

Honor and the Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire

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Abstract

Roman grand strategy has been a controversial topic. Some scholars believe it did not exist while others disagree on its scope and form. One aspect surprisingly absent from this discussion is the Roman perspective. Scholars have been quick to dismiss the ancient sources as having nothing of value to contribute to the debate. However, the sources do have important information concerning Roman strategy. The purpose of this thesis is to examine what concerns and values may have influenced strategy for the Romans. A study of Roman accounts of warfare in the early imperial period (30 B.C. to A.D. 68) demonstrates that honor played a key role in foreign policy and strategic decisions. Honor played a major role in Roman society and as such it is hardly surprising it also influenced strategy. This thesis presents an analysis of the various ways in which honor played a role in strategy in the ancient narratives, culminating in a case study examining how honor influenced events surrounding the Battle of Teutoburg Forest. Only when we understand how the Romans themselves conceptualized strategy can we truly discern what Roman grand strategy may have been.

La grande stratégie romaine a été un sujet controversé. Certains académiciens pensent qu'elle n'existait pas alors que d'autres sont en désaccord sur sa portée et sa forme. Un aspect étonnamment absent de cette discussion est la perspective romaine. Les académiciens ont été prompts à rejeter les sources anciennes comme ayant peu de valeur pour contribuer au débat. Cependant, ces sources disposent d'informations importantes concernant la stratégie romaine. Le but de cette thèse est d'examiner l'influence que les préoccupations et les valeurs romaines peuvent avoir eu sur la stratégie. Une étude des comptes rendus des guerres romaines pendant le début de la période impériale (30 av. J.-C. à 68 après J.-C.) démontre que l'honneur a joué un rôle clé dans la politique étrangère et la prise de décisions stratégiques. L'honneur occupait une place importante dans la société romaine et en tant que tel il est peu surprenant qu'il a également influencé la stratégie. Cette thèse présente une analyse des différentes façons dont l'honneur a impacté la stratégie dans les récits anciens, et culmine par une étude de cas examinant comment l'honneur a influencé les événements entourant la bataille de la forêt de Teutoburg. Seulement quand nous comprenons comment les Romains eux-mêmes conceptualisaient la stratégie pouvons-nous discerner vraiment ce que la grande stratégie romaine peut avoir été.

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Introduction

In A.D. 9 the Roman army suffered a terrible defeat at the Battle of Teutoburg Forest, which had an impact on the Roman empire that was felt for centuries. The Roman response to this tragedy was immediate, as several legions were sent to Germany to avenge the defeat. At least that is what the historian Tacitus claims in his *Annals*: “[the war was] more to destroy the shame caused by Quintilius Varus and his army than a desire to extend the empire or for a worthy prize.” (1.3) This statement implies that the Romans had some broad strategic thinking which in this case was influenced by the need to defend their honor. It seems surprising that Roman strategy was driven by seemingly irrational concerns of honor, shame, and reputation. Yet examination of Roman sources leads us to believe that honor represented a major consideration for foreign policy. This thesis will consider how honor influenced strategy and the implications this had on broader strategic thinking. It will argue that honor influenced Roman strategy in various ways, including not only smaller scale tactical decisions but also large scale declarations of war.

Whether or not Roman foreign policy and strategic decisions were informed by larger strategic concerns has polarized scholars for decades. Some believe the Romans had a comprehensive strategy while others believe they had no strategy at all. This debate hinges on the complex idea that is grand strategy. Grand strategy can be most simply defined as the means by which a state achieves its goals. Definitions of grand strategy often cite the control of the state over its resources and its ability to use those resources for its own ends.¹ Grand strategy, by virtue of its all encompassing nature, must also deal with peacetime as well as war. Thus,

¹ Paul Kennedy, "Grand Strategy in War and Peace: Toward a Broader Definition." Kennedy, Paul. *Grand Strategy in War and Peace*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991, 2-3.

definitions also include ideas of the policies employed to ensure long-term interests not just tactical maneuvers.² When discussing Roman grand strategy modern definitions simply do not apply. Roman leaders did not have the ability to fully control the vast empire nor did they have the apparatus to enforce complicated policies. They also lacked the geographic knowledge and the communication network to make informed decisions in real time. The more simplified definitions which rely on policy and resources are more suitable to the Roman context. This then becomes the framework for how we should consider Roman grand strategy.

