

# Chapter 4

## Building an Empire

### 1. THE GROWTH OF ROME IN ITALY

#### A Challenging Environment

At the same time that the Greeks were fighting epic battles against the Persians in the east, the Romans and their Latin allies were having difficulty with the elementary but chronic problem of local warlike hills people migrating into the rich plains of Latium. The Greeks had the “Father of History,” as Cicero called Herodotus, to record and analyze at length their wars with the Persians, but the Romans had no such chronicler for their lowly struggles. All we know of Rome’s early battles for survival are legends and anecdotes preserved in the archives of their aristocratic families and such few public records as they were capable of generating at the time. Despite this paltry record, we can dimly see that in these formative years Rome was engaged in the monumental task of creating a new version of the *polis* which had the capacity to solve the *polis*’ perennial manpower problem of limited size while not losing the socially cohesive advantages of *polis* citizenship.

Geographically, Rome had a challenging location. Situated at an essential crossing point on the Tiber in central Italy, it tended to become the unavoidable focal point of all travel and migration up and down the peninsula. Any other route from north to south would take travelers—merchants or invaders—through the difficult mountainous spine of Italy or along the distant Adriatic coast. As a consequence, Rome’s survival depended on its ability to control this crossing. Once this had been accomplished, Rome would have the advantage of internal lines of communication that would in turn help it dominate eventually the rest of Italy.

The decision of Rome to defend itself was not really a matter of choice. In international affairs, geography dictates a great deal as to how nations will conduct

themselves. The United States has huge strategic advantages in possessing oceans on either flank and friendly, culturally similar nations to the north and south. Russia, by contrast, has a central place location in Eurasia but without the protection of oceans. Consequently, its history is the story of how it maintained itself with respect to the Atlantic Europeans to the west and the countries of Asia to the east. Germany has a similar geographic location. Rome, more like Russia or Germany than the United States, had no choice when it came to defending its land borders. It was not a foregone conclusion that it could.

Just being able to fend off warlike local enemies on all sides was an achievement by Rome in and of itself. Early in the fifth century B.C., the non-Latin Oscan-speaking Volsci pushed all the way to the coast of the Tyrrhenian Sea and as far north into Latium as Velitrae, only twenty miles from Rome. For most of the century (500–400 B.C.), therefore, Rome's main foreign policy concerns were the movements of peoples and the management of its sometimes difficult relations with other members of the Latin federation to which it belonged. By about 400 B.C., however, the Volsci had been contained and Rome was off on a new venture: the elimination of the powerful Etruscan city of Veii just twelve miles away.

In the following century (400–300 B.C.), local issues gave way to national ones as Rome and the Latins became involved in the struggle for control of Italy among Etruscans, invading Celts, highlander Samnites, and Greeks. From this mêlée, Rome, the least likely winner at the beginning, eventually emerged as the victor. A little over two centuries of obscure wars and even more obscure diplomacy (ca. 500–290 B.C.) brought Rome from the lowly position of a member of an unimportant league to a position of dominance over the whole of Italy south of the Po Valley, having defeated, exterminated, incorporated, or made friends of a dozen formidable peoples. How they did this is the subject matter of this chapter.

### Rome and the Latins

The ties that bound together the villages and towns of Latium—their common cult centers, language, and belief in a common origin—were much more strongly felt than were similar ties among the Greeks. The cities of the latter had generally grown up in something close to isolation from one another in the small plains, landlocked harbors, and islands of Greece, whereas the Latins were forced to live side by side in the vulnerable, wide-open plain of Latium. Their neighbors on all sides were threatening outsiders with alien cultures and languages, and the Latins' ability to defend themselves lay in common effort rather than individual strength or the possession of inaccessible strongholds. Of the latter there were few. The famed Seven Hills of Rome were really just hillocks that offered little or no protection. Even if Rome or any of its allies managed to expand its territory, it became by that very fact exposed to perhaps even more hostile neighbors. In that scenario there would always be one new, more distant frontier to be defended. Many centuries later, Julius Caesar justified invading Britain because, he claimed, Britons were raiding Rome's latest conquest, Gaul. One of Rome's great emperors, the north African Septimius Severus, defended Rome's latest border against the Scots—after the conquest of Britain. It was no wonder that Rome's great national



#### Rome and Latium ca. 600–500 B.C.

At its start, Rome was just one Latin city among many. The Latins in turn made up a small linguistic cluster in a much larger, multilingual Italy.

poet Virgil was able to say the Empire was *sine fine*—without borders. If fear of enemies originally generated Rome’s bellicosity it was soon supplemented by the other great psychological drivers of war and Empire, self-interest and honor. It could not let go of what it had acquired. Acquire, defend, acquire are the dynamics of imperialism.

## CHRONOLOGY

### *Wars of the Roman Republic, I*

Wars with the Oscans	ca. 500–400 B.C.
Capture of the Veii	396 B.C.
Sack of Rome by the Celts	390 B.C.
War with the Latin Federation	340–338 B.C.
Samnite Wars	343–341; 326–304; 298–290 B.C.
Battle of Sentinum	295 B.C.
War with Pyrrhus	280–275 B.C.
First Punic War	264–241 B.C.
Second Punic War	218–201 B.C.
Battle of Cannae	216 B.C.
Battle of Zama	202 B.C.

**THE LATIN LEAGUE** In pre-urban times the Latins formed a religious, linguistic, and cultural community which for centuries shared reciprocal rights (*iura*) of marriage, commerce, and probably also migration. When they evolved into true cities their citizens retained these rights. Citizens of Latin cities could make contracts, for example, with Roman citizens and depend on Roman courts for their enforcement; by reciprocity the rights of Roman citizens would be protected by courts in Latin cities. These rights were particularly important in the matter of marriage, because citizenship was closely associated with parentage, and the transmission of property depended on the recognition of citizenship. In

Latium, citizens of different states could freely intermarry with full testamentary and paternity rights. It is also generally assumed that Latins could migrate and settle in one another's cities, acquiring in the process the citizenship of the new state without forfeiting the right to return to their places of origin. This early conditioning in openness was fundamental to Rome's ability to expand outward, progressively incorporating over time first its Latin neighbors, then the peoples of the rest of Italy, and finally the whole Mediterranean world.

**THE EVOLUTION OF THE LEAGUE** Under the kings, Rome may have enjoyed some kind of military hegemony over the other Latin cities, but after the king's expulsion in 509 B.C. and the founding of the Republic this hegemony lapsed. Cooperation resumed when all of Latium was threatened by a new incursion of Oscan speaking peoples, the Volsci and Aequi, whose control extended from the interior mountains of Italy to the sea at Terracina and Antium, just 34 and 55 miles from Rome respectively. Latins and Romans renegotiated the terms of their original relationship in what is known as the Cassian Treaty (*foedus Cassianum*) in 493 B.C. and successfully overcame their Oscan opponents. Later the Romans were to claim that the treaty explicitly conceded them supremacy in the league.

The wars of the Latins and Romans against the Oscans are described with much embellishment by Livy and feature such legendary figures as the traitor Coriolanus, who led the Volsci to the gates of Rome (491 B.C.), and the hero Cincinnatus, who was called from his plow to defeat the other Oscan tribe, the Aequi, at Mount Algidus in 458 B.C. But even the patriotic Livy cannot conceal the petty character of these conflicts. By the end of the century the threat had come to an end, and Rome was able to divert its attention to an old feud it had with the nearby Etruscan



city of Veii. At issue was control of the salt pans at the Tiber's mouth and of the route by which the salt was conveyed inland, the *Via Salaria*. Initially the Romans wrestled with Veii for possession of Fidenae, the only other crossing of the Tiber in its lower reaches, and then they attacked Veii itself. After a long siege the city fell to M. Furius Camillus in 396 B.C. According to legend, when Camillus saw the great quantity of loot from the captured city, he prayed that Rome's good luck would not provoke the envy of men or the gods, but he stumbled inauspiciously as he was pronouncing the words, and only six years later Rome fell to a band of marauding Celtic warriors.

**THE SACK OF ROME** By 600 B.C., Celtic culture had spread throughout most of central Europe and France (the so-called Hallstatt phase, ca. 700–500 B.C.). Another major period of Celtic expansion (the La Tène phase) began about the middle of the fifth century B.C., and around 400 B.C., bands of warlike Celts crossed the Alps into the Po valley and routed the Etruscans living there. At the same time, the Greek city of Syracuse, under its energetic leader Dionysius, was pressing from the south and was at war with the Etruscan city of Caere, which was friendly to Rome. In the midst of these events, the appearance of the Celts at the rear of the Etruscans gave an unexpected boost to the Greeks. According to one version, the Celts even sought them out to propose joint action against Rome. In this context the defeat of the Romans by the Gauls (Celts) at the battle of the Allia in 390 B.C. and the subsequent sack of Rome may not be as haphazard as they appear from the Roman sources, which ignore events elsewhere in Italy and make Rome the focus of the Celtic invasion. Rome received little help from its Latin allies.

Psychologically, the effect of the sack of Rome by the Celts must have been devastating. Undoubtedly, at this time the Romans reflected on the relentless pressures of the Oscan highlanders during the preceding century and on the often-demonstrated undependability of the Latin League and resolved to free themselves from both of these dangers in the future. Prompted by these motives, they reformed the army, added some new magistrates, and launched a period of expansion that ultimately provided them with safe frontiers, far from Rome and even far from Italy itself.

