Measuring the Power of the Roman Empire

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By the age of Cicero – the point at which they began to recognize the fact that they controlled a territorial empire and could raise revenue from it – the Romans were accustomed to measure their power with criteria taken over wholesale from Greek theory. In the *De Legibus*, Cicero says simply that senators ought to know the state of the army, the treasury, the allies, friends and tributaries of Rome and the nature of the attachment of each to Rome. For Cicero this is what it was to “know the State.”¹ In these terms power is a function of income and manpower. Such a measurement, which, as we shall see, would have a long history going forward, was even then being amply employed by Gaius Caesar in his *Gallic Wars*, and had a long prior history in Greek thought. Caesar famously illustrated the power of the various Gallic and German tribes he subdued or encountered by telling his readers how many of them there were or had been. Good of the Helvetians to have produced a census document (in Greek no less) attesting to the fact that there were 368,000 of them at the beginning of their migration. There were now a mere 110,000 going home. The Suebi, the most powerful of the Germans were said (a nice concession on Caesar’s part) to have controlled one hundred districts which each furnished 1000 men to fight each year – since the same warriors only fought every other year, this meant that there were at least 200,000 of them, and there were nearly 250,000 Gauls who came to the relief of Vercingetorix (including men from tribes such as the Nervii that Caesar claimed to have annihilated in recent years).²

A conception of state power as a function of demography and money would have been familiar to any Roman aristocrat who knew (as any Roman aristocrat would have) the works of fifth-century Greek historians. This Roman might also have noted that the handling of these ideas in both Herodotus and Thucydides was considerably less simplistic than the numbers game Caesar played might imply. It was Herodotus who famously created the largest army on earth so that it could invade Greece in 480 BC, and praised the Athenians for

1 Cic. *Leg.* 3.41 with A. Dyck, *A Commentary on Cicero, De Legibus* (Ann Arbor, 2004), p. 540; C. Nicolet, *Space, Geography and Politics in the Early Roman Empire* (Ann Arbor, 1991), pp. 124 and 181–83.

2 Caes. *BG* 1.29; 4.1.3–7; 7.75 (the Nervii contribute 5,000 men).

their wise use of the silver from Laurion to build a fleet.³ At the same time, he questioned the value of calculations based purely on math, usually with the aid of Demaratus, pointing out that Greeks were tough because they were poor, and that although Xerxes had lots of *anthropoi* in his army he was rather short on *andres*. Courage, some wisdom and the aid of the Gods could overcome vast differentials in power.⁴ The Herodotean calculus of Persian power was well reflected in the Thucydidean calculation of Athenian power, in his own terms, and inserted into the thoughts of Pericles and Archidamus.⁵ But Thucydides too makes it ever so clear that the sinews of power do not make for real power if there are not exercised appropriately. Political imbecility can undermine the greatest states, moral failings are not unconnected with failures on the battlefield, and everyone needed to be aware that luck was always going to play a role in the way things worked out. The stress on money as a measure of power – something that Aristophanes was mimicking at the same time that Herodotus and Thucydides were writing – was plainly not a development of the 420s BC. The most powerful physical statement of the position was on view on the acropolis in the form of the Athenian Tribute lists, and eminently visible to any visitor to Persepolis, where the Apadana reliefs offered a vision of the Persian Empire's vast extent.⁶ In book 1 of the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle lists the five subjects of deliberative oratory as: ways and means, war and peace, national defense, imports and exports, and legislation. Under ways and means the categories that must be mastered are the state's sources of revenue, and all its expenditure with a view to identifying any part that is superfluous, or too large. Under peace and war, the categories are the extent of a state's actual and potential military strength of his country – both of his own state and of a potential rival – and whether the military power of another country is like or unlike that of his own. He should also know the history of wars his country has fought. Under the category of defense (distinct from war and peace since that category seems to be geared to wars aggressive war) are defensive force and the positions of the forts. Food supply encompasses the outlay to meet the needs of his country; the kinds of food produced domestically and imported as well

3 Hdt. 7.186 (size of Xerxes' army), 144 (Laurion).

4 Hdt. 7.211.

5 Thuc. 1.80–85; 140–144 with L. Kallet, *Money, Expense, and Naval Power in Thucydides' History* 1–5.24 (Berkeley, 1993), pp. 80–89 and 93–96.

6 D.S. Potter, "A Note on Ath. Pol. 24.3," *The American Journal of Philology* 108 (1987), 164–66; on the problem of overstated Athenian revenues see also Kallet, *Money, Expense and Naval Power*, pp. 48–51; for the ideological aspects of Persian palace decoration see P. Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire* trans. P.T. Daniels (Winona Lake, 2002), pp. 171–83.

as articles that are part of the import and export markets. Under law he needs to know his own country's history and the histories of other states.⁷

The power of Persia may have been readily on view on the Apadana reliefs, but it also raised questions about the strict applicability of a calculus based on men and money. The march of the 10,000 was taken in the early fourth century BC as revealing the actual weakness of the Persian kingdom (coincidentally just as Persian power was at its most effective in Greek politics with Persian gold shaping the terms of Common Peaces). Power could be undermined by cultural factors ranging from sexual deviance to the effect of barbaric government. Still, the historians of Alexander the Great would stress the disparity between his armies and those that he defeated in the course of the invasion of Persia. There can be little doubt either that massive Persian armies figured in Callisthenes' accounts to impress his readers or that Alexander knew full well that there were limitations on the numbers of men who could be supplied in the field. The campaign against Persia was based, in part, on recognition that there was a massive practical difference between theoretical power as measured by lists of resources and actual power on the battlefield.⁸ Armies larger than 40,000–50,000 men were impossible to sustain over long distances given the nature of pre-modern logistics. Alexander's tactics were based on the fact that his army was not significantly smaller than the army that Darius III was deploying.

