically important to the Romans and therefore not just an innocuous friend. Roman interest in the Iberian Peninsula before 218 seems only to be concerned with the activities of the Carthaginians, with the exception of Saguntum. The declaration of war was only made after the fall of Saguntum, which would suggest that it was the success of Hannibal in Spain and not simply the fall of an ally which was the driving force behind the decision for war.⁵¹

The Second Punic War shows the difficulties in allocating sole responsibility to one particular motive for war or another.⁵² Certainly Rome used aggressive diplomacy which could be construed as backing the Carthaginians into a corner, but only after Carthage had

⁴⁵ Polyb. 3.20.1. See Rich 1976: 36-40 for an assessment of Rome's apparently paradoxical behaviour towards Saguntum, as she made no move to help the Spanish town when it was under siege but went to war only after it had fallen.

⁴⁶ See Livy 24.42.9-10.

⁴⁷ Polyb. 3.20.6-8.

⁴⁸ Polyb. 3.20.1-6.

⁴⁹ Polyb. 3.14.9-10.

⁵⁰ Richardson 1986: 28.

⁵¹ Richardson 1986: 29. Rome was also preoccupied with Illyria at the time. See Polyb. 3.16-19.

⁵² See, Livy 21.2.7. In this passage Saguntum is part of the Ebro treaty and is designated a 'free city' which occupied an 'intermediate' position between the two empires. This shows how far Roman apologists had to go to put the blame for the war unambiguously on Carthage.

captured Saguntum. Hannibal displayed aggressive expansionism in his attack on Saguntum while also knowing that war would be the consequence of his actions.⁵³ Rome's aggression towards Carthage and her possession of Sardinia after the Libyan War were definite motivations for this Punic bellicosity. Given the distances involved, it is difficult to view the Ebro treaty as defensive. Yet, defensive concerns can be perceived in Rome's actions, as she prudently looked to confine Carthaginian expansion to the Iberian Peninsula to prevent her becoming too powerful. Subsequent events in the Hannibalic war would prove these fears well founded. Hannibal would indeed send messages to the Celts in the Alpine and Po regions looking for their support in his invasion of Italy.

The Third Punic War seems to reflect a more genuinely aggressive approach from the Republic,⁵⁴ yet again it certainly is not clear-cut and other factors need to be considered as well. Both Livy and Appian present several appeals to Rome by the Carthaginians who claimed King Masinissa was appropriating Punic territory.⁵⁵ Appian's presentation of these events is significantly more sympathetic to the Carthaginians than Livy's, which is predictably concerned with justifying Rome's destruction of Carthage. However, both accounts show the senate procrastinating or delivering ambiguous rulings that simply allowed Masinissa to occupy Punic territory under tendentious claims.

In Livy's account, in 171 Masinissa's son, Gulussa, arrived in Rome and warned the Romans about the treachery of the Carthaginians. He made claims that they had created a large fleet and would duly decide whether it could be used against Rome or Macedonia.⁵⁶

In 157, according to Appian, a Roman embassy, which included the elder Cato, was sent to Carthage. The ambassadors observed how the city had increased its power and population since the last war.⁵⁷ Cato famously claimed the freedom of Rome would never be secure until Carthage was destroyed.⁵⁸ The senate, after being made aware of these facts,

⁵³ We cannot assume Hannibal and Carthage were working to the same ends.

⁵⁴ See Harris 1979: 234-240 for an extreme and simplistic assessment of Rome's conduct, but an essentially correct one in its interpretation of an aggressive Rome pushing for war.

⁵⁵ Livy 33.47.3-10, 40.17.1-6, 42.23.1-7, 42.34.1-9; App. *Pun.* 10.67-68.

⁵⁶ Livy 43.3.5-7.

⁵⁷ App. *Pun.* 10.69.

⁵⁸ See Harris 1979: 266-267 on the *metus hostilis* theory: the idea that the counterbalancing power of a foreign state would be beneficial to Rome. This theory was probably not actually around in Cato's time. It looks like a theory from the first century BC to explain the civil problems of this time and merely projected back.

determined on war.⁵⁹ By 149 Carthage was exhausted by war with Massinisa and on hearing of this conflict in North Africa, Rome gathered an army. After some diplomatic discourse between the two polities, the Roman senate voted for war on Carthage.⁶⁰ According to Appian the consuls despatched to Carthage, M. Manilius and L. Marcius Censorinus, were given secret orders to destroy Carthage completely regardless of any concessions offered by the city.⁶¹

The consul Censorinus demanded the surrender of the city's weapons which was duly done. But then the consul demanded that the people of Carthage abandon their city and move inland for a distance of ten miles.⁶² The city resolved to fight and was steadfastly defended until it fell. Rome's aggression is self-evident but, again, other significant factors are present. Genuine concern for the recovery of Carthage was bound to raise defensive concerns considering the two major wars the polities had waged with one another. This was also very much a statement from Rome. This kind of statement contained powerful symbolic language. It was a warning to all those who might contemplate defying Rome.⁶³ In the same year, 146, Rome also destroyed Corinth, another famous maritime city. The Roman senate was well aware of the economic geography of the Mediterranean and she had removed some Capuans from the coast in 210 for the same reason of depriving them of one of their traditional sources of economic prosperity.⁶⁴

Once again we see evidence in the ancient sources for a synergistic mixture of varying forces interacting with each other. Ongoing hostility and distrust of Carthage on the part of Rome were certainly factors.⁶⁵ But part of this stemmed from defensive concerns.⁶⁶ To be the most powerful meant to be the most secure. The consuls played a significant part in pushing the Carthaginians to war by making the demand to abandon the city. Economic concerns were also a probable factor as trade was the source of Carthage's power, which

⁵⁹ App. *Pun.* 10.69.