### The New Army

During the fifth century, the Roman legion was modeled on the massed phalanx that characterized Greek hoplite armies. The reformed Roman army of the fourth century was much less rigid. As the historian Livy put it “what was previously a phalanx—like that of the Macedonians, afterwards began to be a battle-line composed of maniples” (8.8). It consisted of thirty maniples (“handfuls”), the tactical units of the legion, each made up of two centuries commanded by centurions. Each maniple had 120 to 160 men armed with a short cut-and-thrust sword. Throwing javelins replaced the old thrusting spears. The legion depended henceforth on a very flexible tactical style of fighting that required a much higher degree of coordination and experience than in the past. The maniple remained a key subdivision of the legion for the next six hundred years, right up to the fourth century A.D.

## Celtic Ferocity

*Neither Greeks nor Romans had any reason to love the Celts. Both had suffered humiliating defeats at their hands, but the main reason Celts were regarded with such fear and disdain was their culture. Unlike most societies around the Mediterranean, Celtic society was oral, non-urban, and unsettled. Celts drank distilled alcohol and ate butter and large amounts of meat. To Mediterranean people they were huge—if slow witted. Celts were not backward technologically, but they seemed to belong to a primitive political and social world. Their fighting techniques, in particular, were regarded by Greeks and Romans as irrational and uncivilized.*

In their wanderings and in battle the Celts use chariots drawn by two horses which carry the driver and the warrior. When they meet with cavalry in battle they first throw their javelins at the enemy, and then step down from their chariots and fight with their swords. Some of them so despise death that they enter the dangers of battle naked, wearing only a sword-belt. They bring to war with them their freedmen attendants, choosing them from among the poor. They use them in battle as chariot drivers and shield-bearers.

They have the custom when they have lined up for combat to step in front of the battle they sing a song

in praise of the great deeds of their ancestors, and of their own achievements, mocking and belittling at the same time their opponent, trying by such techniques to destroy his spirit before the fight. When their opponents fall they cut off their heads and tie them around their horses' necks. They hand over to their attendants the blood-covered arms of their enemies, and carry them off as booty, singing songs of victory.

Spoils of war they fasten with nails to their houses, just as hunters do of the heads of wild animals they have killed. They embalm the heads of the most distinguished opponents in cedar oil, and carefully guard them in chests. They show these heads to visitors, claiming that they, or their father or some ancestor, had refused large sums of money for this or that head. Some of them, it is said, boast that they have not accepted an equal weight of gold for the head they show, demonstrating a kind of barbarous nobility. Not to sell a thing that constitutes the proof of one's bravery is a noble, well-bred kind of thing, but on the other hand to continue to ill-treat the remains of a fellow human being after he is dead is bestial.

—Diodorus Siculus,  
*The Library of History*, 5.29.

**CENTURIONS AND PAY** Cohesion and professionalism were provided largely by the centurions. These men were drawn from the ranks of the ordinary soldiers, not from the elite classes. These latter provided the higher officers, the consuls, praetors, military tribunes, and quaestors (financial officers). Centurions were thus not officers in the traditional sense of being outsiders from a different class who represented a potentially different set of interests from those of the enlisted men. They were instead rankers promoted on the basis of competence and trust. Unlike the officers who belonged to the legion as a whole, centurions were attached directly

to the individual maniples. Another reform that accompanied these changes and made them workable was the introduction of pay.

With pay came an advantageous break with the traditions of the *polis*. The new legionary army was not the equivalent of the hoplite phalanx of a Greek city, which was made up only of those landowners who could afford the necessary equipment for hoplite style warfare. Instead, the legion more accurately reflected the integrated patrician-plebeian state of Rome, where the upper-classes maintained control of the higher commands while the other classes supplied the bulk of the troops and some of its most critical sub-officers, the centurions. Pay enabled the Romans to expand the size of their recruitment base and forced the whole community to subsidize the war effort, not just the landowners. It also alleviated the problem of collecting food from an unwilling population when on the march. Despite these moves in the direction of a professional military, the Roman army was still a militia, an army of amateur citizen-soldiers, and it retained the *polis'* traditional advantage of high Military Participation Ratios, i.e. the ability of a *polis* to put a higher proportion of the male population in the field than any other form of state organization.

### The End of the Latin League: A Pivotal Event

The immediate effect of the sack of Rome on the city's external relations was its loss of control of the Latin League, which went its own independent way until 358 B.C., when the Cassian Treaty was once more enforced. During this time, Rome found allies elsewhere—in Etruria, among the cities of Campania, and with the Samnites of central Italy—among peoples who viewed Roman imperialism as a lesser threat than the marauding bands of Gauls. The Etruscans, in particular, were losing ground throughout Italy. Their naval power was destroyed by the Sicilian Greeks off Cumae in 474 B.C., and by 400 B.C. they lost Campania, their richest possession, to invading Oscans. By mid-century they were driven out of the Po valley by the Gauls, who remained a constant threat on their northern and northeastern frontiers. By contrast, the Samnites were just entering the period of their greatest power.

The alliance with the Samnites in 354 B.C. came at an opportune moment for Rome. For years the Latins had anxiously watched Rome grow beyond what seemed to them its proper place in a league of equal city-states. In 381 B.C., Rome absorbed the nearby Latin city of Tusculum, considerably increasing its manpower and economic resources, and in 340 B.C., in an attempt to alter the changing relationship before it was too late, the Latins revolted, joined by the cities of Campania. Both were quickly overwhelmed by the Romans with the assistance of their new allies, the Samnites, and in 338 B.C. the war came to an end.

What ensued is one of the epoch-making events in Roman history, for instead of confiscations and expropriations to which defeated enemies were usually subjected, the Romans treated their old allies in quite a different manner. To appreciate the importance of this change it is necessary to review the stages by which Rome arrived at what was to become, after 338 B.C., a standard feature of Roman statecraft throughout its subsequent history.

### Techniques of Incorporation

Since the sixth century B.C., the nearby Latin city of Gabii enjoyed an unusual relationship with Rome, ratified by a treaty that, according to first-century B.C. antiquarian Dionysius of Halicarnassus, could still be seen in his time in the Temple of Dius Fidius in Rome. Under the terms of the treaty, citizens of Rome were full citizens of Gabii, and, more important, those of Gabii were full citizens of Rome, to the extent that as early as 422 B.C. a citizen of Gabii named Antistius may have been elected a tribune of the plebeians at Rome. Local government was left intact at Gabii.

In 381 another Latin town, Tusculum, was incorporated into Rome in a similar fashion, and L. Fulvius Curvus, the Roman consul of 322 B.C., was the first of a long series of citizens from that town to appear in the Roman list of magistrates. Finally, Caere, a neighboring Etruscan city that had extended asylum to Roman exiles and to the Vestal Virgins (who had carried with them Rome's sacred objects for safekeeping) during the Gallic invasion, was granted the right of public hospitality. This right guaranteed Caeritans in Rome all the rights of Roman citizens without any of the obligations such as taxes or military or public service. All these were apparently *ad hoc* arrangements, which the Romans, because of their special knowledge of the internal situation of the cities concerned, could assume in advance, would work. In the case of the Latin cities (Gabii and Tusculum), the barriers were less significant, and the Romans could extend full citizenship rights; with the Etruscans of Caere conferral of rights was more guarded. Caeritans did not have to serve in the army, but neither could they run for office.

**MUNICIPIA AND COLONIES** These precedents provided Rome with practical alternatives when it was casting about after the war for substitutes to the Latin League, which by now had outlived its usefulness. The first step was to dissolve the league. Then four of its former members were selected for complete incorporation in the Roman state, with grants of full citizenship (*civitas optimo iure*) but without the abolition of local government or laws. Henceforth, the inhabitants of these cities, like the inhabitants of Gabii, enjoyed dual citizenship and were subject to both taxes and military service while exercising the privilege of full participation in the Roman political process. Next the precedent of Caere was extended to a string of Oscan towns in Latium and Campania. These were partially incorporated into the Roman commonwealth, and their inhabitants were granted Roman citizenship, but they did not have the power to vote in the assemblies (*civitas sine suffragio*, citizenship without the vote). Technically, these newly incorporated cities were known as *municipia*.

Two other governing techniques came into use at this time and became, with the two types of *municipia* just outlined, standard Roman methods of coping with the problem of newly acquired territory with non-Roman or non-Latin populations. First, nine Latin cities were left as independent states, thus forming a ring of border fortresses around the newly extended Roman territories. Citizens of these states kept their Latin citizenship and had reciprocal relations of commerce and marriage (*commercium* and *conubium*) with Rome but not with one another.

In addition, the Romans continued a practice long in use by the Latin League: the founding of colonies in newly acquired inland areas that required fairly large numbers of settlers for security. The league had regularly done this in the past as a joint action, whereby on recently conquered land a completely new city-state was established, made up of citizens from all the members of the league, including Rome. This practice was continued and extended by Rome. Eventually 30 Latin colonies were placed in key locations throughout Italy and become the foundation of Roman power in the peninsula. People were attracted to move to the Latin colonies by large grants of land, although at least for Romans such a move had a drawback: Their citizenship was changed (or reduced) from Roman to Latin, and they could no longer serve in the legions or participate in political life in Rome. They were, of course, expected to defend and govern their own colonies as miniature Latin cities. They could regain their citizenship by leaving the colony and settling permanently once more in Roman territory. It seems that membership in Latin colonies was not restricted to those who were already Roman or Latin citizens; any Italian ally could sign up for enrollment. Therefore, one of the results of the planting of Latin colonies was to bring at least some non-Latin Italians directly into the Roman political system at a status level close to that of Roman citizens.