Greeks, and the Persians, whom I suspect to have been their models in this, seem not to have been alone in making use of the rhetoric of military mathematic to express the concept of state power. The inscription left by Hannibal in Calabria at the end of his time in Italy suggests that Carthaginians might have expressed things in a similar way, and Polybius' observation on Italian manpower makes it plain that, in addition to the organization, both civil and military, that he described in book six, he regarded the ability to draw upon vast resources of manpower as an essential component of Roman power. The use of counting to express the vastness of victories is related to this – something well exemplified by Pompeian documents in the late sixties as well as Caesar's notorious calculation of the mayhem he achieved in Gaul. In both cases it should be noted that if someone tried to make policy on the bases of the claims that were being made, they might well be in some trouble since the numbers appear to have been quite fanciful. It was the thought that counted, but the

7 Ar. *Rhet.* 1359b-1360a.

8 Arr. *Anab.* 2.8.8; 3.11.3–6; for Callisthenes as the source for the "official tradition" at this point in Alexander's career see A.B. Bosworth, *A Historical Commentary on Arrian's History of Alexander* (Oxford, 1980), p. 31.

thought also suggested that numbers did not determine outcomes. Caesar and Pompey were subduing (or killing) people far in excess to the men in their own armies, actual military power depended upon factors such as training and the general's capacity, that corrected numerical imbalances (if it did the Romans would surely have lost).⁹

To sum up so far, by the time of Augustus there was a long tradition of measuring state power in terms of revenue and manpower, and an equally long tradition of questioning the relevance of such calculations in determining a state's actual power – that is implicit in the way that Aristotle includes economic and political factors in his list of things people have to know to be statesmen. There were always moral factors to be considered. Still, in the early empire, the measurement of state power through accounting of revenues and manpower appears to have been enshrined through the summary of state resources that Augustus prepared at the time of his death for delivery to the public at the time of his funeral. Tacitus subscribes both to the view that Roman power should be measured in terms of revenues and men – as he suggests in his description of the empire at the beginning of book four of the *Annales*, and raises questions about the long-term validity of such calculations most clearly in the *Germania* where he suggests that it is the disunity of Rome's enemies that is a blessing for the empire as its destiny presses onwards (he certainly does not think that the Germans are more numerous or wealthier).¹⁰ Given that the doctrine of the succession of kingdoms could not certainly be said to end – the one thing that one knew about other empires is that they had vanished – Romans could not be sure that the same fate would not be theirs.¹¹

9 Pol. 3.33.18 (Hannibal's inscription), 2.24 (total Roman forces in 225 BC), in my view the Roman numbers are rhetorical, for the problem of their relationship with the real world see E. Lo Cascio, "Recruitment and the Size of the Roman Population from the Third to First Century BCE," in *Debating Roman Demography*, ed. W. Scheidel (Leiden, 2001), pp. 127–33 and further discussion in n. 15 below; for Caesar's claims see Plin. *NH* 7.91–92 compare Plin. *NH* 7.97–98, and Plut. *Pomp.* 45.3 for Pompey's records; for Roman consciousness of a change of attitude towards empire in these years see L. Beness and T. Hillard, "*Rei militaris virtus...orbem terrarum parere huic imperio coegit*: The Transformation of Roman Imperium," in *A Companion to Roman Imperialism*, ed. D. Hoyos (Leiden, 2013), pp. 149–51.

10 Tac. *Ann.* 4.4.2–5.4; *Germ.* 33.2; for the meaning of this phrase see J. Rives, *Tacitus: Germania* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 258–60, though he does admit some negative association.

11 For the succession of empires J.W. Swain "The Theory of the Four Monarchies," *Classical Philology* 35 (1940), 1–21 remains important; for further bibliography and discussion of other schemes see D.S. Potter, *Prophets and Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from Augustus to Theodosius* (Cambridge, Mass., 1994), pp. 98–110 and 183–92.

Similarly, while the Romans might measure their own power with reference to Persia using the objective criteria they used for themselves, they could not do so when dealing with the northern tribes, which did not have recognizable revenue streams. Tacitus himself recognized that cultural differences played an important role in limiting the possibility for Roman expansion no matter what the imbalance in power might be. He remarks that Phraates, placed on the Parthian throne in 35 dropped dead because he was *patriis moribus impar* having spent too many years indulging in Roman luxury, and that Polemo was the preferred candidate of the Armenians to be their king because he had accustomed himself to their habits. He later notes that the Armenians were culturally inclined to favor the Parthians. Is it accidental that these passages occur in a work most likely completed after 117 AD – were they take-aways from Trajan's decision to abandon the provinces briefly established in Iraq? Possibly so, but Tacitus had written long before of the importance of "attractive" or "soft" power in securing Roman rule. He praised his father-in-law Agricola and his efforts to acclimatize the Britons to Roman ways as a key to pacifying the province in a work completed in the first part of Trajan's reign.¹²

Tacitus' attitude towards conquest reflects an internal criticism of the way that the Roman state evaluated its own power. Tacitus seems to have favoured generally expansionist behaviour – something perhaps not unconnected with his father-in-law's career in Britain – and tends to see the avoidance of expansion as a sign of imperial weakness.¹³ Appian and Cassius Dio looked at things differently. Appian noted that Antoninus Pius would not agree to impose direct rule over peoples who offered themselves to Rome if they could not pay the costs of their own governance by Rome. Dio complained that Severus' annexation of Mesopotamia was both expensive and a source of needless conflict with Persia.¹⁴ The fact was that the Roman Empire had reached what might be called natural limits in that the equation of treasure and soldiers proved extremely inelastic over time. Although the Augustan military system was long a work in progress, a rough equilibrium of men under arms as a percentage of

12 Tac. *Ann.* 6.32.2 (Phraates); *Ann.* 2.56.2 (Polemo); *Ann.* 13.34.2 (Armenians). For the issue of the date see D.S. Potter, "The Inscriptions on the Bronze Hercules from Mesene: Vollogaes IV's War with Rome and the Date of Tacitus' *Annales*," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 88 (1991), 277–90; V.E. Pagán, "Introduction," in *A Companion to Tacitus*, ed. V.E. Pagán (Oxford, 2012), p. 3. For Agricola see Tac. *Agr.* 21.2; for the concept of "soft power" see esp. J.S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York, 2004) pp. 5–18.

13 For Tacitus' views see D.S. Potter, "The Limits of Empire," in *A Companion to Roman Imperialism*, ed. Hoyos, pp. 325–27.