⁶⁰ App. *Pun.* 10.74-75.

⁶¹ App. *Pun.* 10.75.

⁶² App. *Pun.* 10.80-81; Livy 43.3.5-7.

⁶³ Rosenstein 2012: 239.

⁶⁴ Livy 26.34.9. Also see Polyb. 36-39; Purcell 1995: 133-136.

⁶⁵ App. *Pun.* 10.74.

⁶⁶ App. *Pun.* 10.69. Livy 41.22.1-3.

was intimately tied to her harbours and the sea.⁶⁷ Factors of *fides* (in the sense of loyalty and faith to one's 'friend') seem to have been present in Rome's claim that Carthage had technically broken her treaty by crossing into Numidia to pursue Manticia.⁶⁸ And certainly the Numidians were availing themselves of their status of *amici* and exerting pressure on Rome to support their claims on disputed territory. Even what appears an obvious case of Roman bellicosity is, evidently, much more complex.

THE MACEDONIAN WARS

We now move to the east for the causes of the Macedonian wars according to the ancient sources. The so-called First Macedonian War was relatively uneventful for Rome's forces and would essentially be a Hellenic-Macedonian struggle with limited Roman involvement. The Illyrian dynast Scerdilaidas who was an ally of Philip V of Macedonia turned to piracy in 217. In the same year, word arrived of Rome's defeat at Lake Trasimene at the hands of Hannibal.⁶⁹ Demetrius, an Illyrian dynast who had earlier been defeated by Rome and had sought refuge in the court of Philip, advised the king to concentrate on matters in Illyria and a subsequent expedition to Italy.⁷⁰

Meanwhile Scerdilaidas had induced or forced several cities in Illyria to revolt from Macedonia. The Macedonian king decided to make war on the Illyrian dynast, according to Polybius, because it was essential affairs in Illyria were settled before he could contemplate invading Italy.⁷¹ This is all retrojection, and it is highly unlikely Philip was seriously considering any invasion of Italy at this stage as he lacked any harbours and his own kingdom was suffering from attacks by Scerdilaidas.⁷² During the winter of 216 Philip constructed one hundred new galleys to add to his fleet and when Scerdilaidas received news of Philip's efforts to make his fleet more formidable he asked for assistance from the

⁶⁷ Note Rome's lack of interest in crippling Carthage economically after the Second Punic War, see Polybius 15.17 for the peace terms after the battle of Zama.

⁶⁸ Livy 42.23.4; Cass. Dio. 21. (Zonar. 9.26).

⁶⁹ Polyb. 1.101.6.

⁷⁰ Polyb. 1.101.8-9.

⁷¹ Polyb. 5.108.2-4.

⁷² See Gruen 1994: 374.

Romans.⁷³ The Romans sent a squadron from Lilybaeum, and once the news of the approaching ships reached Philip, the king panicked and fled back to Macedonia.⁷⁴

Philip would make an alliance with Hannibal in 215 which promised to eradicate Roman influence in places where Macedonia saw itself as the rightful hegemon.⁷⁵ It may be the case that Philip's goals may have been limited as he agreed to the terms of the pact that included a clause that specifies Philip's assistance would be used only when Carthage called for it, which she never did.⁷⁶ However, this stipulation is more likely to reflect Hannibal's weariness of Philip's ambitions rather than the limited nature of the king's objectives. In 214 Philip pressed an attack on Apollonia and Oricum only to be surprised at Rome's assertive response. The king was forced to abandon his camp, burn his ships and again flee back to Macedonia.⁷⁷

Rome had limited her involvement in the East and it is even unsure whether she considered herself formally at war with Macedonia.⁷⁸ In 212 or 211 Rome made an alliance with Aetolia against Philip, with Aetolia providing the land forces.⁷⁹ As far as the Romans were concerned, if the Aetolians could keep Philip busy and divert his ambitions from the Adriatic then they could pursue the war with Hannibal. The Aetolians, however, came to terms with Philip and this forced the Romans to agree to a settlement; the peace of Phoenice was made in 205.⁸⁰

What can we say about Rome's motivation? War was raging in Italy so her response to Scerdilaidas' request for assistance was minimal. Yet, she did respond with a squadron of ten ships. Genuine concern over Philip's intentions while Hannibal was creating havoc can certainly not be dismissed. Nor can we totally dismiss the obligations that came with Rome's friendship with various cities in Illyria. In this case, and because of the circumstances, expansionism does not seem to play any part. Rome lacked enthusiasm for a war in the east when the situation in Italy was critical. She certainly wanted to neutralize the threat of Philip,

⁷³ Polyb. 1.110.4.

⁷⁴ Polyb. 5.110.10-11.

⁷⁵ Polyb. 7.9.13-14.

⁷⁶ Polyb. 7.9.11. See, Gruen 1984: 376.

⁷⁷ Livy 24.40.

⁷⁸ Gruen 1984: 377.

⁷⁹ Livy 26.24.11.

⁸⁰ Livy 29.12.14.

first by keeping him busy with the Aetolians and then, dealing with him at a more opportune time. But Rome's hand was forced by the Aetolians coming to terms with Philip. Rome appears to have wished to continue the war, and it has been suggested that the Second Macedonian War is a case of returning to unfinished business.⁸¹ Also, the exceptional situation of the Hannibalic War could be used to claim Rome's putative lack of enthusiasm for war in the east was exceptional. And yet, that is the point. There was never a necessarily 'normal' response to the multitude of events that intersected and intertwined.