The second governing technique was a modification of the first. This consisted in establishing small groups of Roman citizens (usually about three hundred families) in coastal areas that needed a resident garrison. These small settlements, which were known as Roman colonies to distinguish them from the larger Latin colonies, were ultimately established at many points on both the Adriatic and Tyrrhenian coasts and became models for Roman colonies overseas. Citizens who joined these colonies did not lose their Roman franchise and were freed from service in the legions, although this was no great concession because they were on permanent garrison duty anyway. The grants of land they received were small and local government was elementary, again in contrast to the fully organized city life of the Latin colonies. Inhabitants remained subject to the control of the magistrates in Rome.

**A FLEXIBLE SYSTEM** These techniques by which towns were granted full Roman citizenship (*civitas optima iure*) or partial citizenship (*civitas sine suffragio*), or by which Romans and Latins were established in colonies in new territories, were consciously used as a means of resolving the Latins' complaints that they were being treated unequally while simultaneously preserving the city-state structure of both the Romans and the Latins. The colonies were also useful safety valves for surplus population in the home states.

The system was an achievement in federal organization that allowed for a maximum degree of flexibility and adjustment to local differences without endangering the solidity of the state as a whole. The direction of military and foreign affairs was the responsibility of the federal government at Rome and was open in varying degrees to those desiring to share in it from outside the city. By contrast, local government, except for the functions mentioned, was left intact and was exclusively in the hands of the elected magistrates of the individual city-states.



From Rome's viewpoint, the solution of 338 B.C. was enormously advantageous. Directly or indirectly, by whole or partial grants of citizenship, Rome added more than two hundred thousand new citizens to its population (a 42 percent increase) and more than three hundred square kilometers to its territory (a 37 percent increase). All of Latium and Campania, two of the richest and most developed areas of Italy, came to constitute the basis of Roman political and economic power. With these resources Rome was able to control the ever-present threat of the central highlanders, who had never previously been successfully contained, and eventually to fight Carthage to a standstill for control of the western Mediterranean.

**ROME: A TERRITORIAL STATE** There was a significant potential downside for Roman society to all of this state-engineering. As early as 381 B.C., when Rome absorbed Tusculum and gave its inhabitants the full franchise, Rome broke with the ancient *polis* tradition of restricting the citizenship to a small, well established, homogeneous community of citizens. In enfranchising Tusculum, however, the Romans were not taking a great leap. Tusculum lay only 15 miles from Rome and elites of both cities had intermarried. A more daring step was taken in continuing the Tusculum experiment after the Latin War when Rome absorbed new citizens at much greater distances from Rome than Tusculum. The practical effect of all these steps was to transform Rome into a territorial state with the potential of losing the advantages of being a *polis*.

The Romans themselves recognized this danger and brought the process of integrating distant populations to a halt in the third century. After that date, Rome was left with the dilemma of what to do about newly added territory and newly conquered populations. Should citizenship be extended to the defeated, even assuming they wanted it? Should Rome administer the new lands and populations directly? That, however, would have involved a radical departure from Roman political practice because it would put great power in the hands of individual governors and create potential divisions in the ruling class. The Romans eventually were forced to resort to appointing governors to conquered provinces and, as predicted, a divided ruling class led to civil war and the fall of the Republic. That, however, came several centuries after where we are now.

### The Samnite Wars

The most powerful single state in the Italian peninsula in the second half of the fourth century B.C. was the Samnite federation. Strategically located on a saddle of mountain land overlooking two of the major plains of Italy, Campania and Apulia, Samnium was in a position to dominate all of central and southern Italy. By the mid-fourth century B.C. it was well on the way to doing so. Previous Oscan incursions from the highlands had swept the Greeks and Etruscans out of Campania (with the exception of Naples), but when Rome incorporated the Campanians into its commonwealth in 338 B.C., the Samnites were confronted for the first time by an organized block of people reaching from south of Naples to Etruria. In addition, Rome had interests in Apulia, into which the Samnites were infiltrating, where the

cities of Arpi and Luceria had requested Roman help. The great conflict that followed was a battle between the urbanized, agricultural populations of the plains and the pastoral highland peoples. For almost a generation the wars dragged on—bloody, confused, unending.

**ROMAN STRATEGY** The main struggle took place in two phases: between 326 and 304 B.C. and between 298 and 290 B.C. Strategically, Rome's problem was how to avoid being caught between the Samnites to the south and its other enemies, the Celts (or Gauls) and Etruscans to the north. Very conscious of the possibility of having to fight on two fronts, Rome went to great lengths to secure peace on its northern frontier while contending with the Samnites on the south. Almost to the end Rome was successful in this task, and when the Gauls and Etruscans finally did join in the fighting, it was too late to make any difference.

The initial phase of the war saw Rome attempting direct assaults on the Samnite mountain stronghold from Campania and failing miserably. The battle of the Caudine Forks in 321 B.C., which resulted in a whole Roman army being forced to surrender, was in the opinion of the Romans their worst defeat in history. Subsequently, Rome's links with Campania—the Via Latina and the Via Appia—were cut, and several of its colonial outposts overwhelmed. With the failure of this strategy, Rome turned to another, and this time found a way to take Samnium from the rear. The new approach involved a series of diplomatic and military moves across the peninsula to the Adriatic so that Roman armies could march down the coast into Apulia to the rear of the Samnites, where the Romans had established a colony at Luceria in 315 B.C. Other Roman colonies—Alba Fucens and Carseoli—were planted as fortresses on the other (northern) side of Samnium, and so instead of Rome being enveloped, it was the enemy that was surrounded. The last major battle was fought in Sentinum in 295 B.C., when the Romans confronted and defeated a coalition of Samnites, Gauls, and Etruscans; five years later peace was made among all the contending parties.

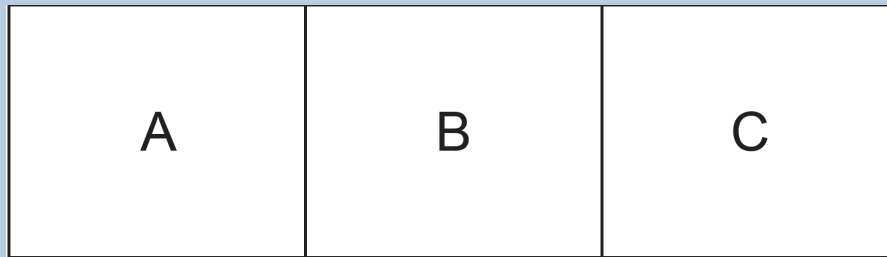
**INTERNAL LINES OF COMMUNICATION** Rome immediately set about consolidating its hold on central Italy by founding new colonies and extending the road system. The solid band of Roman territory across the peninsula now provided internal lines of communication and allowed troops to be moved quickly from one front to another. Rome was now the dominant power in Italy. It could isolate potential enemies in the north and south and concentrate its forces against one while holding off the others. Apart from these military, strategic, and diplomatic advantages, Rome was seen throughout most of the Samnite Wars as the defender of the urban agricultural populations against the infiltrating mountaineers. It was this threat, in fact, that had first involved Rome with the Campanians, and the process was shortly to be repeated with the Greek cities in the south.

An obvious adjunct to Rome's survival was the successful conduct of diplomacy. We have already seen how Rome dealt with conquered enemies and how important *fides*, trustworthiness, was to Rome's self-identity. Cynically, it is sometimes said that Rome depended on a policy of "divide and conquer"—*divide et impera*—but such a policy of selfish realism would not have served Rome well in the long run.

### Central Place Location and Lines of Communication

One of the advantages of central place location (B in the diagram) is that it allows countries so located—Germany and the United States, for example—to move troops and materiel quickly from one frontier to another if attacked simultaneously by their enemies A and C. This is a worst case scenario and ideally diplomacy should be able to hold one enemy quiet while dealing with the other. However, diplomacy by itself is not enough. Countries with central place locations have to have the self-discipline to create dependable transportation networks and, where

necessary, frontier defenses. Rome's commitment to diplomacy, road building, and the creation of protective fortresses was instinctive. Divide and conquer—*divide et impera*—was the operative principle of its diplomacy. Over time, Rome created stand-alone fortress colonies on all its vulnerable frontiers and connected them by all-weather roads. As a result, without calling up all its manpower reserves Rome could hold at bay an enemy on one frontier while concentrating its striking forces on another frontier.



### Tarentum and Pyrrhus

Rome's appearance in Apulia put it into competition with the Greeks of Tarentum and the protectorate they attempted to maintain over the other Greek cities of the south. Given the usual feuding both within Greek cities between upper and lower classes and among Greek cities themselves, it was inevitable that some internal party would supply the impetus or at least the pretext for Rome to intervene directly and displace Tarentum's protectorate with its own.