14 App. *Praef.* 7.26; Dio 65.3.3.

the adult male population appears to have been reached by the time of his death. The best estimate of the population of the Roman Empire in AD 14 is that there were 45,500,000 million inhabitants. At that point in time there were twenty-five legions with a theoretical strength of 5,600 men, for a total of 140,000 legionaries; the recently constituted imperial guard, stationed in Italy, numbered 10,000 men, and it is probable that there were around 170,000 soldiers serving with the *auxilia* (assuming that the ratio of 1.12:1 for auxiliaries to legionaries attested for the second century was inherited from the first century). Assuming that there were roughly 20,000 men serving with the fleets at Ravenna and Misenum, the total military establishment of the Augustan age amounted to around 340,000 men, or roughly 2.5% of the male population over the age of eighteen. In the reign of Marcus Aurelius, the best estimate is that there were around 61,000,000 inhabitants of the empire. At this point the number of legions had expanded to thirty for roughly 168,000 legionaries and roughly 200,000 auxiliaries with again, about 30,000 men serving in the guard and fleets (though, with the addition of fleets on the Rhine and Danube to those at Ravenna and Misenum, this number may be on the low side).

The military establishment under Marcus, just before the radical, if temporary, reduction in the population resulting from the great plague, exhibits a lower ratio of serving soldiers to civilians than had Augustan establishment (roughly 2% of the adult male population). The decline in the proportion of the male population under arms is unlikely to have changed the proportion of the budget attributed to the army significantly.¹⁵ Assuming that the imperial

15 Population of the empire: B.W. Frier, "Demography," in *The Cambridge Ancient History* 11, eds. A.K. Bowman, P. Garnsey, and D. Rathbone (Cambridge, Eng., 2000), 812, 814; on the methods involved see W. Scheidel, "The Roman Population: The Logic of the Debate," in *People, Land and Politics: Demographic Developments and the Transformation of Roman Italy 300 BC-AD 14*, eds. L. de Ligt and S. Northwood (Leiden, 2008), pp. 17–71; esp. 55–62 on the significance of comparative data, on which the validity of Frier's estimate depends. Estimates of proportion of soldiers to civilians (too high in my view): J.B. Campbell, *The Emperor and the Roman Army* (Oxford, 1984), p. 270; Michael Alexander Speidel, *Heer und Herrschaft im Römischen Reich der hohen Kaiserzeit*, *Mavors Roman Army Researches* 16 (Stuttgart, 2009), p. 475 (7.5% of the male population). Reasonable estimates of cost of army and proportion of the budget: MacMullen, "The Roman Emperor's Army Costs," *Latomus* 43 (1984), 571–80; R. Goldsmith, *Premodern Financial Systems* (Cambridge, Eng., 1987). R.P. Duncan-Jones, *Money and Government in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge, Eng., 1994), pp. 33–46 overstates army size by 20% and salary costs by nearly 100% (see his tables 3.1 and 3.2), uses figures for AD 200 rather than, as here, for ca. 150, and seems to me to underestimate the revenues of Rome, which Goldsmith sets at 3% of GDP. Goldsmith avoids problematic attempts at precision, as e.g. W. Scheidel and S.J. Friesen, "The size of the economy and the distribution of income in the Roman Empire," *Journal of Roman*

budget had expanded at the same rate as population – its main driver since the bulk of taxes were derived from cultivatable land and population – the cost to the treasury would have been proportionally higher than it was in AD 14 both because of the 33% percent salary increase that Domitian granted in AD 84 and because, in the course of the second century, the food and equipment for which first-century legionaries would have paid out of their salaries came to be included within their pay packages. It is perhaps a sign of the army's role in domestic politics that emperors chose to increase the compensation of their soldiers rather than their numbers. Such a decision also bespeaks a fundamental decision to limit the manpower needs of the empire; an estimate of the overall cost of army salaries under Augustus, using these figures, would put then at roughly 58% of the total budget; and 71% when retirement bonuses are figured into the mix. This is comparable to actual proportions in the itemized budget that survives from Egypt for 1595/6 where wages amount to roughly 50% of the revenues with a substantial surplus amounting to roughly 20% of revenue, which is delivered as tribute to Istanbul and the holy cities. In Elizabethan England, where again we have real numbers, military expenditures ranged from 73 to 80% of the budget, while they average just under 50% in early fifteenth century Florence (though the average is deceptive since they were much higher in wartime). Such comparative data acts as a check on speculation – if a model for Roman expenditure fell outside the parameters established by measurable budgets of other pre-modern states then the model would, in my opinion, have to go.¹⁶

Studies 99 (2009), pp. 61–91, 91 (though with results not dissimilar to Goldsmith's); he would seem to me to be supported by the empirical observation that the state could pay the increased cost of Severus' expansion and salary increase, but not Caracalla's further pay-increase: Hdn. 3.8.4; *HA Sev.* 12.2, Dio 77.9.3–4 (Severus); 78.36 (Caracalla); Dio 78.12, 78.36 on the return to pay rates under Severus which appear to have been regarded as acceptable and not requiring additional imposts on the upper classes (a sore point with Dio). In terms of the proportion of the population under arms, the estimates given, based on the "low count" should be contrasted with the proportion of the Italian population under arms during various crises of the middle and late Republic, ranging as high as 8%, a point that has been used to favor the "high count" (see E. Lo Cascio, "Recruitment," pp. 127–138 but see Scheidel "The Roman Population," pp. 39–41).

- 16 For Egypt see M. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy c.300–1450* (Cambridge, Eng. 1985), pp. 613–15; Goldsmith, *Premodern Financial Systems*, p. 91; for Elizabethan England see Goldsmith, *Premodern Financial Systems*, p. 194; for Florence see Goldsmith, *Premodern Financial Systems*, pp. 164–67; see also P. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York, 1987), p. 63 on Cromwellian expenditure.

In terms of the army's mission, Dio and Tacitus stress both defence against outside threats and deterrence of domestic unrest. In Dio's view a standing army must be stationed on the frontiers to keep enemies away, and to make sure that Rome would always have adequately trained men available in case of need. He stated that it was a good way to make use of the talents of men who might otherwise turn to brigandage. Josephus, who had reason to know, has Herod Agrippa stress the fact that no subject people could hope to resist the power of the Roman army.¹⁷ The army was a tool of both domestic and foreign policy and it appears that an imperial decision to use it on a large scale stemmed from a breakdown in normal relations.