Another major challenge when studying grand strategy is the scarcity of evidence. There is little explicit primary source information, forcing scholars to study grand strategy by examining what the Romans did or failed to do. This approach however, suffers from modern bias. In particular, scholars try to impose modern rationale and assume Roman foreign policy was dictated by the same concerns we have today. As a result, they tend to ignore what the ancient sources say about imperial strategy and impose their own logic on Roman behaviour. These two significant challenges have shaped the grand strategy debate and have led to different views on Roman grand strategy.

This thesis will examine Roman foreign policy and strategy during the early imperial period. This thesis will not attempt to cover all of Roman history but rather focus on the period from Octavian's (later Augustus') victory at Actium (31 B.C.) to the death of Nero (A.D. 68). Further study into this topic will necessarily require examination of broader periods of history however the Julio-Claudian period is ideal for an initial study of the relationship between honor and strategy. The centralization of power under the emperors during this period as well as the relative longevity of their reigns allows for modern scholars to discern patterns in foreign policy

² Kennedy, 5.

that may indicate a coherent strategy. Finally, and most importantly, the wealth and the uniqueness of the source material for the Julio-Claudian period allows for a more comprehensive analysis of imperial motives and strategic thinking than in other periods of Roman history. Once patterns of policy, strategy, and imperial motives have been identified in the Julio-Claudian period it may be possible to examine other periods of Roman history in a similar manner.

A detailed review of the major primary sources of the early principate makes it possible to remedy one of the main problems with previous scholarly discussions of grand strategy. The lack of explicit or 'rational' source information has been highlighted as a problem in several discussions on grand strategy. Yet, while explicit references may be rare, it is possible to use the sources in a meaningful way. The ancient sources frequently mention honor as a key motivator for Roman decisions concerning war. Restoring honor is specifically mentioned as justification to go to war and the success of a campaign is often discussed in terms of the honor accrued during the campaign. Rather than dismiss discussions of honor as justifications for strategic decision making, I argue these references are crucial to understanding how the Romans themselves may have conceptualized grand strategy. Honor played a key role in Roman society, especially among the aristocracy, and individual aristocrats felt intense pressure to increase their own honor, that of their families, as well as that of the Roman state. By taking into account ideology and values as well as strategic concerns, it is thus possible to infer what grand strategy may have been in the Roman empire. Surprisingly, the relationship between honor and strategy has been absent from the scholarly debate surrounding Roman grand strategy. While it is unlikely Roman grand strategy was purely driven by concerns about honor it should nevertheless be considered in any attempt to study it.

Lastly, it is not the intention of this thesis to present a comprehensive definition of grand strategy for all of Roman history or even for the Julio-Claudian period. Rather its intent is to demonstrate the importance of honor in Roman strategic decision making and to introduce this important but overlooked facet of Roman grand strategy into the on-going scholarly discussion.

This thesis is divided into four parts. The first chapter examines the debate surrounding Roman grand strategy, a discussion on what honor meant to the Romans and its role in Roman society, and an analysis of the ancient sources that cover the early imperial period. The second chapter examines the honor of Rome as it relates to all of its people not just the individual leaders and commanders to determine the various ways the honor of the empire as an abstract concept influenced strategy. It explores smaller scale strategic decisions, such as tactics and negotiations, as well as broader strategic decisions. The third chapter examines the individual honor of the emperor in order to emphasize the role it played in strategic decisions and foreign policy. Finally, the fourth chapter is a case study of the Battle of Teutoburg Forest and the campaigns that followed. This case study demonstrates the concepts discussed in chapters two and three centered around one event in order to better assess the various ways strategic decisions were driven by honor.

Chapter 1: Approaching Roman Grand Strategy

The subject of Roman grand strategy is understandably complex and as such it is necessary to first cover the background material. This chapter examines the facets of Roman grand strategy that are central to the analysis presented in this thesis. The first section outlines the debate surrounding Roman grand strategy and the different approaches scholars have taken when studying it. The second section examines the sources from early imperial period that are studied in this thesis in order to better understand their strengths and weaknesses and to demonstrate how they will be utilized in this analysis. The third section considers what honor meant to the Romans and the role it played in Roman society in order to demonstrate its significance and how it came to play such an important role in strategy. The final section outlines the methods used in this thesis to demonstrate that honor heavily influenced Roman strategy.