**THE TROJAN WAR RESUMED** In 282 B.C. the aristocrats of Thurii appealed not to Tarentum but to Rome for help against the Oscans of Lucania, and Rome responded by supplying a garrison of Roman troops. About the same time four other Greek cities were similarly garrisoned. Tarentum retaliated by sinking part of a Roman flotilla that had entered its waters and then appealing for help to one of the great military adventurers of the post-Alexander world, Pyrrhus of Epirus. Hopeful of duplicating Alexander's eastern conquests in the west, Pyrrhus arrived with an expeditionary force in 280 B.C. and announced, by way of justification, that as a descendant of Achilles he was waging a second Trojan War on behalf of the Greeks against the (Trojan) Romans. In two battles in 280 and 279 B.C. at Heraclea and Asculum, he defeated Roman armies but not without serious losses to his own troops. Attempts at negotiation failed, and the Romans, encouraged by their



Rome in Italy ca. 300 B.C.: A Mosaic of Allies and Colonies

allies, the Carthaginians, rejected proposals for a confederacy of southern Italy of which Tarentum would be the head. Never one to remain for long at any task, Pyrrhus left to help the Sicilians clear their island of Carthaginians. When that project failed, he returned to Italy, where in his third battle with the Romans, near Beneventum in 275 B.C., he was defeated and forced to withdraw from Italy. Three years later Pyrrhus removed his garrison from Tarentum, and the city fell to the Romans.

**ROME DOMINANT** With the fall of Tarentum, Rome's conquest of the peninsula, except for the Celtic north, was complete. No power remained to challenge Rome, and its general defense of the urban populations against the traditional enemies of the Greeks of Italy—the Oscans and the Gauls—won Rome esteem in the eyes of Greeks throughout the Mediterranean world. Pyrrhus was one of the most colorful characters of the period, and his military abilities were not taken lightly by either Greeks or Macedonians. Roman success against his elephants, cavalry, and infantry was evaluated accordingly. A delegation from the Macedonian king of Egypt, Ptolemy Philadelphus, arrived in Rome in 273 B.C. bearing gifts, and Greek historians such as Duris and Timaeus took note of the new power rising in the west. Timaeus picked Rome as the defender of Greek liberties against the other traditional enemy of the Greeks, Carthage, and made a synchronism between Rome's and Carthage's founding dates to lend dramatic emphasis to his point.

## 2. THE PUNIC WARS: THE CONFLICT WITH CARTHAGE

Carthage, like Rome, had grown considerably since the two cities had made their first treaty in 509 B.C. By the time of their clash in the third century B.C., Carthage had come to dominate all the Phoenician cities in Africa and possessed a maritime Empire reaching from Ptolemaic Egypt to the Atlantic. It was renowned for its wealth and the stability of its constitution, which Aristotle so admired that he included it as the only non-Greek example in his collection of constitutions. Carthage's wealth depended not only on its mercantile activities but also on its rich agricultural hinterland, from which food supplies were exported to the urbanized Greek east. The city was ruled by a wealthy oligarchy; the masses of the people, exempt from military service and cared for by rich patrons, lacked the political consciousness of the Greeks and Romans and were known for their submissive-

### The Meaning of "Pyrrhic Victory"

After Pyrrhus won the battle of Asculum against the Romans in 279 B.C., he is supposed to have said: "Another victory like this and I'm finished" (Plutarch, *Pyrrhus* 21). Another version has him saying:

"With another victory like this I'll have to return to Epirus without my army" (Orosius 4.1). Pyrrhus's saying has been used ever since to describe a win that results in as much loss to the victor as the vanquished.



ness. Military and civilian powers were separated not for any theoretical reasons but because commerce was the predominant way of life at Carthage.

### Carthage and Rome

Among the legacies the Etruscans left Rome was their alliance with Carthage, based on a lack of competing interests and shared enemies. Initially the differences between the cities were substantial. Rome's wealth, such as it was, lay in agriculture. Its military power consisted of heavy infantry, and its immediate concerns were with Italy. Carthage's interests were maritime and commercial, and its military power lay in its navy. Eventually, the situation changed, and the success of each power in enlarging its respective sphere of influence inevitably brought the cities into confrontation. With the advantage of hindsight, Livy was to comment that Rome's involvement with Campania led to the war with Pyrrhus, which in turn led to the wars with Carthage. It was not a calculated collision; both powers edged their way into the conflict, with no careful weighing of national interests or realizable war aims.

**CARTHAGINIAN IMPERIALISM** Founded sometime in the eight century B.C. Carthage was not a city of energetic, mostly peaceful merchants who were victimized by an aggressive Rome as is sometimes thought. In the sixth century B.C. in a series of bitter wars, Carthage drove the Greeks out of the western Mediterranean and colonized its coasts with strongholds and naval bases of their own. In the fifth century the Carthaginians began attempts to conquer the portions of Sicily that lay under Greek control. They waged five major campaigns there between 480 B.C. and the last in 278 B.C. In the process, the Greek cities of Selinus, Himera, and Acragas (*Agrigentum*) were captured and destroyed. In the end, the effort to conquer the Greeks failed but it was not from lack of effort. In Africa the Carthaginians were more successful and by around 300 B.C. they had conquered from the native Libyan inhabitants of Africa a larger and richer land empire than Rome's.

Carthaginian generals were elected and held office for as long as was necessary for them to accomplish their missions. Failure on their part was treated with great harshness. Unsuccessful commanders were often crucified. By contrast, Roman commanders were sent out on an annual basis to replace the previous commander in the field unless that general had his command extended. This practice left Roman armies exposed to the dangers of inexperienced generalship, but it also tended to stimulate a general's aggressiveness, because he knew that he would soon be replaced and the glory of victory might fall to his successor. Failure in the field rarely affected a Roman commander's political career.

By the third century B.C., the Carthaginians had established a reputation for brutality that far exceeded Rome's. Its generals were legendary for their cruelty to captured cities where the mass slaughter of citizens was used as a tactic to terrify other cities into submission. Carthage was not popular either with its Phoenician allies or with the native Libyans. The harshness with which it ruled both was a weakness in Carthage's otherwise powerful empire.

**MERCENARIES** Compared to Rome, Carthage always suffered from a shortage of manpower. In compensation, it had the wherewithal from its commercial and agricultural activities to hire mercenaries to fight for it, and in the third century the Mediterranean was awash with soldiers of fortune. Since it was always dangerous to create armies made up of mercenaries who all spoke the same language and so could potentially conspire against their employer, Carthage made sure that its armies were polyglot.

One source of mercenaries for Carthage was the Greek world. For centuries Greeks had warred among themselves, and as a consequence, masses of professional soldiers from ordinary infantry men to generals were available for hire. There were well known places in Greece—Cape Teanum in the southern Peloponnese, for example—where such soldiers could be picked up. But Carthage had access to a much larger pool of mercenaries locally in north Africa among Libyans and Numidians. The former constituted the bulk of Carthage's infantry units and the Numidians provided the cavalry. In addition, warlike, footloose Celts, either from Spain or southern Gaul, were available along with Ligurians from the mountains of northern Italy. By contrast, as we have seen, Roman armies were militia armies, made up of drafted citizen soldiers, brigaded with usually equal numbers of allied contingents.

### The First Punic War (264–241 B.C.)

The occasion for the conflict arose, as might be expected, in southern Italy and Sicily, where Roman and Carthaginian interests were beginning to overlap. In the past an internal squabble in a Sicilian city might have meant little to Rome, but with its growing involvement in southern Italy, its sensitivity to such events expanded proportionately.

The incident that provoked the collision involved Campanian mercenaries in the service of Syracuse in Sicily. They revolted and seized the Sicilian city of Messana, which dominated the narrow passage between Italy and Sicily. From that base they indiscriminately raided both Greek and Carthaginian territories. However, in 264 B.C. they were hard-pressed by Hiero of Syracuse, and different factions within Messana appealed to the Romans and Carthaginians for help. The Carthaginians were closest and got there first, putting a garrison in the citadel.

**A CARTHAGINIAN LAKE?** At Rome, the request for aid caused a major debate. Some saw the Carthaginian seizure of Messana as a prelude to an attempt to end the old balance of power between the Greeks and Carthaginians in Sicily by a complete victory for the Carthaginians. The fact that Messana was only a few miles from Italy and lay deep in traditional Greek territory, coupled with the fact that the Carthaginians already occupied Corsica and Sardinia, meant that such a move would convert the entire Tyrrhenian Sea into a Carthaginian lake. Other Romans had a personal interest in the Campanian mercenaries who were in control of Messana and in southern Italy in general. Since the settlement of the Latin War in 338, Campania had become an important part of the Roman commonwealth, and Campanian senators (the Atilii and Ogulnii, for example) were powerful in Rome



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at this time. It might also have been argued that the Romans had more in common with the Greeks of Sicily than with the Carthaginians, their erstwhile allies. The senate was not anxious for war and in the impasse, passed the decision to the Roman people, who, according to biased aristocratic sources, were swayed by greed in favor of war against Carthage.

### Strategy: The Problem of Winning Asymmetrical Wars

The problem faced by Romans and Carthaginians alike was how to win an asymmetrical war where one side had a powerful army and the other a powerful navy. Theoretically each was unbeatable, at least while fighting its own kinds of battles on its own ground. What would “victory” in such a war look like? The conflict was in some respects like the not too distant asymmetrical Peloponnesian War which pitted the Athenian fleet against the Spartan army. That war ended when the Spartans, subsidized by the Persians, were able to cobble together a fleet and defeat the Athenian navy.