The combination of Severus' increase in the size of the army, raising three new legions in the 190s, bringing the total number of men under arms 436,000, his increase in the compensation of the average legionary and the temporary down turn in the economy stemming from the catastrophe of the Antonine plague served to upset the balance of payments upon which the imperial system had been based from the previous two centuries. While we do not have this argument made explicitly, it does appear that there was sufficient redundancy built into the system that a shift in resources may have been sufficient to maintain the essential balance between income and expenditure in Severus' lifetime, but the subsequent increase in army pay initiated by Caracalla was problematic. That much is clear from Macrinus' effort after Caracalla's assassination to eliminate the pay increase for new recruits. His action embittered the army and contributed mightily to the success of the insurrection that placed Elagabalus on the throne. Macrinus restored the Caracallan rate of 600 denarii a year when Elagabalus' revolt began and salaries may have increased even further under Maximinus (though this is not certain).¹⁸ Signs of shifting priorities, long since recognized by Stephen Mitchell in an important study of building inscriptions from Asia Minor, show that emperors ceased spending money on public works projects in the course of the third century, and, notoriously, exploited the customary ratio of 25:1 for silver *denarii* to an *aureus* by lowering the silver content of the *denarius* and scams such as the Caracallan introduction of the *antoninianus* – a double value denarius that had less than double the silver content.¹⁹ The story of the imperial silver coinage, thanks to the splendid work of David Walker is well known and need not be rehashed here.

¹⁷ Tac. *Ann.* 4.5.1; Dio 52.27.3–4; Jos. *BJ* 2.345–404.

¹⁸ Dio 78.28.1–2; for his restoration of Caracallan pay rates see Dio 78.34.3.

¹⁹ S. Mitchell, "Imperial Building in the Eastern Roman Provinces," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 91 (1987), 333–365; D. Rathbone, "Monetisation, Not Price-Inflation, in Third-Century AD Egypt," in *Coin Finds and Coin Use in the Roman World: The Thirteenth*

For our purposes, however, what is significant is that the decline in the silver content of the coinage reflects central fiscal policy – and a long-term understanding that the budget could be kept in balance through such actions (and that the budget needed to be balanced). It appears from a tantalizing fragment of a work on coinage, written by the jurist Lucius Volusius Maecianus that the Roman state understood that the value of money was based on an act of trust equating the value of a coin with an object of merchandise that people wanted to buy.²⁰

In his justly famous account of *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*, Paul Kennedy introduced the notion of imperial overreach as the states of early modern Europe expanded their reach beyond the means to support the tasks they had taken upon themselves. In his view “wealth and power, or economic strength and military strength are always relative and should be seen as such,” and that “the differentiated pace of economic growth among the Great Powers ensures that they will go on, rising and falling, relative to each other.”²¹ The model was and is a powerful one as it had obvious applicability to the events of the later twentieth century – including one that occurred just after Kennedy wrote, that is the sudden collapse of the Soviet Union – and could be seen as exemplifying the principle that a state could remain immensely powerful (and in possession of the capacity to destroy the planet) but fail relative to other powers.²² Kennedy was able to use the data of comparative Gross Domestic product to illustrate the nature of overreach.²³

Neither Kennedy’s data nor his problems are directly relevant to the study of the Roman Empire, but the concept of relative decline is. While we can pro-

Oxford Symposium on Coinage and Monetary History, 25.27.3.1993, eds. C.E. King and D.G. Wigg (Berlin, 1996), pp. 329–33 on the tariff of gold to silver.

20 For the history of Roman silver coinage see D. Walker, *The Metrology of the Roman Silver Coinage*, BAR International Series 5, 22 and 40 (Oxford, 1976–1978). For the text of Maecianus’ *Distributio* see F. Hulstsch ed., *Metrologicorum scriptorium reliquiae* (Leipzig, 1866) with discussion in S. Cuomo, “Measures for An Emperor: Volusius Maecianus’ Monetary Pamphlet for Marcus Aurelius,” in *Ordering Knowledge in the Roman Empire*, eds. J. König and T. Whitmarsh (Cambridge, Eng., 2007), pp. 206–228.

21 Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*, pp. 536 and 537.

22 See the important review discussion (also prior to the fall of the Soviet Union) by A. Giddens, M. Mann and I. Wallerstein, “Comments on Paul Kennedy’s *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*,” *British Journal of Sociology* 40 (1989), 328–40 (the issue appeared in June of that year) and W. Woodruff, “The Rise and fall of Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000 by Paul Kennedy,” *The American Historical Review* 94 (1989), 719–21.

23 See esp. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*, pp. 55–70, 170–77 and 198–249.

duce some sort of data for the size of the empire and its balance sheet, we cannot do the same for its neighbors, with the possible exception of Persia, and, since the empire remained within steady boundaries, it is not possible to make a strong case about imperial overreach as a contributing factor to the decline of the Roman Empire. In fact it is possible to show in a number of cases that emperors avoided maximal expansion in the wake of significant victories.

The case of Marcus Aurelius' settlement with Persia after 165 is significant. Despite an overwhelming Roman victory, Marcus Aurelius made no effort to acquire significant new territory in the east, even though arguably, the kingdom of Edessa, which would be annexed by Severus, was in a position to be added to the empire with the obvious strategic benefit that accrued (despite what Dio had to say) of keeping the frontier further from the crucial area of central Syria (which had in fact been invaded by the Persians in 161). The only changes that seem to have been made were the replacement of Parthian garrisons (possibly emplaced during the attack on Syria) with Roman garrisons along the middle Euphrates.²⁴ We cannot attribute this decision to the plague, which had yet to break out. Just as significant, albeit, in our sources far more controversial, was Marcus Aurelius' policy along the Danubian frontier.