The Second Macedonian War again displays all the complexities of the Punic wars we have studied above. At the end of the year 203 Greek envoys arrived in Rome complaining of Philip V's destruction of various territories.⁸² The Romans sent envoys to the king to explain that he had violated the treaty the two polities shared. The Romans also claimed that the Macedonians had aided Hannibal in his war with Rome.⁸³ Livy explicitly suggests the Romans had waited until the Hannibalic war had finished before contemplating war with Philip seriously. The king had also made a 'treacherous peace' with the Aetolians, and his forces had driven the Athenians into their city and ravaged the lands of Attica.⁸⁴

The senate was convened to discuss the complaints from the allies regarding Philip V. Livy reiterates the fear that Rome must strike quickly lest Philip 'should venture to do what Pyrrhus before him had done.'⁸⁵ To take Livy's narrative at face value would be a mistake but we should nonetheless entertain the idea that some Romans may have convinced themselves—regardless of the reality—of the threat from Philip. Polybius portrays a flurry of diplomatic activity leading up to the outbreak of war. Rome sent an ambassador to Philip's commander who had invaded Attica: the ambassador admonished the Macedonian general to desist from war and to submit to arbitration.⁸⁶

War was declared on Philip only a few months after peace with the Carthaginians had been made.⁸⁷ Macedonia was assigned by lot to P. Sulpicius Galba as his province and the question of war was submitted to the popular assembly on account of 'the injuries he [Philip

⁸¹ See Livy 31.1.9-10; App. *Mac.* 3.2.

⁸² Livy 30.26.2. Polyb. 16.24.3 for envoys in Rome in 201.

⁸³ Livy 30.42.1-4, 7-8.

⁸⁴ Livy 31.1.8-10.

⁸⁵ Livy 31.3.1, 6.

⁸⁶ Polyb. 16.27.2-3.

⁸⁷ Livy 31.5.1.

V] had inflicted and the war he had made on the allies of the Roman people.’⁸⁸ The Roman people voted, however, against war because Rome had just gained peace after fighting for a long time against Hannibal and because they were worn out and longed for peace.⁸⁹ The popular assembly was reconvened as the senate was annoyed at the result of the proposed war. According to Livy, the consul made clear the danger to Italy and claimed that Philip had prepared for a great war on sea and land. Moreover, the question was not if war was desired or not, but whether it was to be fought in Macedonia or Italy.⁹⁰ War was eventually voted for by the assembly.⁹¹

Livy’s account, and the elaboration of the annalistic tradition, of course, look to justify all of the republic’s actions. We have seen various reasons offered by Livy for the origins of this war, most prominently the defence of Italy.⁹² The Macedonian king is presented as threatening the security of Italy by his desire for power and empire. Also, the defence of allies is offered as a prominent reason on several occasions and this is Rome’s rhetoric. One could argue that moral imperatives towards friends compelling Rome to war are a stronger argument than the idea Philip was planning to invade Italy. Moreover, we have the suggestion that Macedonia had aided Hannibal against Rome in the Second Punic War. Philip is certainly presented as ruthless by Polybius,⁹³ and, as we have seen in chapter three, Macedonian royal ideology certainly espoused the monarch’s duty to expand the kingdom and there is plenty of evidence in the ancient sources for Philip’s bellicosity.⁹⁴ Thus defensive concerns, again, would have been present for the Romans, although probably not as prominently—in the case of Italy as opposed their allies—as the annalistic tradition would have us believe. As we have seen, defensive concerns were easily translated into aggressive actions in the ancient interstate environment of the Mediterranean. Certainly the Republic took an aggressive posture, and the senate was not going to settle for the people not ratifying their declaration of war. Was it Rome’s chance to continue a war they had only postponed after the peace of Phoenice in 205 due to the Aetolians? This unofficial policy might have also played its part. Once again, we have an example of multiple forces of

⁸⁸ Livy 31.6.1.

⁸⁹ Livy 31.6.3.

⁹⁰ Livy 31.7.2.

⁹¹ Livy 31.8.1.

⁹² See Gruen 1984: 382-398 for a detailed analysis.

⁹³ Polyb. 15.20.

⁹⁴ E.g. Livy 30.26.2, 31.1.9-10, 31.2.1, 31.5.2; Polyb. 15.20.7-9, 16.24.3 etc.

different strength playing their part in the decision for war. In the end defensive concerns, Roman *fides* and the security of allies, and a desire for revenge may have been just some of the more prominent factors in Rome's decision for war.

For many historians, the Third Macedonian War seems to be a good example of the Republic being less concerned with a substantive threat to Rome and more bent on a pretext for conflict.⁹⁵ But, just as in the other examples presented above, the ancient evidence allows for a much more complex evaluation of Rome's reasons for going to war, none of which was necessarily dominant.

On the surface, Rome's historians have created a thin veil over the facts to exculpate Rome from accusations of bellicosity. But subsequent evidence confirms that the reality was considerably more convoluted than either Livy's version of events or even the more modern interpretations that charge Rome with naked aggression. We have looked at some of the evidence for this war in chapter one so only a brief overview is needed here.

The main accusations levelled at Perseus were his build-up of arms, his connection to Antiochus III and his campaigning to increase his own popularity in Greece.⁹⁶ Certainly these initial claims could have been construed as undermining Rome and her settlement of the Greek east. We have seen how Livy claims Perseus was attempting to win over allies for a war with Rome which his father had been planning.⁹⁷ We have also encountered the accusations and rumours about Perseus brought to Rome by King Eumenes. It is always risky to place too much credence in the annalistic tradition, as represented by Livy, but it would also be a mistake not to recognise the powerful effect some of these rumours may have had, regardless of whether they represented reality or not. Only the *rumours* need to be real; the reality may well have been different. There is nothing inherently impossible about the rumours and the senate may have found them highly disconcerting.