**WAR AIMS** For the Carthaginians, a winning strategy would have been to prevent the Romans from conquering their holdings in Sicily and force a peace on the Romans on the basis of the *status quo ante*. The strategy was straightforward enough: Carthage would remain on the defensive in Sicily while using its fleets to harass Roman possessions in Italy. For most of the generation-long war, Carthage was successful in this effort. Their aim was to wear down and embarrass the Romans until they made peace.

The Romans entered the conflict with a number of unresolved problems, the first of which was the question of realistic war aims. Should they restore the balance of power in Sicily? This would be a minimum achievement. Should they drive the Carthaginians out of Sicily altogether as Pyrrhus attempted to do but failed, or even attempt an assault on Carthage itself? Because there had never been a need to debate these matters, there was no clear thought on how the war should be waged, and events themselves dominated the early years of the conflict. After initial land victories in Sicily, and the switch to their side of Hiero of Syracuse, the Romans, following in the footsteps of Pyrrhus, began to push the Carthaginians back into the west of the island, only to discover that this could never be more than temporarily successful as long as the Carthaginians held their main ports, Lilybaeum, Drepana, and Panormus (Palermo).

The naval issue became clear to the Romans (if it was not long before) after their capture of the city of Agrigentum in 262 B.C. According to Polybius, on the one hand this victory caused many inland Sicilian towns to join the Romans because of their fear of Rome’s infantry, but on the other hand “even more coastal towns broke away from them because they in turn feared the Carthaginians fleet.... They also saw Italy frequently ravaged while Africa remained untouched” (1.20).

**COSTLY NAVIES** By definition, navies—ancient or modern—are inherently expensive to build, crew and maintain. Only the wealthiest states can expect to launch fleets. Sparta in its war with Athens had limited resources and hence

needed Persian subsidies to defeat wealthy Athens. Rome was not particularly wealthy—as, for instance, Carthage was—but it had resources Carthage lacked, namely allies who could be called upon to supply ships. Rome, with its vast manpower reserves, could provide the rowers and marines. These allies of Rome were the Greeks of southern Italy and Sicily, and with their help the Romans brought a fleet into being in 260 B.C. To circumvent the superior seamanship of the Carthaginians they turned sea battles into land battles by the invention of a device called the *corvus* (the “crow” or “raven,” referring to the birds’ bill). This was a gangplank with a spike at the end of it which was to be dropped on the deck of an enemy ship, transforming it into a grappling iron which locked the two ships together and allowed Roman marines to board the ship and make quick work of their opponents. With the creation of the fleet and the achievement of tactical superiority over the Carthaginians, the slow process of land siege and sea blockade began. Ultimately this approach was to bring victory, but not before the Romans attempted some shortcuts that threatened their whole strategy of naval warfare.

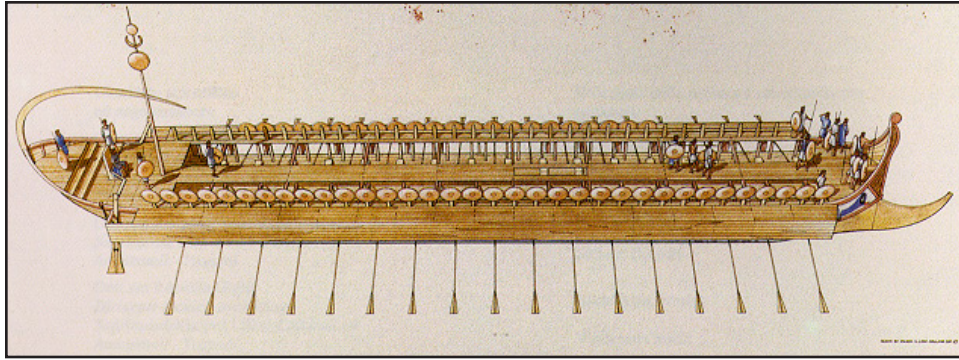
**THE FINAL ROUND** In 256 B.C., Rome sent an expedition against Carthage in the hope of concluding the war quickly. It failed, and Roman naval power was decimated by storms and mishandling, so that by 249 B.C., Rome was back where it started. For the following eight years the war languished until, by one supreme effort, a new fleet was created and the Sicilian blockade resumed. The Romans won a naval battle off the Aegates Islands, and Carthage, exhausted and unable to supply its forces in Sicily, including those of its most successful commander, Hamilcar Barca, agreed to negotiate (241 B.C.). The settlement resulted in the loss of Sicily, the payment of an indemnity, and various other clauses, which the Romans used as a pretext shortly afterward to seize Corsica and Sardinia.

**A BALANCE SHEET** The First Punic War, Rome’s first war with Carthage, revealed the strengths and weaknesses of both sides. Rome suffered from inept generalship because of its system of annual rotation in office. However, Rome’s tenacity, manpower reserves, and willingness to seek victory contrasted with Carthage’s half measures and its dependence on mercenaries. Roman luck made a difference too, and its ally, Hiero of Syracuse, more than once helped out in bad times.

### Between the Wars

Between the two rounds of wars (264–241 B.C. and 218–202 B.C.), the Romans and the Carthaginians became deeply involved in their own affairs. In the Adriatic, Rome put down the pirates of Illyria, who were terrorizing the Greek coastlands, and replaced Macedonia, supreme since Philip and Alexander, as the power to be reckoned with in this area. Shortly afterward, the Gauls, who had been quiet all during the war with the Carthaginians, began a major advance on Rome. Terrified, the Romans resorted to human sacrifice and the consultation of the prophetic Sibylline books. They finally defeated the Gauls at Telamon in 225 B.C., just 90 miles from Rome. This victory gave the Romans the opportunity to finish off the Gallic





A reconstruction of a Carthaginian warship of the time of the First Punic War found, along with the remains of a sister ship, off the coast of Sicily in 1971–1973. The hold of the one illustrated contained a cache of *cannabis sativa*. The discoverers of the ships speculate that it was used to help the rowers endure the stress of their long hours at the oars.

threat and launch a series of campaigns against the Gauls' homeland in the Po valley. Roman colonies were established at Cremona and Placentia (Piacenza), but before the task was completed the second war with Carthage broke out. Twenty years elapsed before the Romans renewed their efforts in the north.

The Carthaginians were also engaged in expansion, and under the energetic Hamilcar Barca began the subjugation of Spain and the exploitation of its considerable physical and human resources. Hamilcar, his son-in-law Hasdrubal, and his son Hannibal established close relations with the Spanish natives, and the last two, following Carthaginian custom, intermarried with Spanish royal houses. The Barcid dynasty in Spain grew in power, and the attention of the Romans was often drawn there by Rome's ally Massilia (Marseille).

### The War with Hannibal (218–201 B.C.)

The pretext for the outbreak of the Second Punic War was found in Hannibal's attack on Saguntum, over which the Romans claimed some kind of protectorate, although the city lay well within the Carthaginian sphere of influence. An ultimatum was rejected by Carthage, and as soon as Hannibal heard the news, he marched his army out of Spain, through France, and across the Alps into Italy.

**NEW APPROACHES** The strategies that each side used in the Second Punic War were dictated largely by the results of the first. The Carthaginians, recognizing that they had to defeat Rome on land for a complete victory, conceded control of the sea to Rome; the Romans, for their part, planned to continue where they had left off in 241 B.C., using Sicily as a base to invade Africa while blockading a Carthaginian invasion from Spain. Hannibal upset this plan by slipping past the Roman forces into Italy by land, thereby forcing the cancellation of the war in Africa. His strategy was based on two assumptions based on the experiences of Hellenistic armies. The first was that a professional general leading professional

troops could generally defeat citizen militias. That truism had been verified by the experience of Greek cities in recent times. The second was that, as a result of defeats in the field, the Roman confederation, like all other leagues, would disintegrate. In the first instance, Hannibal proved to be correct, although his own genius was a factor that outweighed the others and made textbook cases out of his battles, confronting the Romans with a threat they had never before faced. He was fatally wrong in his assumption that the Roman commonwealth, made up mostly of allies, would crumble. He can hardly be blamed for this mistake. None of the federal states Hannibal knew of—all Greek—were known for their solidity. Nor did he know that Rome had had sufficient time to perfect its federal union before being confronted.