In the case of the northern frontier, the record of treaties, sixteen in all, made with various groups in the last years of the reign of Marcus Aurelius and the first years of Commodus, illustrates a preference for indirect control. The usual terms include three elements: a treaty of friendship, regulation of tribal autonomy, and a statement of the terms under which the tribe's future relationship with Rome will be carried out. Typical ingredients in the first part are a statement of the relationship, return of booty, prisoners and deserters to Rome, and the assessment of a contribution of troops to the Roman army; steps in the second part were the naming of a king by Rome, a ban on alliances with other peoples, the requirement that a Roman officer be present at meetings of the tribe, and supervision of dealings with other tribes. The definition of a tribe's future relationship with Rome can be broken down into three categories: bans on certain types of activity (settlement within a certain distance from the Danube, navigation, regulation of contacts between the tribes and the province for commerce etcetera), requirement for future contributions to Rome, and the concession that the Romans will not seek to garrison the tribe's territory. Although there is some variation in points of detail (especially concerning the extent of the land to be left empty north of the Danube), the pattern is consistent, and offers no evidence that Marcus seriously considered the

24 P. Edwell, *Between Rome and Persia: The Middle Euphrates and Palmyra under Roman Control* (London, 2008), pp. 23–6.

expansion of the empire. Several of these terms are attested as early as the Julio-Claudian period in Rome's dealings with Germanic peoples.²⁵

It was only after Marcus' death that controversy appears to have broken out over the manner in which the northern wars had ended. The *Historia Augusta* biography of Marcus asserts that "he waged war for the next three years [after his return from the east] against the Hermunduri, Sarmatians and Quadi, and, if he had lived for another year, he would have turned them into provinces," a statement that is based upon the work of Marius Maximus writing in the 220s. Similarly, and even later, Herodian places in Commodus' mouth the statement that soldiers should "set in order and strengthen our position, if you finish off the remnants of the war with all your valor, and extend the Roman Empire to the ocean." Herodian then attributes Commodus' departure for Rome to the influence of disreputable advisers, the *Historia Augusta* asserts, "he submitted to the terms of the enemy and gave up the war that his father had almost finished." Dio apparently said something similar.²⁶

Although we cannot now know Dio's source for his account of Marcus' northern wars, it seems likely that Dio drew his information from a person who composed a work specifically on those wars. The image of the vigorous conqueror might well have been a standard point of contrast for an emperor who sought peace – and have been anything but new in the late second or early third centuries, though a more generous evaluation might have drawn attention to the similarity of the new policy to the old policy of Antoninus Pius, about whom it was said that "no one had greater authority among foreign people," that he always "loved peace," and who "was venerable no less than terrible to foreign kings, so much so that many barbarian nations, putting aside arms, brought their quarrels and disputes to him, and obeyed his decrees."²⁷ In the

25 M. Stahl, "Zwischen Abgrenzung und Integration: Die Verträge der Kaiser Mark Aurel und Commodus mit den Völkern jenseits der Donau," *Chiron* 19 (1989), 289–317; P. Kovács, *Marcus Aurelius' Rain Miracle and the Marcomannic Wars* (Leiden, 2009), pp. 233–36; 246–48; 255–63 for the treaties; D.S. Potter "Empty Areas and Roman frontier Policy," *The American Journal of Philology* 113 (1992), 269–274 on earlier practice.

26 *HA Marc.* 27.10; *HA Comm.* 3.5; *Hdn.* 1.8.1–6; *Dio* 71.33.4; 72.1.3.

27 Statements about the quiescence of Pius *HA V. Ant.* 9.10; Eutrop. 8.2 might need to be rethought in light of the material noted in the next footnote for the processes resulting in the king given to the Quadi and Armenians [*RIC* 3 Antoninus n. 619–20 with W. Hüttl, *Antoninus Pius: historisch-politisch Darstellung* (Prague, 1936), p. 272; *HA V. Ant.* 9.6] may not have been entirely peaceful. For Marcus see now Kovács, *Marcus Aurelius*, 242–63; S. Dillon, "Women on the Columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius and the Visual Language of Roman Victory," in *Representations of War in Ancient Rome*, eds. S. Dillon and K. Welch (Cambridge, Eng., 2006), pp. 244–71.

second century AD. Roman emperors were content with the notion that indirect power was real power and that their power extended into areas where they did not have to bear the cost of annexation. For Tacitus the *claustra imperii* could reach to the Persian Gulf because the king of Mesene counted as a client. Recent discoveries at Harzhorn also require some rethinking about what the exercise of indirect power might look like. Non-occupation does not mean non-intervention, and from the Julio-Claudian period to the mid third century there is evidence now for substantial military intervention well beyond Roman frontiers. In AD 49, for instance, Roman troops were sent into the Crimea, and from there, even to the lands east of the Sea of Azov. The Roman troops who engaged at Harzhorn, nearly two hundred miles north of the Rhine were returning from an expedition further to the north. Observation posts and intelligence collected, well away the formal frontiers could steer expeditionary forces for which we now have no record. It would be surprising if the battle of Harzhorn had no parallels in the centuries between Claudius and Maximinus or if Maximinus should prove to have been especially innovative in his policies.²⁸

The balance of power between Rome and its neighbors was not initially disturbed by the rise of new powers. John Drinkwater's important discussion of the evolution of German tribes in contact with the Roman state shows that there is no reason to think, for instance that the Franks and the Alemanni were any different from the Cherusci who had been there before (great powers have a tendency to force their rivals into new alliances).²⁹ They may have repackaged themselves but that is really all. The Sasanians were not initially a significantly greater threat than the Arsacids who they drove out, it was Roman mismanagement that made them so, and even then we need not be blinded by the rhetoric of the *Res Gestae* of Sapor and imagine the power of Persia to have been greater than it was.³⁰ Even though it does seem clear that Sapor himself

28 Tac. *Ann.* 12.15–21 for Didius in the Crimea and beyond; for Roman contact with Clochis and Iberia see D. Braund, *Georgia in Antiquity: A History of Clochis and Transcaucasian Iberia 550 BC–AD 562* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 219–37; for Harzhorn see H. Pöppelmann, K. Deppmeyer, W.-D. Steinmetz eds., *Roms vergessener Feldzug. Die Schlacht am Harzhorn* (Darmstadt, 2013); see also *AE* 2004 n.1643 for the Roman base at Farasan off the coast of Yemen.