1.1 The Grand Strategy Debate

The seminal work in the debate concerning Roman grand strategy was Edward Luttwak's *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire* in 1976.³ Luttwak approached the problem as a military analyst and noted several patterns in Roman behavior in frontier regions. He claimed that this showed conscious policy decision-making by the emperors and jumpstarted the concept of a Roman grand strategy. Luttwak centered his analysis of Roman grand strategy on the first three centuries A.D. He did not claim that there was one overarching grand strategy for all of Roman history but rather argued that the grand strategy changed over time to suit the needs of the empire

³ Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

as it evolved. He believed there were three distinct imperial periods each with its own grand strategy. The first is the Julio-Claudian system, which covered the first hundred years of the imperial period (from around 30 B.C. to Nero's death in 68 A.D.). The next was from the Flavian emperors to the Severi which ended with Commodus' death in 192. The final period he called "The Crisis of the Third Century" which he ends around the time that the tetrarchy split the empire and the reign of Constantine the Great. For the purpose of this thesis the period Luttwak identified as the Julio-Claudian system is most relevant.

According to Luttwak, the Julio-Claudian period was characterized by a less expansionist grand strategy. After the death of Augustus in 14 A.D. the size of the empire changed little. Luttwak claims this was a conscious effort on the part of the successive emperors to uphold a strategy laid out by Augustus after his death.⁴ This assessment is based on a famous passage in Tacitus's *Annals* (1.11) in which Augustus warned Tiberius not to further expand the empire.⁵ In Luttwak's analysis the emperors who followed Augustus chose not to expand the empire unless it was necessary or cost effective. Instead, they relied on a series of client kingdoms as 'buffer states' between hostile forces and the empire. Luttwak refers to this as hegemonic influence rather than direct rule as the client kingdoms remained semi-autonomous.⁶ In Luttwak's analysis

⁴ Luttwak, 12.

⁵ This statement in Tacitus is one of the only pieces of source information cited by modern scholars. However, it is incongruous with Tacitus' larger narrative and the strategy laid out does not seem to have been employed by the Romans. This thesis discusses other source information is more relevant to discussions about Roman strategy. Josiah Ober's "Tiberius and the Political Testament of Augustus" (*Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* (1982): 306-328.) highlights just how incongruous this statement in Tacitus is with the reality of imperial Rome. He demonstrates that there is little evidence that Augustus' policy was every official or simply a claim made later by Tiberius (312, 326-326). He also discusses how Augustus himself did not follow this policy and was planning campaigns until he died (325). Augustus also chose successors who were strong military commanders further emphasizing the desire for future conquest (325). Ober suggests that Augustus may have felt more concern about expansion as a result of the Teutoburg disaster but he had also laid out plans for retaliation before his death (318-319).

⁶ Luttwak, 20.

client kingdoms varied in form and dependence on the Romans. Some of these kingdoms, like Pontus, Commagene or Judea, were well established states with rulers who had made alliances of mutual protection with Rome. Others were states whose rulers held power as a result of Roman patronage, like Mauretania or Armenia. In the west they formed alliances with local tribes rather than urbanized states. According to Luttwak these client kingdoms, despite their differences, served largely the same purpose and thus can be described as part of one grand strategy.

Luttwak often uses the term “economy of force” to describe this system. A system with a effective economy of force is one that has the ability to use force but does not need to use it all the time. As Luttwak describes it, power from potential force (i.e. perceived threat) does not require active involvement and is not depleted when it is used.⁷ This system allowed the Romans to focus their attention on more vulnerable frontiers while the client kingdoms, coerced by the potential power of the Romans, protected the others. These states eliminated the need for permanent perimeter defenses which would have been cost prohibitive. They were particularly useful for dealing with what Luttwak describes as “low-intensity threats” which could be dealt with by small local forces freeing up the actual legions to deal with serious threats and conquest. They also provided valuable troops to the auxilia which in turn increased the forces at Rome’s disposal.

According to Luttwak, this system remained largely unchanged throughout the Julio-Claudian period. Luttwak points to this as proof for the concept of grand strategy. The fact that the ‘standard operating procedures’ of foreign policy remained stable despite a series of arguably unstable emperors appears to demonstrate that this was a conscious effort on behalf of those in command. A significant exception to this is Claudius’ invasion of Britain which increased direct

⁷ Luttwak, 33.