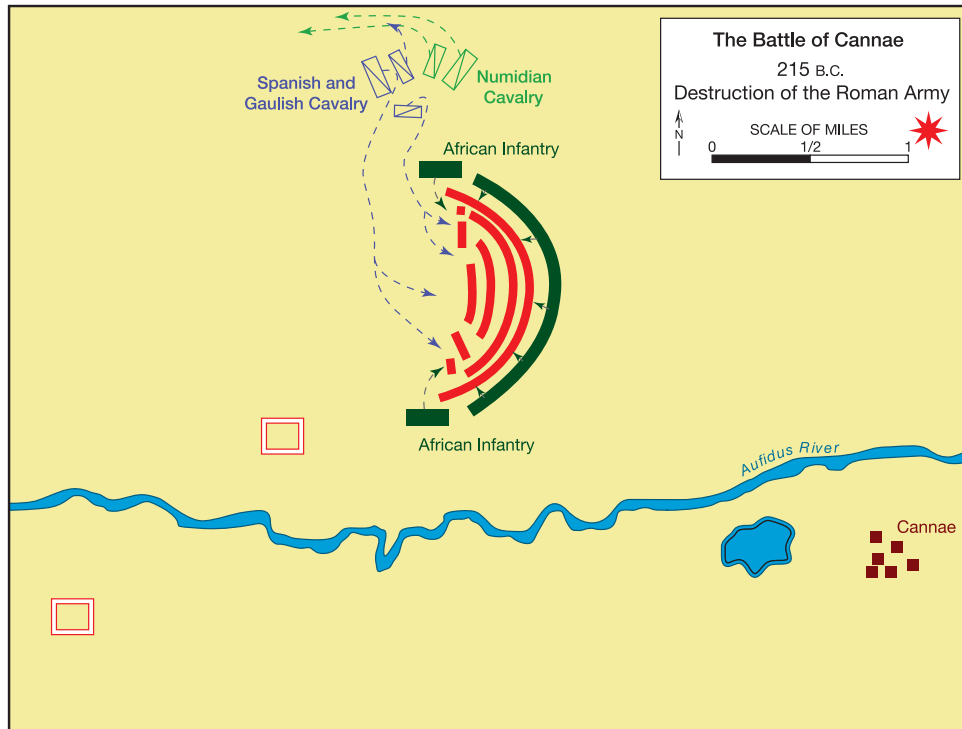
**BATTLEGROUND ITALY** From 218 B.C. onward, Hannibal remained unbeaten, and one great Roman defeat followed another, of which Cannae in 216 B.C. was the greatest. So great were the Roman losses that adolescents and slaves had to be drafted into the army. The annual rites in honor of the goddess Ceres, which could be celebrated only by women, had to be canceled because too many women were in mourning and mourners could not participate in the rituals. Many cities in southern Italy went over to Hannibal's side. To add to Rome's woes, the young and aggressive king of Macedon, Philip V, chose the moment of Rome's defeat at Cannae to side with Hannibal. It was a cynically calculated—and as it turned out spectacularly mistaken—act made on the assumption of Rome's defeat and the dismemberment of its federation. It accomplished nothing other than to embitter Rome against Philip with disastrous results for the king and for Macedon.

Then the weight of history began to tell as Hannibal came up against the Roman conquests of the past century that had divided Italy into two halves, giving the Romans internal lines of communication and preserving intact the heartland of Roman influence. Hannibal was kept in the south, the Gauls were fended off in the north, and although individual cities might revolt against Rome, as did Capua and Tarentum, Hannibal could not prevent their recapture. Nor could he capture Rome itself. His army was not large enough, and it lacked siege equipment. Roman colonies continued to perform their assigned function as self-sustaining

### Why Hannibal Did Not Try to Capture Rome After Cannae

"Hannibal you know how to win battles but not how to exploit them," so Maharbal, Hannibal's cavalry commander is supposed to have said at the end of a debate over whether to march on Rome after the battle of Cannae (Livy 22.51). Hannibal, however, was right to reject Maharbal's advice. His army was not an engineering army; it was not suited to building a

huge counter wall or ditch around Rome and then waiting for the city to surrender. If the army did so it would have lost its greatest strength, its power of maneuver. Hannibal was also well aware that a cordon of fortresses protected Rome and that each would have had to have been taken individually before Rome could have been successfully besieged.



#### Battle of Canae: The Final Phase

fortresses in enemy country, and Roman roads allowed the legions to be shifted quickly from front to front. With its fleet, Rome could bring in supplies and deny them to Hannibal. Still, even with these advantages, Rome would not have beaten Carthage had it not been for its victory in other theaters of the war and the emergence of a Roman military genius, P. Cornelius Scipio.

#### “The War Should Be Fought in Italy”

*We lack a firsthand account of Hannibal’s reasons for taking on Rome in Italy but the historian Livy reports that when Hannibal was forced to flee from Carthage after the war with Rome he took refuge with the Macedonian king of Syria, Antiochus III, who was contemplating war with Rome. He offered the following advice:*

Hannibal’s advice was always the same. The war should be fought in

Italy because first, Italy could supply food and troops to an invading army. Secondly, if there was no military presence there and Rome was allowed to draw on the manpower and material resources of Italy, then neither the king nor any other people for that matter, would be a match for the Romans.

—Livy 34.60.

**SCIPIO AFRICANUS** Scipio's first successes came in Spain, where he drove out the Carthaginians (210–205 B.C.) and established his reputation as a charismatic leader and a general of the caliber of Hannibal. Given the opportunity to invade Africa, he forced Hannibal's withdrawal from Italy and then defeated him in a pitched battle at Zama in 202 B.C., when for the first time the Romans achieved cavalry superiority in the field. Carthage surrendered all overseas possessions and all but ten warships and agreed to pay a huge indemnity and not to wage war in Africa without Rome's consent.

### A Final Balance Sheet

Rome won because it was able to compel Carthage to fight on Roman terms, even though the genius of Hannibal averted defeat for years. Rome's control of the seas forced Hannibal to march overland to Italy, and prevented Philip V of Macedonia, an ally of Hannibal's from 215 B.C. onward, from effectively aiding him. Control of the sea allowed Rome to make its final assault on Africa from Sicily. The Romans could bring supplies into Italy from all over the Mediterranean while denying the Carthaginians the same facility. In Scipio they finally found a leader who raised their citizen-soldiers to new levels of technical ability, introduced new weapons and sophisticated new tactics, experimented with mobile tactical units (cohorts), and passed on a legacy of brilliant generalship. The senate throughout the long war refused to panic or splinter into pro- and anti-war parties. Once it recognized Hannibal's mastery of set battles, it came up with the daringly comprehensive strategy of containing Hannibal in southern Italy while eliminating the Carthaginian threat in Spain and preparing to invade Africa from Sicily. The citizenry at large remained steadfast, as did Rome's original allies in central Italy.

This brief summary of the war with Hannibal gives little sense of the magnitude of the struggle or the appalling losses suffered mainly by Rome and its allies. There was unending warfare between 217 and 203 B.C., costing Rome a third of its adult male population. Rome's allies suffered equally. Vast tracts of land in Italy and Sicily were devastated and major cities such as Tarentum, Capua, and Syracuse were looted. Carthage suffered less. Immense numbers of mercenary Libyans, Numidians, Celts, and Ligurians in its armies lost their lives or, when captured, were sold into slavery, but comparatively few Carthaginian citizens died. None of Carthage's cities were captured and plundered. Its fertile hinterland was untouched.

We cannot properly gauge the feelings of the Roman families that lost relatives in the protracted conflict. They were inured to battlefield losses from previous wars in Italy, but the war with Hannibal was of a greater magnitude than any previous war or, for that matter, any that happened afterward. At a guess, war led to the hardening of Rome's resolve never to allow itself to be challenged by a peer-competitor in its own neighborhood, the western Mediterranean. Later that resolve extended to the entire Mediterranean. Perhaps it was at some point during the war with Hannibal that Rome changed from being a hegemonic power in Italy to an imperial power in the Mediterranean.

### 3. ROMAN TERRITORIAL EXPANSION AFTER THE HANNIBALIC WAR

The most obvious result of the Punic Wars lay in the extension of Rome's commitments overseas and in Italy. Before this time, Rome's principal concern was for its immediate possessions in central Italy. With the defeat of Hannibal, however, the Romans found themselves deeply involved in northern and southern Italy, Spain, southern Gaul, Illyria (in the Balkans), and North Africa, and through these areas with the eastern Mediterranean.

#### Confiscations in Italy

Much of northern and southern Italy had gone over to Hannibal during the wars, and as punishment Rome confiscated huge areas of land from its traitorous former allies, more than doubling its own landholdings in the process and producing an entirely new political map of Italy. Pieces of Roman territory, designated as public land, stretched from one end of Italy to the other, still occupied in many instances by their original owners. The connecting of these scattered parcels (usually the best land of the original owners) by roads and their settlement, occupation, and development by Romans were to be among the greatest projects undertaken by Rome in the second century B.C., offering fantastic opportunities for self-enrichment to many, especially the upper-classes, but also the chance to acquire good farm land for the masses, at least for those willing to emigrate. Although the south required little pacification after the departure of Hannibal, the Ligurian and Celtic tribes of the north were conquered only after a series of lengthy campaigns lasting from 200 to 180 B.C. Even then the job was not complete, as the tribes of the Alps remained unsubdued until the time of Augustus. Romanization took place concurrently with pacification, and large colonies and major connecting roads were created.

#### Spain

Spain fell to Rome as part of the spoils of the Punic Wars. For strategic and economic reasons, Spain had to be brought fully under Roman control, for it was from Spain, with its human and mineral resources, that Carthage had launched its nearly fatal attack on Rome in 218 B.C., and Rome was determined that nothing like that should happen again. Accordingly, in 197 B.C. Spain was divided into two Roman provinces, and the slow process of bringing this gigantic land mass under control began. Spain was inhabited mostly by non-urbanized peoples, and the Romans used the same techniques of diplomacy and war they used so successfully against similar peoples in Italy. As in all Roman undertakings abroad at this time, the object was not the direct annexation and economic exploitation of territory but the elimination of groups that might pose a threat to Rome's interests in the area and the establishment of relations on a client-patron basis. Because these interests were never clearly defined and because the client-patron relation-



ship was moral rather than legal, misunderstandings and ambiguities inevitably resulted.