29 On this point see Giddens, Mann and Wallerstein, "Comments," pp. 334–35 (Mann in this instance).

30 For the Alamanni see J.F. Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome 213–496 (Caracalla to Clovis)* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 43–79; for the rise of the Sasanians see now P. Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran* (London, 2008), pp. 37–53; despite the fact that Ardashir and Sapor planted relatives in many important posts, the power structure of the Parthia confederacy

was a preternaturally able soldier, it is also clear that, even after destroying effective Roman opposition, he never attempted to operate north of the Taurus or too far south of Antioch. He appears to have realized that his own power had limits and attacked when Roman power was deployed in fashions that might be seen as less than ideal. Sapor's victory over Gordian III, deep in Mesopotamia, followed upon a campaign where Sapor had been driven out of territory he occupied during a Roman civil war. Sapor's capture of Antioch in 252 followed a year in which the Roman army was weakened through the disaster at Abrittus, and the victory over Valerian in 260 was enabled by the ineptitude of a Roman emperor who was trying to do too much. The failures on the frontiers in the 250s as a whole cannot be disconnected from failures in the Roman command structure connected with the political instability that set in with the assassination of Alexander Severus.³¹ If it shows nothing else, the career of Diocletian shows that the Roman state retained the resources, when properly coordinated, to wage successful wars on more than one front. Notably Diocletian seems to have been conscious of the cost of success in that his treaty with the Persians did not involve the acquisition of new territory.³² Even though we lack a pile of memoranda from the emperor that might prove this point directly, the evidence of Diocletian's own actions show that he was conscious of cost and wished to keep expenditure where it was. In other words, "no new troops." John Lydus' statement that his army numbered 435,266 men suggests no increase since the time of Severus.³³

External imperial overreach and relative decline, stated as an inevitable consequence of inadequate economic resources, in Kennedy's terms, cannot be shown to be workable concepts for the analysis of the Roman Empire in the third and fourth centuries. But does this mean that the Roman state was as powerful in 350 as it was in 150? The answer is no. What was decisively lost in the wake of Constantius II's coup in 337 was central direction of resource allocation. Constantius II repeatedly complained that he did not have enough men to fight the Persians; it was only Julian who could bring western troops to the east who could think of invading Persia. Valens admitted the Goths to the

remained largely intact and reasserted itself after Sapor I's death (for Ardashir and Sapor see D.S. Potter, *The Roman Empire at Bay AD 180–395* 2nd ed. (London, 2014), p. 218). For the limits of Sapor's ambitions see now M.R. Shayejin, *Arsacids and Sasanians: Political Ideology in Post Hellenistic and Late Antique Persia* (Cambridge, Eng., 2011), pp. 5–38.

31 Potter, *The Roman Empire at Bay*, pp. 230–32 and 242–53 with discussion of other scholarship.

32 For Diocletian's campaigns see D.S. Potter, *Constantine the Emperor* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 55–57 with references to other scholarship.

33 John Lyd. *De Mens.* 1.27 and, more generally, Potter, *The Roman Empire at Bay*, pp. 437–49.

empire because he wanted more soldiers without weakening his tax revenues.³⁴ These are signs that Roman emperors in the fourth century understood the importance of balancing their budgets, a concern that the Diocletianic indiction cycle also makes plain. But they are also signs that there were political constraints on their ability to do so.

The problems of the fourth-century empire present little evidence here to support the case made so eloquently by A.H.M. Jones and, in a somewhat different way, by Geoffrey de Ste. Croix, that the Roman Empire collapsed from over-taxation, excessive government exploitation, and the baleful influence of Christianity. The basic problem for Jones was that “too few producers supported too many idle mouths.” It did not help either that Christianity taught that a public career could be bad for the soul so that “the service of the state tended to be left to ambitious careerists, and Christianity thus paradoxically increased the corruption of the state.”³⁵

Jones’ analysis does resonate with Kennedy’s views of the causes of relative decline, but it cannot be shown that he was correct in his estimates of the increase in the size of the imperial government. This suggests that we might instead look at the question from a slightly different angle. The problem was not the sufficiency of the totality of the empire’s resources, but rather of resource allocation. Peter Brown has correctly noted that the Christian governments of the fourth and fifth centuries were more proactive in promoting an ideological agenda than those of earlier centuries. Brown’s point is a subtle transformation of Jones’ case, taking it for granted that there was more government, and finally that the increased professionalization of government in the sixth century destroyed local autonomy, leaving cities, now dominated by bishops and large landowners to collapse into turmoil.³⁶ He is also absolutely correct in seeing that the Christian Empire involved itself in the private affairs of its people in

34 Amm. Marc. 20.4.1–2 (Constantius and Julian) with Potter, *The Roman Empire at Bay*, pp. 457–61 and E.L. Wheeler, “The Army and the Limes in the East,” in *A Companion to the Roman Army*, ed. P. Erdkamp (Oxford, 2007), pp. 255–56 on deployments; Amm. Marc. 31.4.4 (Valens) with N. Lenski, *Failure of Empire: Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century A.D.* (Berkeley, 2002), pp. 183 (suggesting that there was a specific need for fresh troops for a projected Persian war) and 299–319.

35 A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284–602* (Oxford, 1964), pp. 1045–1064, the passages quoted are from pp. 1045 and 1063–4; see also G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (London, 1981), pp. 453–503.

36 P. Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity AD 150–750* (London, 1971), pp. 145–7 and 156–7 (professionalization of government); see also S. Mitchell, *A History of the Later Roman Empire AD 284–641* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 155–190 on the growing role of imperial government, and esp. 186–87 on connection between Roman and Christian ideals.

ways that the Pagan Empire did not, and Fergus Millar has shown that the media opened up by Church Councils were important in creating a new Greek-Roman society in the eastern Mediterranean.³⁷ This may have been a more centralized society as the expressive diversity of the early empire was channelled through narrower passages. All of these are valid points, but a state's power was still theoretically a function of its revenue and manpower, and people at this same time would say that this was insufficient. Both Romans and Persians show signs of stress. The Persians routinely demand subsidies, which they appear to have needed to protect their northern frontiers from the peoples of the steppe, and the Romans found that it was advisable to pay off a power that was militarily superior; Attila the Hun's empire. As a strategy payment was reasonable – and cost effective – as a symbolic act it was deeply embarrassing, it weakened an empire's power of attraction by advertising military incapacity. That is why Roman ambassadors tried to claim that the money they gave Attila were actually his salary as *magister utriusque militiae* or fixed treaty terms with Persia so as to avoid annual payments that might appear to be tribute.³⁸

Insufficiency tended, in a long tradition of classical thought, to be defined in moral terms, and if we want to see how an ancient state measured its own power I suggest that we need to go beyond the simple equation of treasure + men = potential for destruction, to look at points where there may have been a concurrent fascination with widespread moral improvement.