Leaving Eumenes' speech aside, other putative Macedonian transgressions appear in Livy's text. Roman envoys claimed to have seen preparations for war in 172.⁹⁸ The envoys had been given an audience with the king and they had accused him of violating the treaty

⁹⁵ See Harris 1979: 227-233.

⁹⁶ Livy 42.2.2, 3; Polyb. 25.3.1, 25.4.9.

⁹⁷ Livy 42.5.1; Polyb. 25.3.1. See chapter one.

⁹⁸ Livy 42.25.1-3.

that Philip had concluded with Rome; it was forbidden for the king to lead an army from his territory or make war on Rome's allies.⁹⁹ Rumours were heard that Gentius, the king of the Illyrians, was in league with Macedonia and was planning to wage war on the Romans together with Perseus.¹⁰⁰

Livy has Eumenes outline the formidable resources of Macedonia and the warlike nature of the king.¹⁰¹ Eumenes also spoke of Perseus' crimes, which included the expelling and execution of Rome's friends and allies in Macedonia among others.¹⁰² Livy claims Eumenes' speech made a profound impression on the *patres*. It would seem that a few days later when ambassadors from Perseus were given an audience before the senate, the *patres* had already accepted Eumenes' accusations and rejected any excuses for Perseus' conduct. Again we see an aggressive posture from putative concerns for *fides*. Of course Livy's (or his sources') attempt to justify the coming war is incontrovertible, but even his account cannot camouflage the complexities involved.

Meanwhile, Roman envoys, in a concerted effort, sought the loyalty of their allies in Asia.¹⁰³ On the *patres'* instructions, the consuls presented the war resolution to the popular assembly. They emphasised Perseus' contravention of the treaty made with Philip and renewed by Perseus, and the putative attacks on Rome's allies. Moreover, they said that the king had been preparing for war with Rome, and 'unless he offered satisfaction in these matters, war against him would be undertaken.'¹⁰⁴ On the surface Livy has attempted to exculpate Rome from accusations of bellicosity. But subsequent events¹⁰⁵ confirm that the reality was considerably more complex than Livy's version of events as well as more modern interpretations that accuse Rome of naked aggression or, following Livy, defensive posturing.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁹ Livy 42.25.5-7.

¹⁰⁰ Livy 42.25.8.

¹⁰¹ Livy 42.11.6-7.

¹⁰² Livy 42.13.5-9.

¹⁰³ Livy 42.26.7-8.

¹⁰⁴ Livy 42.30.11.

¹⁰⁵ See, Polyb. 22.8: Livy 42.62.3-15: App. *Mac.* 12 for Perseus offering generous peace terms after his initial victory in the war.

¹⁰⁶ E.g. Harris 1979: 227-233 for aggression. See e.g. Errington 1973: 202-212; Frank 1914: 203-25 for a defensive interpretation.

It would seem that the Republic procrastinated considerably before sending forces to Greece as more than a year had passed since Eumenes made his accusations. The senate certainly attempted to pressure the Macedonian king through 'compliance' diplomacy.¹⁰⁷ Initially, Perseus had been as obstinate and aggressive in his diplomacy as Rome, as befitted the interstate environment of the age. Both Rome and Macedonia were attempting to demonstrate their respective power and the element of honour became significant. In the end Macedonia hesitated first and Rome asserted her power. Defensive concerns certainly existed for the Romans, and they were also most definitely aggressive in their pursuit of that end. The waxing popularity of Perseus among the Greeks was also a definite issue the Romans foresaw as being potentially harmful to the security of the area. The Third Macedonian War was a typical case of states competing with each other for power, which in turn was bound to their security, which in this case, was also tied to their own standing in the eyes of the international community.

SPAIN AND THE CELTS

As noted earlier, Rome's initial interest in the Iberian Peninsula should be seen in the context of the expanding Carthaginian influence in the region.¹⁰⁸ By 206 the Romans had driven the Carthaginians out of Spain, but the Romans remained. The nature of the Roman presence in the Iberian peninsula changed through the second century, but there may be some substance to the claim that Roman warfare in Spain was 'an unsystematic hunt for peoples to defeat and booty to carry home.'¹⁰⁹ The acquisition of booty and the winning of a triumph are prominent in Appian's account of several Roman generals' activities in Spain.¹¹⁰ Yet many other factors potentially played their part. Spain, in fact, provides a microcosmic example of the many forces that could impact on a decision to wage war.

¹⁰⁷ E.g. Livy 42.40, 42.30.10-11 etc.

¹⁰⁸ Richardson 1986: 20.

¹⁰⁹ Richardson 1986: 98.

¹¹⁰ See App. *Hisp.* 6.10.57, 6.12.79 etc.

Between 218-206 Rome's presence in the Iberian Peninsula would have been easily justified, but after the Carthaginian forces were defeated there and as the victorious Scipio was travelling back to Rome L. Cornelius Lentulus and L. Manlius Acidinus had already been selected to replace him.¹¹¹ While some Romans and Iberians felt that once the Carthaginian threat was removed from Spain the Romans could pull out,¹¹² the fact was war was still being fought in Italy and the danger of Carthage reasserting herself in Spain was real.¹¹³ After twelve years in Spain, the Romans now had strong connections to some of the peoples there. It is not hard to imagine Rome's Spanish friends such as Saguntum, Emporion, and Tarraco wanting a Roman presence to protect them.¹¹⁴

Scipio's establishment of the town of Italica seems to show he intended the Roman presence to be long term.¹¹⁵ Scipio had also created strong personal ties with local chieftains, and he doubtless wanted to maintain Rome's links with the peoples of Spain.¹¹⁶ Moreover, strategic reasons must have been prominent: Hannibal was still in Italy and Rome needed to ensure he could not be supplied from Spain.