Roman control into hostile territory and expended a large amount of direct force.⁸ Yet despite this invasion, Claudius maintained the system everywhere else in the empire even leaving in power client kings appointed by Caligula. In fact, Luttwak argues that this was the ultimate goal of the Julio-Claudian strategy: to free up forces for further expansion.⁹ This did, however, limit the areas available to Roman expansion. If the Romans wished to increase their territory and direct influence they would first need to conquer their allies and thus lose the important buffer regions.¹⁰

Almost immediately Luttwak's work was criticized by other scholars. While some scholars scoff at the idea of a conscious grand strategy developed by the Roman emperors, the patterns seen by Luttwak supported by actual evidence on the frontiers do not appear to be completely random or unstructured. In fact, more recent work has investigated the notion that while the Roman grand strategy may not have been as comprehensive as Luttwak described, frontier policy was likely not completely ad hoc. Neither alternative is without its issues and, because of this, the debate surrounding Roman grand strategy is still active. Benjamin Isaac presents the most vicious critique of Luttwak's work. He claims that any attempt to study grand strategy in a Roman context is simply modern arrogance born from a lack of information.¹¹ Isaac claims that defense was almost an accident that occurred when the Romans could advance no further. The Roman army was not sophisticated enough nor is there any evidence that the

⁸ Claudius' invasion of Britain is an important case when looking at Roman grand strategy in this period since it is the only major territorial conquest the Romans made in the early principate. Luttwak dismisses this as rare deviation from a larger strategy, however in Chapter 3 I maintain that this conquest is indicative of Roman strategy rather than a departure.

⁹ Luttwak, 50.

¹⁰ The other two phases identified by Luttwak are not relevant to this thesis.

¹¹ Benjamin Isaac, *The Limits of Empire: The Roman Army in the East* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 375.

emperors thought in terms of long term goals. Any attempt to describe the theoretical workings of the empire can only be a thought exercise as it can never really be proven.

Isaac cuts deep into the serious flaws of Luttwak's work. He highlights the lack of literary evidence but also the assumption made by Luttwak that even when the motives for conquest and frontier defense are stated there is some deeper underlying motive.¹² Another major flaw is Luttwak's apparent lack of knowledge of Roman society and how it functioned. Isaac indicates that many of the ideas presented by Luttwak demonstrate little understanding of genuine Roman concerns. For example, Isaac points out that money, plunder, and veteran pay were immensely powerful motivators in Roman conquest but they are hardly mentioned in Luttwak's work.¹³ Isaac also critiques the idea concerning conscious versus unconscious strategic thinking.¹⁴ Luttwak assumes that grand strategy was consciously enforced by the imperial legions however as Isaac notes even modern generals rarely know the scope of a strategic decision while a conflict is being fought.

Fergus Millar takes a more moderate approach, though he too criticizes Luttwak's thesis for its lack of literary evidence. Millar points out the lack of bureaucracy needed to plan and execute some kind of grand strategy.¹⁵ He indicates that there is no record of any kind of strategic planning or advising body for frontier affairs.¹⁶ While, the senate could have performed this role during the republic, the more centralized principate eliminated any such body. In fact, there are records of other advisory bodies, or at least positions, but nothing that could have hinted that broad strategic planning was taking place with any kind of consistency. Millar points

¹² Isaac, 375.

¹³ Isaac, 381.

¹⁴ Isaac, 378.

¹⁵ Fergus Millar, "Emperors, Frontiers and Foreign Relations: 31 B.C. to A.D. 378," *Brittania*, 1982: 1-23.

¹⁶ Millar, "Emperors, Frontiers and Foreign Relations: 31 B.C. to A.D. 378," 6.

out there is evidence that even when advice on frontier policy was provided by members of the imperial inner circle there was no assurance it would be heeded.¹⁷ Moreover some sources seem to show that emperors were often directly involved in policy decisions, which means any advisory body that could have aided in strategic planning and implementation would have been unable to act with any consistency from one reign to the next.¹⁸ This seems to prove that frontier policy decisions were not made in advance in accordance with a coherent grand strategy but rather in reaction to immediate events. The changing desires of the emperors along with a lack of consistent bureaucracy meant that while some strategy may have been employed it did not resemble the grand strategy laid out by Luttwak.

J. C. Mann is also highly critical of Luttwak's work.¹⁹ To begin with, he believed the time period represented in Luttwak's work was inadequate. As he points out, the relatively brief period Luttwak focuses on is one of rare stability.²⁰ The republic and late empire are ignored almost entirely. This is valid criticism that has been voiced by several other authors. Mann also attacks one of Luttwak's central premises, Augustus' advice to Tiberius as reported by Tacitus' *Annals* (1.11). This appears to be direct proof of a grand strategy but, as Mann describes, it was largely inconsistent with Tacitus' other statements on expansion.²¹ Indeed, although Luttwak stresses that the Romans were primarily concerned with defense during the principate, Tacitus and other sources for the imperial period suggest that Roman expansionist ideology was as strong if not stronger than during the republican period. Mann demonstrates that imperial propaganda well into the third and fourth centuries still included the idea that Rome was on the

¹⁷ Millar, "Emperors, Frontiers and Foreign Relations: 31 B.C. to A.D. 378," 5.