The point that despite its power, there was at the very core of its being something wrong with the Roman state informs the rhetoric of Tiberius Gracchus in 133 BC; a few years later Polybius would adduce the notion that Roman power, whose expansion he had so admirably chronicled, was now morally challenged and Rome might be on the verge of losing its power.³⁹ Moral regeneration at home was concomitant with imperial expansion in the Augustan Age; afterwards emperors tended to give moral rectification something of a rest save at

37 F.G. Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief under Theodosius II 408–450* (Berkeley, 2006), pp. 192–234.

38 Priscus fr. 15, 2 (Blockley), Exc. 12 (Carolla) (Attila describes payments as tribute); fr. 11.2 (Blockley) Exc. 8. 145 (Carolla) (the offices “conceals” the tribute); Procop. *Bell.* 8.15.6 (outright payment to avoid the appearance of tribute); for the payments as a strategy see E. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge, Mass., 2009), pp. 49–56.

39 Plut. *Gracch.* 8.3; for Polybius see F.W. Walbank, “The Idea of Decline in Polybius,” in *Niedergang: Studien zu einem geschichtlichen Thema*, eds. S. Koselleck and P. Widmer (Stuttgart, 1980), pp. 41–58 = F. W Walbank, *Polybius, Rome and the Hellenistic World* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 193–211.

moments of grave scandal that is until the third century. Decius' edict on sacrifices, Valerian's persecution edict and sundry actions of the Tetrarchs – e.g. the edict forbidding brother-sister marriage, the response to the Manicheans, the tendentious prose of the Price-Edict's preface and the persecution edicts of 303 all fall within a pattern of Roman self-doubt. Constantius' micro-management of religious activity in the decades after Constantine died is perhaps what was to be expected of an emperor who was not powerful enough to ensure the security of his eastern border when he could not draw upon the resources of the western empire. The Zoroastrian extremism of the Sasanian regime strikes a similar cord as the revolutionary regime sought to justify its grasp on power.⁴⁰ The evidence Peter Brown adduces for the increased proactivity of the Late Roman government may be the best evidence for the government's perception of its own weakness.

Recent work on the quantification of the Roman Empire's economy has revealed, perhaps more clearly than we could have expected, the limitation of any effort at quantification.⁴¹ We can see signs of increased mechanization – e.g. the use of water wheels to grind grain – but we cannot know what actual impact this had on the economy of the empire as a whole, by what percentage did it increase economic output, we cannot measure efficiencies of scale or increase of output unrelated to changes in population. Confronted with evidence for archaeological economic expansion on the limestone massif south of Antioch we cannot know what impact this had on the overall power of the Roman Empire, and we have to wonder whether the plague put an end to this expansion in the middle of the sixth century. Indeed, the bubonic plague may have had a decisive impact on both Rome and Persia, for neither, it seems, could afford the military forces of earlier times. If we wish some estimate of the plague's overall impact, the answer may be provided by Tabari's account of the trial of Chosroes II after his deposition in 628, which, as James Howard-Johnston has convincingly show, reflects a late Sasanian history, *The Book of Lords*.⁴² The Roman victories at the root of the political chaos were the result

40 For the ostensible significance of Zoroastrianism in Sasanian ideology see now M.P. Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of Kingship Between Rome and Sasanian Iran* (Berkeley, 2009), pp. 102–4, though see also Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall*, pp. 321–95 esp. 324–34 and 347–50 showing that the actual situation was far more contested.

41 A.K. Bowman and A. Wilson, "Quantifying the Roman Economy: Integration, Growth, Decline?," in *Quantifying the Roman Economy: Methods and Problems*, eds. A.K. Bowman and A. Wilson (Oxford, 2009), pp. 3–84.

42 For the plague see esp. H. Kennedy, "The Justinianic Plague in Syria and the Archaeological Evidence," in *Plague and the End of Antiquity: The Pandemic of 541–750*, ed. L. Little (Cambridge, 2007) pp. 87–95; P. Sarris, "Bubonic Plague in Byzantium," *The Plague and the*

of extraordinary miscalculations on the Sasanian side, but they seem not to have been the only factor in the crisis of this year. At his trial the king (who, unsurprisingly, was executed in the aftermath) was accused of the murder of his predecessor (true), the ill-treatment of his sons, brutality, lack of affection towards his harem, treacherous behavior and:

[Fifth] What you have inflicted on your subjects generally in levying the land tax and in treating them with harshness and violence. [Sixth,] your amassing a great amount of wealth, which you exacted from the people with great brutality so that you drove them to consider your rule hateful and thereby brought them into affliction and deprivation. [Seventh] your stationing the troops for long periods along the frontiers with the Byzantines and on other frontiers, thereby separating them from their families (al-Tabari p. 1047 Nöldeke tr. Bosworth).

There is no obvious reason to believe that taxation was not in fact a serious issue, for Chosroes' successor promptly repealed some of the taxes that Chosroes had imposed, and while it is possible that the charge that Chosroes hoarded his wealth may have some validity – in his defense Chosroes does say that only a fool does not realize that a king maintains his authority through wealth and armies – the fact of these charges suggests that although having taken possession of Syria, Osrhoene and Egypt, Chosroes was unable to extract sufficient surplus from these lands to fund war and avoid alienating his subjects.⁴³ In Roman lands it is apparent that he retained the Roman tax system and many of the collectors who had been in post at the time of the conquest. A reasonable conclusion is that the surplus generated by these lands was insufficient to support the costs of aggressive warfare.

Greg Woolf has recently helped us see the change from the Republic to the Empire in terms of the history of empire, arguing (completely coherently) that what we saw in the Republic was a classic conquest state that passed through

End of Antiquity ed. L.K. Little (Cambridge, 2007) pp. 119–32; for Tabari see J. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 367–68.