Between 197 and 133 B.C. Rome conducted a series of campaigns resulting in the subjection and eventual Romanization of much of the Iberian Peninsula. Later in the second century, Rome acquired Trans-Alpine Gaul (modern Provence in southern France), guaranteeing direct land access to Spain from Italy.

The campaigns for the conquest of Spain were characterized not by the significance of the battles or the numbers involved, but by the consistency with which the legions were beaten by the skillful guerrilla tactics of the Spanish and by the broken treaties, lax military discipline, atrocities, and ruined reputations on the Roman side. Not until 133 B.C., when the Celt-Iberian town of Numantia was destroyed by Scipio Aemilianus, who earlier had reduced Carthage to rubble, could Rome's hold on Spain be called secure. As late as the time of Augustus, recalcitrant tribes in northwestern Spain were still disturbing the *pax Romana* (the Roman peace). It is no coincidence that some of the dates Roman historians assigned to the decline of the Republic coincide with Rome's tragic experiences in the Iberian Peninsula.

#### 4. MACEDONIA AND THE EAST

Before the war with Hannibal, Roman suppression of piracy in the Adriatic had brought it into immediate contact with Macedonia, and the usual process of making friends and allies, by which Rome established its influence, began.

##### War with Philip V

Following Philip's stab in the back after the battle of Cannae, when the Macedonians allied themselves with Hannibal, Rome became more involved in the area east of the Adriatic, establishing its first formal alliance with a Greek state, the Aetolian League. With its hands freed after the defeat of Hannibal, Rome now gave its attention to the Greek sphere, as it was doing simultaneously to its other legacies of the Punic Wars in northern Italy and Iberia. Encouraged by new allies in Greece and by Rhodes and Pergamum across the Aegean, Rome challenged Philip to withdraw from Greece. When he refused, Rome launched a war against him. At Cynoscephalae in 197 B.C., the famed Macedonian phalanx met the Roman legions in battle for the first time and went down in defeat. Rome's object, as in Spain and elsewhere, was not the direct acquisition of territory or the complete destruction of Macedonia as a center of power, but only its weakening and curtailment within suitable limits. This was achieved by balancing Macedonia against Aetolia and winning over the Greek states by granting them their freedom. Unfortunately, the Greeks had difficulty in coming to terms with the limitations placed on their freedom by the Romans, and it was to take more wars and the breaking up of Macedonia before the ambiguities of their relationship were finally resolved.



The Mediterranean ca. 200 B.C.

### Force vs. Justice: Winning and Keeping Empires

Writing in the second century A.D. long after Rome had acquired its empire, the historian Florus commented that “It is more difficult to hold on to provinces than to win them in the first place because they are won by force of arms but retained by justice.” (Florus 2.30)

#### The Seleucid War

Typically, the first of these wars was provoked by Rome’s first Greek ally, the Aetolian League. This militarily powerful but culturally backward league had hoped in typical Greek fashion to fill the power vacuum left by Macedonia but was disappointed not only in this, but even in its attempts to annex a few adjoining Thessalian towns. The war also involved Rome with the Macedonian king of Syria, the Seleucid Antiochus III, with whose possessions in Asia Minor Rome now came into contact.

The evacuation of the Macednians from Greece in 196 B.C. had won Rome much goodwill, so that when Antiochus, in response to the urging of the Aetolians, landed in Greece in 192 B.C. to “liberate the Greeks,” as he claimed, he received a cool reception. In due course he was bundled out of Greece by the Romans, who quickly returned. He was completely defeated at Magnesia in Asia Minor in 190 B.C. The Romans imposed an armament reduction and an enormous indemnity, which eventually led to the destruction of Seleucid power in the east. Rome’s staunch allies in Asia, Rhodes and Pergamum, were generously rewarded, and a new balance of power was established in the eastern Mediterranean by the Peace of Apamea in 188 B.C. Ptolemaic Egypt, weak at this time, had no intention of challenging Rome, especially after seeing its two old rivals, Macedonia and Syria, go down to defeat so easily.

#### Decoding Rome’s Intentions

Rome’s handling of Greece through a combination of cynical manipulation and reliance on its traditional client–patron approach continued to lead to more misunderstandings and blunders on the part of its allies and enemies alike. In taking on alliances with Greek states and cities, Rome inevitably became involved in the complicated political and social entanglements that had frustrated every effort of philosophers, statesmen, and generals for the preceding five hundred years. Rome was constantly besieged by Greek individuals, factions, and governments attempting to manipulate it in their own self-interest against other Greeks. At one time the Senate was confronted by no less than four sets of Spartan envoys, each of whom claimed to speak as a legitimate spokesman for his state. Such a situation put the Greeks at the mercy of the Romans, but it also dragged the Romans into the demoralizing world of Greek diplomacy, where they quickly learned (or perfected) the arts of casuistry, equivocation, and mischief-making.

## CHRONOLOGY

### *Wars of the Roman Republic, II*

First Macedonian War	215–205 B.C.
Second Macedonian War	200–196 B.C.
Battle of Cynoscephalae	197 B.C.
War with the Seleucid Antiochus	192–189 B.C.
Battle of Magnesia	190 B.C.
Sporadic Wars in the Iberian Peninsula	197–133 B.C.
Third Macedonian War	172–167 B.C.
Battle of Pydna	168 B.C.
Achaean War: Sack of Corinth	146 B.C.
Third Punic War: Sack of Carthage	146 B.C.

**ROMAN SUSPICIONS** A complaint by an ally, or perhaps a suspicious move by one of the powers being watched by Rome, led time and again, to increased suspicions and investigations by commissions that often provoked confrontations. Such a combination of circumstances led, after Philip V's death, to a final confrontation in Macedonia between his son Perseus and the Romans (Third Macedonian War, 172–167 B.C.). The consolidation of Macedonia's economic and human resources and a marriage alliance with the Seleucids, together with the personally urged allegations of Eumenes, king of Pergamum, led to another war and the final overthrow of the Macedonian kingdom at the battle of Pydna in

168 B.C. In the aftermath, Macedonia was divided into four impotent, autonomous republics. With the loss of its kings, one of the world's great nations passed into oblivion.

At the same time, the Romans dissolved the Greek Boeotian League. Its democratic organization found little sympathy at Rome, where democracy was identified with instability. Rome also weakened Rhodes, its former ally, which had mistakenly offered to mediate between Rome and Perseus when Rome seemed to be having difficulty bringing the Macedonians to a decisive confrontation on the battlefield. Pergamum was also involved in mediation attempts and likewise suffered eclipse as Rome's foremost ally in Asia Minor. Once again, Rome refused to take on the responsibility of formal supervision of the conquered areas, although it did assume a direct financial interest by continuing to collect, at a reduced rate, the taxes the Macedonian kings had levied in the past. After clearing out the

### The Whims of Fortune: Macedonia Dismembered

*The Greek historian and statesman Polybius reflected on the dismemberment of Macedonia by recalling what the philosopher Demetrius of Phaleron said about the fall of Persia to the Macedonians under Alexander.*

Fortune never makes deals with life and always defeats our calculations by some novel move. She is forever

demonstrating to us her power by foiling our expectations. And now it seems to me that in putting Macedonia in possession of the wealth of Persia she proved to all that her investiture of Macedonia with the insignia of empire was equally revocable and contingent on her will.

—Polybius 29.21

unreliable anti-Roman elements throughout the Greek cities, the Roman legions returned once more to Italy, laden with immense booty.

## 5. THE END OF CORINTH AND CARTHAGE

This was not Rome's last involvement in the tangle of Greek politics. Rome did in Greece what it had done in Italy and the western Mediterranean: It eliminated one power block after another and slowly inculcated the rules under which politics were to be exercised. Allies were often slower to learn the rules than enemies, as the examples of Aetolia, Rhodes, and Pergamum had already demonstrated. Now the Achaean League, another longtime ally of Rome, miscalculated just how much freedom it was allowed to settle affairs in its own area, the Peloponnese, where it maintained a permanent dispute with Sparta. This time the issue was resolved by the dissolution of the league and the barbaric sack and destruction of the ancient city of Corinth as an object lesson to the rest of Greece (146 B.C.). Greece as a whole now came under the general supervision of the Roman governor of Macedonia, which had been made into a province two years earlier after yet another revolt. The same year (146 B.C.) saw the sack and destruction of Carthage in the Third Punic War after a three-year siege. The same combination of Roman suspicions and the complaints of allies that had so often brought on confrontations in Greece had the same effect in Africa, where the basic economic strength of Carthage and the constant stream of complaints from Rome's Numidian allies finally brought Rome to a decision it had avoided in the past: the destruction of the city. Yet another province, Africa (modern Tunisia), was added and came under the direct surveillance of a Roman governor.

## 6. ROME'S EMPIRE: AN ANALYSIS

In 146 B.C. Rome emerged as the dominant power in the whole Mediterranean. Under its direct control were the provinces of Nearer and Further Spain, Sardinia-Corsica, Sicily, Africa and Macedonia. Not long afterward, Asia Minor and southern Gaul were added. Cowed by Rome's power or enmeshed in its system of client-state relations were the Hellenistic Kingdoms of Seleucid Syria and Ptolemaic Egypt and dozens of independent cities, petty states, and tribal peoples. In skeletal form this was to be the eventual shape of what we know as the Roman Empire.