¹⁸ Millar, "Emperors, Frontiers and Foreign Relations: 31 B.C. to A.D. 378," 9.

¹⁹ Mann, "Power, Forces and the Frontiers of the Empire," *Journal of Roman Studies*, 1979: 175-183.

²⁰ Mann, "Power, Forces and the Frontiers of the Empire," 176.

²¹ Mann, "Power, Forces and the Frontiers of the Empire," 176.

offensive.²² Thus it would be odd for the Romans to actively develop a grand strategy that called for halt to major expansion as outlined by Luttwak's analysis.

Susan Mattern focused on Roman decision making, noting especially the overall lack of knowledge and experience possessed by those who made policy decisions.²³ Roman emperors, with a few notable exceptions, were actively involved in policy and decision making, yet, neither emperors nor their advisors had any formal military education and few had military experience. There were no regional experts to help deal with the vastly different territories of the Roman Empire.²⁴ As a result, complex strategic thinking reinforced by the actual circumstances on the frontier would have been nearly impossible. Roman knowledge of geography was also severely limited. Whereas Luttwak relies on the assumption that the Romans had a good understanding of what the empire looked like and also what lay beyond its borders, Mattern demonstrates that this was not the case. Often the Romans went into hostile territory with little or no geographic knowledge.²⁵ This means that a conscious push towards natural frontiers was unlikely. It is more likely that the Romans thought they were close to conquering the whole world which would have influenced their ideology of expansion.

Not all scholars reject the idea of Roman grand strategy, although they remain critical of the strategy presented by Luttwak. For example, C. R. Whittaker admits that the patterns identified by Luttwak are indeed hard to ignore and that Roman ideology could have supported some kind of grand strategy.²⁶ According to Whittaker, the Romans certainly had defensive

²² Mann, "Power, Forces and the Frontiers of the Empire," 179.

²³ Susan P. Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy: Imperial Strategy in the Principate* (Berkley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999).

²⁴ Mattern, 18.

²⁵ Mattern, 38.

²⁶ C. R. Whittaker, *Rome and its Frontiers: The Dynamics of Empire* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).

plans, including long term goals as well as a concept of some of the resources available to them, all of which are elements of strategic thinking.²⁷ Nevertheless, Roman foreign policy was dominated by a never-ending desire for war as well as the short term goals of the individual emperors. For Whittaker, Roman emperors were driven by ideology rather than any consistent grand strategy.

Arthur Ferrill argues that Rome would have needed some kind of grand strategy as long as they maintained a standing army in order to guide and control the legions in the field.²⁸ Ferrill rejects the idea that Rome was mainly concerned with expansion. As he puts it, the Romans may have started out trying to conquer the whole world however when faced with the enormity of the task they likely settled for "...the part of the world that was worth conquering."²⁹ Ferrill allows that the Romans knew exactly where their strength lay and thus tailored a largely defensive grand strategy to those advantages which he calls "defense in exterior depth" strategy.³⁰ Ferrill suggests that Roman grand strategy must have been flexible enough to allow for regional differences.³¹ Strategic goals were the same across the empire but the means by which these goals were achieved could vary. While this idea addresses the scope of the Roman empire as well as the limitations of those in command it does undermine the underlying premise of grand strategy.

Finally, Kimberly Kagan has recently revived the debate about grand strategy.³² While she is critical of Luttwak's approach and conclusions, she argues that scholars have been too

²⁷ Whittaker, 34.

²⁸ Arthur Ferrill, "The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire," in *Grand Strategies in War and Peace*, 71-86 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991).

²⁹ Ferrill, 74.

³⁰ Ferrill, 75.

³¹ Ferrill, 79.

³² Kimberly Kagan, "Redefining Roman Grand Strategy," *The Journal of Military History*, 2006: 333-362.

quick to dismiss the idea that Roman foreign policy was driven by a grand strategy. She argues that we should focus our attention on information that is readily available, in particular troop movements, military expenditures and resources.³³ Kagan also reformulates the debate by rejecting the notion that grand strategy must be characterized by policies that remain in place for hundreds of years.³⁴ Accordingly, grand strategy should be defined by goals rather than scope - “Grand strategy is the use of all of the state’s resources to achieve all of the state’s major security objectives.”³⁵ This definition provides the framework for a Roman grand strategy that is applicable to the ancient world. The Romans certainly had the ability to determine major security objectives and use the resources of the empire to achieve those objectives. This definition does not require an inflated bureaucracy or complex knowledge of geography. The only requirement is an objective that can be passed from emperor to emperor. Kagan’s reassessment of Roman grand strategy shows that the debate is far from stagnant.