43 For Sasanian use of Roman institutions see C. Foss, "Syria in Transition: An Archaeological Approach," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51 (1997), 189–269; for the revenue issues see D.S. Potter, "Cities in the Eastern Roman Empire from Constantine to Heraclius," in *Archaeology and the Cities of Asia Minor in Late Antiquity*, eds. O. Dally and C. Ratté (Ann Arbor, 2011), p. 259; for the overall circumstances see Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall*, pp. 149–60 who unpacks factional disputes within the Sasanian regime.

the fire and sword of its self-generated chaos to become a tributary empire.⁴⁴ The initial Roman version of a tributary empire was one in which individual people retained the right to choose how they would interact with their Roman overlords. So long as taxes were paid and violence abated, people retained considerable discretion in their personal lives (e.g. Egyptians siblings could marry each other). But the available surplus remained in a relatively stable state for centuries; ancient states were limited by technology in the extent to which they could systematize and enhance productivity, and this is something that it seems the emperors of Rome understood. Likewise they seem to have understood economies of scale, that the army at their disposal could strike with overwhelming force on any one frontier, but an army that could do more than that could not be afforded if emperors were to meet other priorities such as rewarding subjects who behaved well, or feeding the people of Rome. The permanent division of the empire after Constantine's death was an act of political rather than economic policy, but the effect was to eliminate certain efficiencies and economies in the disposition of force that had been commonplace in earlier eras. The western empire could not withstand barbarian invasions on two fronts by the beginning of the fifth century, and the eastern empire could do no better with its Persian rivals than hope for a draw (Attila was another matter). The Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon are phenomena of a weakened state. In the sixth century, the bubonic plague played havoc with earlier systems of finance based on the notion of a stable population, but that was not, in and of itself, enough to be a decisive factor in the end of either the Roman or Persian Empire. Both of the great powers suffered from the plague; the fact that Persia fought a war that the diminished resources of both sides could not support was a political decision. Internal politics lie at the heart of the problem.

What is striking about the Roman experience is that there is evidence to show both that the Romans understood the physical limitations on imperial power. But they could not, over time, avoid what Tacitus could also have described as the driving force of empire – the tendency for internal politics to develop an internal logic that undermined the functionality of the enterprise. The division of the empire after Constantine's death was the result of dynastic policy. We do not know what Constantine hoped would happen, but he had long ruled on the basis of large regional prefectures that were coming to take on lives of their own. He may not have intended for the empire to be divided into three antagonistic parts (in fact it is obvious that he did not – he was looking to have it divided into four parts with a weakened or ruined Persia across the border). His vision appears to have been to recreate the collaborative

44 G. Woolf, *Rome: An Empire's Story* (Oxford, 2012), 184–199.

administration of the tetrarchy in which he had grown up. Richard Burgess has tracked the stages in which that vision collapsed during the months after Constantine's death in May 337, and all I have to add to that analysis is the simple observation that Constantius II, the prime beneficiary from what happened, is unlikely to have been the prime mover of the coup that split the empire into three parts; he was twenty at the time and responsibility more likely lies with members of the court who were tired of waiting for the veterans of Constantine's years to give way and had their own vision of the future, in which Constantine's sons were given an opportunity to share.⁴⁵ If as I suspect he did, Constantine envisioned a return to the tetrarchic style of Diocletian, his officials preferred that of the age of Galerius, which concentrated power in regional offices, which I strongly doubt Constantine was interested in authorizing. Difficult he may have been to live with, but there is no reason to believe that he wished a fratricidal civil war to break out in the years after his death.

The division of the empire in 337, which was never really reversed, was not the result of rational policy considerations, of a decision that the state would run better if the efficiencies in the distribution of resources enabled by imperial unity was restricted. The empire's division was a function of domestic politics, driven by the perceived self-interest of long-serving officials who had no interest in answering to a distant authority. That is no more a feature of ancient empires than of modern super powers.

Overall, the consistency in the way ancient authors measured the strength of their states resonates with contemporary thinking not simply in tone, but also in impact. Knowing what was possible or wise did not guarantee that a course, either wise or well-informed would necessarily be followed. It is not always obvious that short-term advantage is just that, or that the solution to an immediate need would not clash with long-term goals. Xerxes would have derived minimal benefit from the conquest of Greece, just as it is not self-evident that Valens' best choice was to fight the war with Persia for which he hoped to

45 R. Burgess, "Summer of Blood: The Great Massacre of 337 and the Promotion of the Sons of Constantine," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 62 (2008), 5–51; Potter, *Constantine the Emperor*, 292–3; Lenski, *Failure*, 308–9 on the military consequences. Connected with this is the issue of efficiency in the deployment of available resources; J. Howard-Johnston, "The Two Great Powers in Late Antiquity: A Comparison," in *The Byzantine and Islamic Near East*, eds. Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad (Princeton, N.J., 1992), pp. 57–226 suggests that the Sasanian state was likely more efficient in the extraction of resources from its people and mustered forces that were on a par with Roman armies though Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall*, pp. 33–160 (esp. 84–5) shows that generalization is unwise given the instability of the Sasanian regime. See also Mitchell, *A History of the Later Roman Empire*, pp. 166–67 on actual army sizes in the sixth century.

use the Goths whom he allowed across the Danube. That is why the rise and fall of Great Powers cannot be reduced to a simple equation.

Perhaps the most important perspective that can be gained from *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers* is on the extraordinary stability achieved by Rome as opposed to other great powers. While we see “Great Power” effects such as the stimulation of new forms of political organization and the development of socio-economic elites around the political/military center, we may also come to question the concept of the “great power” in modern terms. Kennedy’s Great Powers emerged in conflict with each other, but no power, not even England in the nineteenth century or the United States in the second half of the twentieth century, achieved the relative dominance over its neighbours that the Roman Empire achieved. The most significant changes within the Roman Empire in the first century BC (the emergence of the monarchy) or the third and fourth centuries AD (the move from a monarchy to collegial government, shift in the capital and change in religion) arose from internal causes. Rome’s stability arguably arose from precisely the modes of thought discussed in this paper; the tendency to weigh power in quantifiable terms had the effect of limiting rather than encouraging expansion in the imperial period. Perhaps was the most important lesson of the late Republic was the destabilizing effect of aggression. It was another great historian – Cornelius Tacitus – who observed that the monarchy was inherently hostile to expansionism.⁴⁶ He felt this was opposed to the traditions of Rome’s Republican past. In that he was right.

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46 Tac. *Ann.* 4.32–33 and, on the restructuring of the memory of the Republic A.M. Gowing, *Empire and Memory: The Representation of the Roman Republic in Imperial Culture* (Cambridge, Eng., 2005); see also J.S. Nye, *The Future of Power* (New York, 2011), p. xv.

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