The Romans had no preconceived plans for the conquest of Italy, the western Mediterranean, and finally the Greek east. Some conquests came as a result of responses to importuning allies. "By defending our allies," Cicero wrote with some sarcasm, "we have come to dominate the whole world" (*de re publica* 3.23). Early wars in Italy were defensive in nature, *ad hoc*, and fueled by a mixture of fear, glory seeking, and land hunger. With reason, the Romans feared and hated the Samnites, Celts, and Carthaginians. It was a different story when they encountered the powers of the Hellenistic world, but by then Rome had been hardened by its experiences in the western Mediterranean. Rome had become an imperial



power. Inevitably its Empire was institutionalized. Vested interests arose that saw to it that the Empire did not decrease. The elite wanted prestige and the people the tangible benefits of Empire. Once taxes and booty began rolling in, Romans were naturally reluctant to let go of their conquests.

### Why Nations Rule Other Nations

Writing in the fifth century, the Greek historian Thucydides reports on a debate at Sparta in which an Athenian ambassador attempted to defend Athens' empire. He did so by explaining why, universally, nations acquire empires, why it is difficult for them to let them go once they have been acquired, and what, if any, justification can be made for imperial rule. The speaker admits that while Athens had acquired its empire "first through fear," soon afterward "honor and profit" entered the picture making it impossible for Athens to give up its rulership. The speaker goes on to claim that in being driven by the universal human emotions of honor, fear, and profit, the three driving forces for empire, Athenians were not acting contrary to human nature nor, for that matter, was Athens the first to act this way. Empires were always acquired in response to these emotional drives. He goes on: By their nature, empires are always unpopular. But, so what? The only true choice is "between governing strongly or endangering one's own security." What counts in the end is whether, when a nation has actually acquired an empire, it rules justly: "Men deserve praise," the Athenian speaker says, "when in obedience to human nature they exercise rule over others, and yet show more justice than the extent of their power allows."<sup>1</sup> The Romans would have agreed.

We should beware of projecting contemporary concerns with national sovereignty, isolationism, and interventionism into the distant past. At the time when Rome was winning its empire, it was considered respectable to want to rule. Thucydides' view was unexceptional. Neither isolation nor pacifism were options in the anarchic world of Europe and the Mediterranean. War was a normal and accepted exercise of sovereignty and was recognized as such by the international community. Plato opined, perhaps with tongue in cheek, that "in reality all states are in a natural state of perpetual, if undeclared, war with every other state" (*Laws* 625d).

### Restraints on Imperial Expansion

The impulse to having more, however, clashed with a variety of internal constraints at Rome that had nothing to do with the justice or injustice of imperial rule. An important conservative element in the Roman elite recognized that continued expansion posed a threat to the balance of power within the governing class and undermined the republican or *polis* character of Rome. There was strong resistance, for instance, to the settlement of individual Roman homesteaders in what was at that time thought to be the distant Sabine lands conquered during the Samnite Wars and in the *ager Gallicus* on the Adriatic coast of Italy. Rome was generally

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<sup>1</sup>Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* 1.75-76

reluctant to annex territory and even more reluctant to take direct responsibility for administering and maintaining order in distant provinces. Then, in the second century B.C., the pattern of warfare changed. Roman armies did not march every year to war as they did in the fourth and third centuries. Periods of intense warfare alternated with relatively peaceful interludes. The elite, despite its yen for glory, did not want to see individual members gain too much glory and rise above their peers in the opinion of the people. In the first century, when glory-seeking leaders arose who were willing to ignore their peers' envy and disapproval and identify their own success with that of Rome's, the way was opened to one-man rule.

## THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF ROMAN IMPERIALISM

**ANCIENT AND MODERN VIEWS** The nature of Roman imperialism was much debated in antiquity and the debate has continued to the present. Contemporary political, social, and cultural currents inevitably affect historical judgments. In the nineteenth century when empires and emperors were common in Asia and Europe, many scholars (though not all) argued that Rome's acquisition of empire was mainly defensive. Empire was justified, they claimed, on the principle that unruly people who could not govern themselves and made the lives of their settled neighbors miserable should be ruled by those who *could* rule themselves. On the other hand, in the twentieth century, the collapse of European empires after World War II, the war in Vietnam, and the optimism generated by the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989 led some western scholars to categorize all empires as inevitably unjust and unnecessary, beneficial neither to conquerors nor to the conquered. Rome, in their eyes, was a uniquely belligerent and violent society. It sent out armies year after year in search of booty and slaves to sustain its insatiable social needs of honor, glory and material prosperity. Each conquest required another. In this view, the Romans were hard wired for imperialism.

More recent scholars, however, are less inclined to see Rome as uniquely violent, arguing, for example, that within the "anarchic interstate [world of antiquity] every major state, every medium-sized state, and even many small states were highly militarized societies, habituated to employing violence and threats to achieve their aims."<sup>2</sup> To this list should be added the presence at times of even more dangerous, even more highly militarized non-state peoples such as the Celts, Germans, and the violent nomadic peoples of the Eurasian steppe such as the Huns. In the context of the world in which they lived, Rome was no more exceptional than any other militarized state.

This book does not aim to settle the argument over the justice or injustice of empires and imperial rule. That is properly the role of political philosophers and ethicists. By reviewing previous chapters, readers can make up their own minds whether Rome was justified or not in waging war as it did in Italy against the Samnites, Celts, and others, or later with the Carthaginians in the west and the

<sup>2</sup>Arthur. M. Eckstein in Craig B. Champion, *Roman Imperialism: Readings and Sources*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, 6.

powerful Hellenistic monarchies in the east. The argument presented so far in this book is that what made Rome different from the many other militarized, belligerent states of its day was not that it was more or less just or violent than others, but that it was better organized, better led, more adaptable, and had, at the time of its conquests, greater internal cohesion than its opponents. It did not, as a society, fall apart and lose its nerve when confronted with serious challenges. Its elite did not betray it as the elites of so many Greek cities betrayed their cities. The population at large lived up to its responsibilities and did not feud incessantly with the leadership. This formula won for Rome its empire. The question of its justice came later.

**JUSTICE AND IMPERIAL RULE** The case for justice was argued by the Greek Stoic philosopher, Panaetius of Rhodes, who was a member of the entourage of Scipio Aemilianus, the destroyer of Numantia and Carthage. Combining the Stoic ideal of moral duty and the old Roman concept of good faith (*fides*) and just wars, he argued that the Empire was justified only if the Romans used their strength fairly and conscientiously for the good of the people they ruled. It was to this high duty, he suggested, that Rome was called by destiny and for which it was particularly well equipped. Rome had become great through its pious observance of its duties to the gods, who in turn had repaid piety with prosperity. By divine law, good government was the due of conquered peoples. It was a theory of justice in search of practitioners.

As a people, Romans recognized that the environment in which they lived was a dangerous one; they entertained few illusions about human nature and human society. This situation, however, changed. As the level of danger from the outside declined, Rome began to lose its internal social and political balance. That the absence of fear leads to social decline is an old explanation. Sallust, a careerist ally of Julius Caesar, in attempting to explain Rome's social upheaval in the first century B.C., argued that in the past "fear of enemies preserved the good morals of the state, but once this fear was removed, the vices of prosperity, licentiousness, and arrogance rose."<sup>3</sup> He was echoing a common theme. Modern historians, as we will see, prefer different explanations.

The formula which won an Empire for Rome was poorly suited to maintaining it once it had been won. Between 133 B.C. and 31 B.C., Rome entered into a protracted period of internal disorder and civil war which nearly destroyed it. That it survived this period of chaos and was able to re-invent itself yet again is itself a commentary on the character of the Roman people. The reinvention or transformation of Rome from an agrarian republic to a world empire in the second and first centuries B.C. will be the subject of later chapters.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What were the advantages and disadvantages of Rome's geographic position in the western Mediterranean?

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<sup>3</sup>*Jugurthine War* 41

2. The Latin League conferred what rights on its member states? How did the possession of these rights allow Rome to incorporate other states into its commonwealth?
3. The sack of Rome by the Celts (Gauls) forced the Romans into making some key decisions regarding their own safety. What were these?
4. The end of the Latin League led to a complete restructuring of the Roman state. What were the new policies adopted by Rome and how did they impact Rome's future development?
5. What strategy did Rome adopt during the Samnite Wars?
6. Rome and Carthage were asymmetrical military powers. What does this mean and how did it affect the waging of war between the two powers?
7. The war with Hannibal required new strategies on the part of both Romans and Carthaginians. What were these, how were they implemented and with what success?
8. What were some of the consequences of the Hannibalic War?
9. Client-patron relations were the basis for most of Rome's foreign policies. In Greece they caused major misunderstandings which led to some disastrous wars. Discuss.
10. When do you think Rome moved from defensive imperialism to offensive imperialism? After the Latin War? During the war with Hannibal? After the destruction of Carthage and Corinth in 146 B.C.? Some other date?
11. What justification can be offered in general for imperial rule? Do you agree with it?
12. The Greek philosopher Panaetius offered a justification of Rome's Empire. What was it?