The preceding discussion offers a brief glimpse into the scholarly debate surrounding grand strategy. One facet that is glaringly absent from this debate is the Roman perspective. While some scholars, such as Whittaker, Mattern and Isaac, try to address the concerns that may have impacted Roman policy decisions, they ignore what the Romans themselves said about foreign policy. It is difficult to believe that the Romans had no strategic plan at all and that any policy they may have enacted was simply reactionary or driven by the personal whims of individual emperors. It is equally unrealistic to assume that the Romans simply stumbled on perimeter defense and launched massive expeditions to conquer new territories without any long term goals. Even scholars who maintain that Rome had some kind of grand strategy ignore the

³³ Kagan, 354.

³⁴ Kagan, 362.

³⁵ Kagan, 348.

evidence presented in the sources. They are quick to dismiss the sources as having no useful information about grand strategy. Yet the sources do have information about grand strategy and a careful analysis of their works allows us to understand how the Romans themselves conceptualized strategy, policy, and the decision to go to war. This thesis will look at the accounts of warfare in the early imperial period to demonstrate the Roman view of strategy and foreign policy. Recurring themes of honor, shame, and glory demonstrate that ideology played a major role in strategic decision making.

1.2 Sources for Grand Strategy in the Early Principate

My analysis of Roman strategy focuses on the early imperial period from 30 B.C. to A.D. 68. The major historical sources for the early principate are written by Cornelius Tacitus, Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, Cassius Dio Cocceianus, and Velleius Paterculus along with the unique inscription known as the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*. These sources provide the bulk of the evidence for this thesis. Their interpretation of events shed light on the concerns and motives that may have influenced strategy.

The most important source for this analysis is Tacitus' *Annals*. Tacitus describes in detail the reigns of Tiberius, Claudius, and Nero. It is his history that provides us with the most comprehensive information on the Battle of Teutoburg Forest and its aftermath which is the main case study for this thesis. Tacitus wrote the *Annals* in the early second century A.D. during the reign of the emperor Trajan. He had lived through the civil war in 69 A.D. and the persecutions of Domitian, events which had a significant impact on his work. Tacitus is harshly critical of the Julio-Claudian emperors, especially the emperor Tiberius. In many ways he blamed the early

emperors for the horrors that emperors like Nero and Domitian inflicted on Rome.³⁶ Tacitus was also a senator and he tapped his political experience to write his histories.³⁷ We need to keep his biases in mind when analyzing Tacitus' history.³⁸ His position as a senator and member of the elite as well as his familiarity with events means that his opinions and concerns may be reflective of genuine Roman concerns. Tacitus is the most important source for this analysis because his work is most likely to reflect the values of the period being studied. However, his critical stance on the emperors means that he is a less reliable source for understanding the concerns that drove the emperors themselves. There are also large sections of his work missing and the reign of Augustus is not covered.

Cassius Dio's *Roman History* provides us with a detailed narrative of the rule of Augustus to the death of Nero, however, his history covered the whole of Roman history and as a result the period covered in this study was a small portion of his work. Cassius Dio wrote in the early third century A.D. and his scope was significantly broader than Tacitus'. He was born to a wealthy family in Nicaea, and he was a member of the senate during the reign of Severus. The scope of Cassius Dio's work meant that he had to rely on a variety of sources. He claims to have read the work of earlier Roman historians but he also collected stories and rumors along with eye witness accounts for the later periods in his work.³⁹ Cassius Dio is also considerably less hostile

³⁶ Ronald Mellor, *Tacitus' Annals* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 96.

³⁷ Mellor, 24-25. Tacitus gathered eye-witness accounts of the events in his works whenever possible. His work demonstrates some awareness of the trouble with using gossip and rumor as a source and he occasionally mentions when he found a source unreliable. Tacitus' position as a senator allowed him to use senatorial records and decrees as a source as well.

³⁸ B. Walker, *The Annals of Tacitus: A Study in the Writing of History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1952), 164. Tacitus' close ties and deep admiration for his father-in-law Agricola made these biases more prominent. Tacitus was far too young to have really suffered during the civil war in A.D. 69 but Agricola and his family did.