Rome's presence in the Iberian Peninsula became permanent, but the intensity and frequency of wars did fluctuate. Down to 179, the fighting seems almost continuous, but after 179 there is a drop in intensity. Of the twenty two promagistrates who returned from Spain between the years 195-178, seven celebrated a triumph and four an *ovatio*. That is one celebration for every two promagistrates. Over the same period, seven triumphs were celebrated by generals that fought the Macedonians (1), Antiochus (3), Aetolians (1), and the Celts (2).¹¹⁷

Of the twelve men who returned from Spain between 177-166, one was awarded a triumph and one an *ovatio*. That is one in six. During the same period eight triumphs were awarded to commanders who were victorious against the Sardinians (1), Ligurians (3), Corsicans (1), Macedonians (2), and the Illyrians (1). And between three years 166-155 not

¹¹¹ Livy 28.38.1.

¹¹² Livy 28.24.7.

¹¹³ Richardson 1986: 62.

¹¹⁴ Richardson 1986: 63.

¹¹⁵ App. *Hisp.* 6.7.38.

¹¹⁶ Badian 1958: 116-119.

¹¹⁷ See the *Fasti Triumphales*.

one triumph or ovation is recorded by the *Fasti Capitolini Triumphales*.¹¹⁸ Elsewhere five triumphs were celebrated over the same period for victories over the Celts, Ligurians, and Eleates (1), Ligurians (1), Ligurians and Eleates (1), Apuani (1), and the Dalmatians (1).¹¹⁹ What is more, of the twenty praetorians who returned from Spain down to 178, ten became consuls, and of the ten that celebrated an ovation or triumph, seven became consul. It seems clear that a command in Spain certainly enhanced the chances of becoming consul.¹²⁰ After 178 only three out of twelve praetors became consuls, and this indicates a reduction in military activity after this date, and a consequent lessening of the advantages gained by serving in Iberia.¹²¹

As J.S. Richardson has observed, the two Spanish provinces commanded by praetors, in the first decades of the second century, were directly responsible for the increase in triumphs awarded to men who had not reached the consulship. From the 170s the relative stability in the provinces changed this situation as triumphs and *ovationes* were not awarded to commanders in Spain. Then, from the 150s, the evidence shows a change in senatorial policy as generally the two Spanish provinces became consular. It was, as we have seen, the most fundamental aspect of the position of consul to command an army, and according to Richardson, it was necessary for the senate to assign military areas as consular provinces.¹²² There is a distinct possibility Rome was lacking suitable provinces, in this period, where consuls could command and win glory other than the Spanish *provinciae*.¹²³

Economic gain was certainly another factor in serving and waging war in Spain. In 185, when L. Manlius Acidinus returned from Hispania Citerior, he reported to have returned with 52 golden crowns, 132 pounds of gold, and 16,300 pounds of silver.¹²⁴ After 178, the exploitation of the two provinces became more systematic. Polybius reports that from silver

¹¹⁸ All figures from Richardson 1986: 104-106.

¹¹⁹ *Fasti Triumphales*.

¹²⁰ Richardson 1986: 106.

¹²¹ Richardson 1986: 106.

¹²² Richardson 1986: 135.

¹²³ See Polyb. 32.13.6-7 for some of the senate's concerns in assigning a province. Also Richardson 1986: 136-137.

¹²⁴ Livy 39.29.6-7.

mines around New Carthage, forty thousand men were producing 2,500 drachmae every day for Rome.¹²⁵

The behaviour and decision making of individual generals were varied but no less critical in Rome's often volatile relationships with the various peoples of the Iberian Peninsula. Claudius Marcellus in 152, after gaining a victory over the Nergobiges, devastated the countryside and distributed the plunder to his soldiers.¹²⁶ Marcellus then sent letters to the senate urging peace because, Appian claims, he desired the end of the war so he could gain the glory from this.¹²⁷ Licinius Lucullus was Marcellus' replacement, and he is described as being greedy for fame and needing money. He invaded the territory of the Vaccaeii with no approval from the senate.¹²⁸ In 153, Lucullus and Servius Galba invaded Lusitania with no authorisation and devastated parts of the region. Galba is described by Appian as being even greedier than Lucullus, and he kept most of the captured plunder for himself. He even escaped any punishment for his deeds by means of his wealth.¹²⁹

In 142, we find Fabius Maximus Servilianus concluding a peace with Viriathus, but only for his brother and successor, Caepio, to complain that this treaty was unworthy of the dignity of the Roman people. The senate authorised, secretly, that Caepio should 'annoy' Viriathus until he was forced to push back and then the senate could break the treaty and declare war on him.¹³⁰ The motivation of a desire for vengeance and plunder appears when Sextus Junius Brutus attacked guerrilla groups in Lusitania in 138.¹³¹ In the year 137, during the Numantine War, Appian suggests that Aemilius Lepidus was one of the men from Rome that took command of the army 'not for the advantage of the city, but for glory, or gain, or the honour of a triumph.'¹³²

In the interest of presenting a balanced overview of the nature of Rome's presence in the Iberian Peninsula, we should make mention of Ti. Sempronius Gracchus and the significant impact he made on Roman policy in Spain. Gracchus—in a similar vein to Scipio Africanus—

¹²⁵ Polyb. 34.9.8.

¹²⁶ App. *Hisp.* 6.9.48.

¹²⁷ App. *Hisp.* 6.9.49. Note Romans gained glory from *ending* wars; however, naturally they needed to be started first.

¹²⁸ App. *Hisp.* 6.9.51.