³⁹ Fergus Millar, *A Study of Cassius Dio* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 34-38.

to the emperors and their way of ruling.⁴⁰ Cassius Dio is the most problematic source for this thesis because he was writing so far from events. While his work fills in the gaps of Tacitus' *Annals*, his distance from events gives him a different perspective which is not necessarily indicative of the period studied in this thesis. Yet Cassius Dio's history can be salvaged for this thesis. While his views on the emperor are different from Tacitus he discusses honor in warfare in much the same way. This similarity could be attributed to his use of Tacitus as a source, however, this pattern also exists for periods not covered in Tacitus. This seems to indicate that the importance of honor for strategy was common in his source material, even for sources we no longer possess, or that honor continued to play a role in strategy even in Cassius Dio's time. Either way, because Cassius Dio wrote about honor and warfare in a similar manner to more contemporary sources, his accounts of events can be used to study the link between honor and strategy.

Velleius Paterculus' *Roman History* is a useful source since the author was present at many of the events he describes. Although Velleius did eventually embark on a senatorial career, he was first and foremost a soldier, serving in several important campaigns.⁴¹ Most importantly as it relates to this study was his role in Tiberius' retaliatory campaigns following the disaster at Teutoburg forest. Velleius is the only author whose work survives who is not hostile to Tiberius. Indeed, Velleius shows a deep admiration for the man he often served under. The last five chapters of his work are devoted to praising Tiberius and his reign (2.126-131). Velleius' work

⁴⁰ Fergus Millar, *A Study of Cassius Dio*, 76-77. By the time Cassius Dio wrote his work the monarchy established under the emperors had been in place for over 200 years. Cassius Dio had less nostalgia for the republic than earlier historians and even considered the single rule of monarchy necessary for order.

⁴¹ J.C. Yardley. *Velleius Paterculus: The Roman History* (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2011), xvi-xvii. Yardley provides a detailed list of the campaigns Velleius served on.

covers a broad period of history, from the Trojan War to the reign of Tiberius, though the sections relevant to this thesis are relatively short.

Suetonius' biographies of the early emperors are a major source for this period. His focus on the personal details of the emperors provides an interesting perspective into Roman society. Suetonius was not a senator but he had close ties to the elite including the emperor Hadrian. While his work contains much gossip and rumor, it is clear that Suetonius researched his biographies extensively.⁴² Unfortunately, because Suetonius is not a historian, his accounts often lack important historical details and instead focus on the more sensational. One of the most significant features of Suetonius' work is his assessment of the emperors in each of his biographies. Suetonius assessed the success of each emperor based on a set of criteria, providing a framework from which we can extrapolate Roman values. The actions and qualities that Suetonius deemed good or bad provide us with a better idea of what was important to the Romans.

The *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* is a unique source for this period. It is a lengthy inscription composed by Augustus himself detailing the successes of his reign. The inscription was placed on Augustus' mausoleum and may also have been displayed in the provinces.⁴³ It shares similarities with funerary inscriptions and laudatory inscriptions as well as honorific decrees which were common in Hellenistic kingdoms. The combination of all these features makes the

⁴² Suetonius cites Augustus' letters (*Aug.* 51, 64, 71, 76, 86; *Tib.* 21; *Calig.* 8; *Cl.* 4), the wills and memoirs of several emperors (*Aug.* 2, 101; *Tib.* 61, 76; *Cl.* 41), and public records for many of his accounts.

⁴³ Alison E. Cooley, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 18-22. The *Res Gestae* survives to us from three inscriptions in what was the Roman province of Galatia which has led some scholars to believe that the inscription was put up throughout the empire. Cooley suggests that given the Greek version of the text and the rarity of an empire wide inscription the *Res Gestae* may have only been put up at the discretion of the local governors. The distribution of the *Res Gestae* has implications on what function the inscription was meant to serve but for the purposes of this study the fact that the inscription was erected in Rome is most significant.

Res Gestae unique. Its purpose was to extoll and glorify the deeds of Augustus and it demonstrates the deeds and traits important to the Romans. The *Res Gestae* is significant for this study because it allows us to discern the concerns and values of the emperor himself. The inscription demonstrates how the emperor wanted to portray himself to the people of Rome. Interestingly, the inscription may have served as a model of sound practices for later emperors. Augustus states in the inscription that he wants future generations to imitate his practices (8.5). In the broad sense this could apply to anyone who reads it however its messages about ruling would have been most applicable to subsequent emperors. The idea that great figures could serve as example was common in Roman culture and it is possible that the example Augustus left would have been perceived as a model for ruling by both the people and future rulers.⁴⁴ The autobiographical nature of the *Res Gestae* makes it the only source that provides us with the perspective of the emperor himself for this period. While other sources can provide us with the values and concerns of the broader Roman populace, the *Res Gestae* demonstrates the image that the emperor wanted to project. This image allows us to understand what may have motivated Augustus notably in regards to foreign policy decisions.