¹²⁹ App. *Hisp.* 6.10.59-60.

¹³⁰ App. *Hisp.* 6.12.68.

¹³¹ App. *Hisp.* 6.12.71.

¹³² App. *Hisp.* 6.13.80.

made many arrangements with various Celtiberian tribes after defeating them. In 179, for instance, Gracchus rushed to relieve the allied city of Caravis, which was besieged by 20,000 Celtiberians. He then took the city of Complega, 'gave a place in the community to poorer classes, apportioned land to them, made carefully defined treaties with all the tribes, binding them to be friends of Rome.'¹³³

The evidence for Rome in the Iberian Peninsula, points to a complex situation and varied motivations for the many wars fought there. Earlier on, defensive concerns related to the Carthaginians can be detected. Concerns for friends, economic gain, including booty, and the exploitation of natural resources become more prominent after 206. Moreover, the generals on the ground seeking triumphs and glory or even exacting revenge also played a major role throughout the whole mid-Republic period.

The Republic's relationship with the Celts of northern Italy was unstable. Polybius' description of the Celts being exclusively occupied with war and agriculture—as could be said to some extent of most people of the age—suggests the prevailing attitude about the danger they posed.¹³⁴ In the year 390, a group of Celts had entered Italy, allegedly laid siege to the Etruscan city of Clusium, before advancing south to capture and sack Rome.¹³⁵ In 360 the Celts had appeared before Alba with an army but the Romans did not take to the field due to the fact they were unprepared for a battle.¹³⁶ In 348, yet again, the Celts invaded Roman territory, but this time the Romans marched to meet them in battle and they retreated.¹³⁷

In 334, Italian Celts incited migrating transalpine Celts to attack the Romans together with them.¹³⁸ In 295, the battle of Sentium was fought, which the Romans won at a heavy cost, but they were defeated by the Celts at Arretium in 283.¹³⁹ The Romans then defeated the Senones in Gaul who were killed or driven from their territory and a Roman colony was

¹³³ App. *Hisp.* 6.8.43.

¹³⁴ Polyb. 2.17.10.

¹³⁵ Polyb. 2.18.1-3. See Cornell 1995: 315.

¹³⁶ Polyb. 2.18.6.

¹³⁷ Polyb. 2.18.7-8.

¹³⁸ Polyb. 2.19.1-3.

¹³⁹ Polyb. 2.19.5-8.

planted there.¹⁴⁰ The Boii, fearing the same fate as the Senones, joined the Etruscans and gave battle to the Romans at Lake Vadimon, only to be heavily defeated.¹⁴¹

The overview of events thus far gives a picture of Rome generally looking to defend itself from a substantive threat. Yet, Rome also aggressively marched into Gaul and destroyed the Boii and planted a colony on their land. In 232 the Romans divided the territory of Picenum which was previously Senone land among their citizens. Polybius makes the claim that these actions prompted the Celts to desire war, for they feared the Romans no longer merely wanted to assert supremacy over them, but wanted 'total expulsion and extermination' of them.¹⁴² While Polybius is clearly following a Roman senatorial source in having a swipe at Flaminius, the popular statesman who proposed this policy of land settlement, there may be some substance to this claim. There was always a fine line between offensive and defensive policies. But certainly, fear of the Celtic threat was very real for the Romans.

In 225 a league of Celtic tribes consisting of fifty thousand foot and twenty thousand cavalry advanced on Etruria.¹⁴³ Polybius explicitly states there was general alarm in Rome and it was believed the city was in serious peril. The old invasion of 390 was still present in the minds of the citizens of Rome who put all their energies into preparing for war.¹⁴⁴ As we have seen, the Celtic threat of 225 was seen in such a serious light by the Republic that she concluded the Ebro treaty with Hasdrubal, though it was also recognised that the Carthaginian presence in Spain was a potential threat. The threat from the Celtic tribes was on Rome's immediate flank and the affairs of Spain needed to be handled diplomatically so that Rome's concerns were allayed.¹⁴⁵

Overall, Polybius' account of Rome's policy towards the Cisalpine Celts gives the impression of a defensive posture, with the majority of battles involving the Celts marching down to engage the Romans in Roman territory, or near to it, down to 225.¹⁴⁶ Yet, there is also enough evidence to suggest Rome acted aggressively in her pursuit of security, as well as delivering punishment. After the Second Punic War, there is something to be said for

¹⁴⁰ Polyb. 2.19.11-12.

¹⁴¹ Polyb. 2.20.1-4.

¹⁴² Polyb. 2.21.7-9.

¹⁴³ Polyb. 2.22.4.

¹⁴⁴ Polyb. 2.22.7.

¹⁴⁵ Polyb. 2.22.10-11.

¹⁴⁶ Polyb. 2.19-31. See Eckstein 1987: 4.

Harris' interpretation of a consciously offensive policy towards the Celts in Northern Italy.¹⁴⁷ In the year 197, and afterwards, the Romans marched north and fought entirely on Celtic territory.¹⁴⁸ In 190, the Boii were driven from their territory which does suggest the appropriation of land was at least part of the aim, together with defensive concerns.¹⁴⁹ It is possible to see the fate of the Senones in a similar light.

In conclusion the ancient sources, if we read them without prejudice for or against the defensive or aggressive interpretation of Rome's conduct in the Middle Republic, suggest that much more complex, multi-causal explanations for the wars and the Republic's expansion during this period are needed. Defensive factors were quite frequently present, but certainly not always predominant. Bellicosity,¹⁵⁰ due to the very nature of the interstate environment and warfare in general, is also detectable in all the conflicts we have analysed. Yet again, this bellicosity was of varying degrees of strength for the different conflicts. Individual generals in the field also played their part in decisions about peace, war, and even expansion. Economic considerations may have played their part, particularly in Spain and Northern Italy, as we have seen. The ancient evidence often places great stress on Roman *fides*, good faith, towards friends and allies, as another factor in considering whether or not to go to war. In the end the determining factors for the decision to go to war were varying and complex and the ancient sources do confirm this. In short we can see the evidence as portraying Rome as defensive in her posture or equally aggressive. What I have attempted to show is that there is simply no need to conclude in favour of just one or the other; she was both. Moreover, there were innumerable other factors that potentially influenced her decisions for war, some of which we will never know, yet we are obliged to acknowledge this fact explicitly.

¹⁴⁷ See Harris 1979: 210-211.

¹⁴⁸ Harris 1979: 211.

¹⁴⁹ Livy 36.39.3, 37.2.5

¹⁵⁰ Strictly speaking bellicosity is to be found in any war (*bellum*), regardless of the nature of it. It is when the word is applied to people that it has the significance we have been discussing.

CONCLUSION

In our final analysis, what conclusions can we make about Rome's numerous wars and her expansion in the mid-Republic? What forces impelled her to make war on various peoples who were situated around the Mediterranean Sea? Does the ancient evidence paint a picture of a predatory Rome driven by a nobility hungry for fame, glory, power, and wealth? Or does the evidence point to a Rome merely trying to sustain itself in an environment replete with enemies and potential enemies who were ready to strike at any sign of weakness? It would seem, from our analysis, the evidence paints an extremely complex picture where any number of reasons for going to war could be posited for the numerous conflicts during our period. This is not to say that I am advocating some kind of post-modernist 'everything is true and nothing is true' paradox, only that the wars we have looked at and their reasons for occurring are far more nuanced than are often portrayed. Rome was indeed belligerent, *and* at times defensive *and* at times diplomatically assertive *and* at times tardy and noncommittal and so on and so forth. She was all the above in different degrees and at differing times and sometimes combinations of them all: that is how, I suggest, the ancient evidence can be, and should be read.

In this thesis I have attempted to present clear evidence that Rome's undeniable bellicosity was far from being exceptional in the ancient world. By focusing on Rome only, some modern historians have not given her expansion and the wars she fought the context that is needed to comprehend the political climate of the time fully. Rome was always prepared to go to war, to conquer, to punish and destroy but as we have seen so were the Greeks, Macedonians, Celts etc. Rome was also quite willing to be merciful, to forgive and to prove that her reputation for good faith was well earned. Likewise, we would do well to remember that all of these attributes were innate in all states and were part of the political economy of the ancient Mediterranean. We may infer that flexible responses to political situations were critical for a state's survival. To be relentlessly aggressive or terminally pacific would eventually spell doom for any state.

Rome was quite aware of the value of friends and allies in the harsh environment of the ancient Mediterranean and that meant to wage war arbitrarily and indiscriminately on other states could potentially damage her reputation and her value as a friend. It was just not

good politics to run roughshod over all the other peoples of the Mediterranean. Yet, the flexible nature of *amicitia* allowed Rome much latitude in her choices of response to any friend that asked for succour. And though we have focused on the intervention Rome did actually do, the evidence does in fact point to a multitude of opportunities she had for aggressive actions against other states that she did not avail herself of.¹ To put it another way, Rome was significantly more calculated in her decisions to go to war than some historians have implied.

The duties of Rome towards her *amici*, evidently, were often determined by a strong moral pressure that existed. Even though Rome was not strictly bound to respond to her friends in any predetermined manner, she did have a moral obligation which was based on *fides*. Rome's failed attempt to prevent Philip V from attacking her friends in the east is just one example of Rome under pressure to uphold her reputation for good faith.² Of course, Rome prioritised her own best interests, as is only natural; nevertheless, the pressure exerted by friendship with other states, can be seen to have played a role in Rome deciding on war.

The evidence also makes it clear that Rome's *amici* had considerable freedom in their political action and self-determination.³ We need to consider how Rome's relationships with other states were not necessarily unilateral. We need to consider the possibility that in some cases the friends of Rome manipulated her, or at least encouraged her to go to war. Eumenes' exhorting Rome to go to war against Perseus is the most obvious example.⁴ Giving some agency to Rome's friends and neighbours as well as her enemies will give some balance back to the picture of the ancient Mediterranean.

I have, in fact, argued that there was a certain amount of 'sameness' (functional similarity) in the ancient Mediterranean states, whether they were small, medium or large. This leads us to another determining factor for Rome going to war and her expansion. This is the theme of the interstate environment of the time. I have relied heavily on Eckstein's work in this area and his many studies on the anarchic structure of the interstate relations

¹ Gruen 1984: 117.

² See Livy 24.20.7-8. Burton 2011: 229.

³ Burton 2011: 205. For example, King Attalus' decision in 208 to cease fighting at Rome's side, against Philip V, and return to his kingdom. See, Livy 28.7.10.

⁴ Livy 42.11-13.

of the ancient Mediterranean are valuable contributions to our understanding of Rome and her neighbours' behaviour.⁵ The environment the Roman Republic operated in—and all other states of the same geographical and temporal type—had a significant effect on her decision-making and behaviour. What is more, the ancient evidence seems to paint a picture of insecurity and suspicion of other states, which confirms Eckstein's theory.

There are numerous examples in our sources of Rome and other states seeking survival 'through competitive self-help strategies.'⁶ Or at least, the state perceived itself as taking aggressive action in order to survive, even if the reality of the situation contradicts this assessment. The defensive aspect only needed to be substantive in the minds of the decision-makers in Rome (or any other state) for it to have a significant bearing on policy making. Certainly Rome and Carthage indulged in these 'self-help' strategies' in the build up to the First Punic War as they both sought to acquire Messana.⁷ As we have seen however, the whole situation with the lead up to the beginning of hostilities in this war is convoluted. Many forces were at play to drive Rome and Carthage into conflict with defensive concerns and the implementation of self-help strategies merely two of these.

The environment, in which Rome of the middle Republic functioned, pressed Rome and other states into maximizing their own power and influence to gain an advantage over other states.⁸ This power-maximizing role is prevalent throughout all our ancient sources. This was the standard behaviour of all states in the ancient world. Both Carthage and Macedonia, for example, also exhibited this behaviour: it was prevalent in the ancient world and not just exhibited by Rome.

Seeking survival and security meant trying to manage other states through checks and balances. We can especially observe Rome attempting to do just this in the Greek east. We have also seen that seeking security was a priority in an environment that has been classified as a 'military anarchy', because competing states simply lacked accurate information on each other's military potential. Paranoia was bound to exist. We can see examples of this in our ancient evidence on the Third Punic War, for example.

⁵ E.g. Eckstein 2006.

⁶ Eckstein 2006: 16.

⁷ Polyb. 1.10-11.

⁸ Eckstein 2006: 16.

There can be little doubt that defensive concerns played a part in many wars the Republic fought. At times these fears may have been unfounded or merely fear of a future enemy, nevertheless it was a fear. However it is critical to qualify our acknowledgement of fear as a factor in Rome's aggressive wars. Not all Rome's wars, according to our evidence, were simply defensive or mainly defensive. The concept may, in some cases have been manipulated by certain policy makers to get the outcome they wanted from the senate and/or the people. And, of course we need to be wary of the Roman apologists who have attempted to exculpate Rome from any responsibility for the numerous wars she fought by claiming they were defensive. It is quite easy for even the most aggressive of states to see, in a most unjustified attack on another state, a defensive justification.

While the pressure produced by Rome's anarchic environment was often a major factor in her reasons to go to war, it was certainly not the only one. The unit-factors, the people and the culture, were equally forceful in compelling Rome to war (or of course, avoiding it too). I have shown how the political system was likely the product of Rome's warrior culture and it helped nurture and sustain this culture. The ultimate goal for any citizen of Rome, particularly the nobility, was to serve the state. To serve Rome ultimately brought glory and prestige to an individual and his family. The most effective way to gain glory—but certainly not the only one—was to be successful in battle. The whole competitive nature of the political system could produce men hungry to serve Rome and win glory in battle, and this too could have a decisive effect on whether Rome initiated a war. We have seen many examples of this with various generals in the Iberian Peninsula.

This leads us to another important factor in Rome's wars. The general in the field, as we have seen, often had considerable freedom in determining the actions of the army. Naturally these men were generally part of the senatorial class so they were expected to be measured in their decision making and mindful of the attitude the ruling class would have towards the actions taken. Moreover, the senate would need to ratify any decisions made in the field, but this would often be after the fact due to the distances that were involved between Rome and the battlefield. We have seen this kind of freedom of determination of the general with P. Scipio Africanus in various instances as well as many other examples where ever Rome was fighting.

In theory the generals of Rome were concerned solely with serving the state but in actuality our sources tell us some generals had other, more personal motivations. Personal economic gain for the general and his army are often attested in our sources. Again, there is nothing sinister in the motivation for monetary gain. This was a normal and expected outcome of a successful campaign in the ancient world. We have seen the prospect of riches used by the consuls to convince the Roman people to go to war in 264.⁹ There are ample explicit or implicit examples of economic motivations for beginning or continuing wars in the Greek east and the west, particularly in Spain. This economic motivation can be detected at the state level as well as the personal level too. The senate seemed well aware of the potential gains of conquering certain locations and its people. Whether these gains stemmed from natural resources, booty, taxation or indemnities, the Romans were quite cognizant of the benefits of being victorious in war and it would be naïve not to see economic motivation as an important factor in many of her wars.

Certain other intangibles also come to the fore in our sources: notions such as vengeance (the Second Macedonian War), hatred and distrust (the Third Punic War), and even the use of compliance diplomacy to the point that Rome needed to enforce her demands as a matter of prestige and to avoid losing face (the Third Macedonian War). In fact the topic of prestige in the interstate environment of the Mediterranean should not be lightly dismissed. The consequences of other states losing respect and/or fear of your military potential and your willingness to use it could be disastrous. Rome may have been forced into conflict to back up her threats. It seems evidential that Rome frequently avoided conflict, often relying on diplomacy first, and then followed by (veiled) threats. To maintain her prestige she may have had to carry out some of these threats.

While in the end it is always critical to treat our ancient sources with a certain amount of incredulity, we also need to bear in mind that it is not constructive to evaluate an ancient state such as Rome by our modern criterion of what is reasonable and logical political behaviour. Make no mistake, the Roman Republic had many cogent and natural (for the time) reasons for her decisions to wage numerous wars and to expand through this period. To create a dichotomy between Rome driven to war by defensive imperialism or a predatory nature is to attempt to envelop extremely nuanced and complicated phenomena with

⁹ Polyb. 1.11.2.

simple categories. This thesis has attempted to show that Rome was not unique in her frequency of war-making, but only unique in her success. The Roman Republic's impetus to go to war was varied and contained various degrees and combinations of the motivations we have discussed above. The ancient sources confirm this. Even if many of the details we find in Polybius or Livy, for example, are controversial, one factor remains constant in the ancient sources: Rome's wars were begun and continued for various reasons both defensive and aggressive and on account of a considerable amount of other motives that are just as important to acknowledge.

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