The ancient sources are not without their problems and as such they must be used cautiously. Despite these challenges the sources discussed above are used in this analysis because of the consistent patterns found in among their works. While each source has their own biases each discusses honor as it relates to warfare in a similar way. These similarities suggest that the role of honor in strategy was well known and represents genuine Roman concerns and values.

⁴⁴ Cooley, 40.

1.3 Roman Honor

In order to understand the prevalence of honor in ancient literature it is important to first understand the importance of honor in Roman society. Honor is most often defined by what is considered 'right', but this definition is shaped by the values of a particular society. Thus the concept of honor can be challenging to define, and many scholars have studied its different meanings for different societies.⁴⁵ There has been a trend in scholarship towards the idea of a widespread Mediterranean honor culture.⁴⁶ Cultures in close proximity often have similar values which hinders the definition of a distinct Roman view of honor. Despite the similarities in the definition of honor among Mediterranean cultures it is still possible to discern aspects of a uniquely Roman definition of honor. The key to this definition is the emphasis on honor as it relates to war and politics, which is the focus of this study.

The modern English word honor comes from the Latin *honor*, both of which are used similarly. The latter differs from the former in the emphasis placed on public perception by the Romans. Another Latin word associated with Roman honor is *dignitas* which is more difficult to translate. It can translate to *dignity* but it is more commonly used as *worth*, *authority* or *greatness*. Honor had no value if it was private, thus deeds and traits deemed honorable were displayed prominently. Honor and reputation were closely related concepts. The easiest way to conceptualize this is to consider honor for the Romans more as public prestige.

⁴⁵ For more on honor in the relevant period and location to this study see: Julian Pitt-Rivers, "Honour and Social Status," in *Honour and Shame: Values of Mediterranean Society* 1966 and Frank Henderson Stewart: *Honor* 1994.

⁴⁶ For an excellent overview of this see Stanley Brandes, "Reflections on Honor and Shame in the Mediterranean," in *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*, 121-134 (Washington: American Anthropological Association, 1987).

Roman prestige was based on values such as *pietas* and *virtus*, which are the most important values for the honor discussed in this thesis.⁴⁷ *Pietas* refers to duty not only to the gods, but also – perhaps more importantly- to duty towards your family, ancestors, and Rome itself. Similarly, *virtus* was more than its cognate virtue: it was specifically related to manliness or courage. *Virtus* is strongly linked to Roman military prowess. *Pietas* is a value that has important implications for strategy because it drove the Romans to avenge insults to their homeland. These and other Roman values were based on that which brought renown. Individuals who publically displayed these qualities could become well-known and thus command great respect. This public aspect led honor to play an important role in politics. Politicians relied on their reputations to be elected to magistracies and in turn used these offices to further increase their personal prestige. This system flourished in republican Rome.

The significance of honor in Rome's political system led to honor being most important for the members of the aristocracy. While men of any social status could earn prestige, aristocrats could inherit it from their ancestors. Honor was passed down through the generations therefore those of higher rank had the combined duty of increasing their own personal prestige as well as maintaining their family's honor. A good family name was vital to a political career and social standing. Members of prominent families were repeatedly elected to high office. The public nature of this system meant that any shame brought to a family could have negative ramifications for generations and individuals would go to extremes to avoid it. Aristocrats sought to not only live up to the glory of their ancestors but also surpass them.

As its societal importance grew honor became rigidly defined and jealously protected by the people involved. Honor was employed as a way to keep society in check. The fear of public

⁴⁷ For a detailed description of Roman values see: Carlos Norena, *Imperial ideals in the Roman West : representation, circulation, power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

shame and humiliation was used as a deterrent for undesirable behavior and the need for public praise reinforced good behavior.⁴⁸ There were also laws protecting a man's honor. The laws of *iniuria* protected people from unfounded attacks on their honor, which are similar to modern slander laws but taken much more seriously. The laws of *inuria* covered the person being attacked but they also covered those under his protection, which included his family and his household.⁴⁹ If a case was successfully proven in court the accused could be convicted of *infamia* which essentially demoted them to second-class citizens with fewer rights and privileges.⁵⁰ Punishments for other crimes were often displayed prominently so all could see the transgressor and in many ways humiliation was seen as the ultimate punishment.⁵¹

Individuals could increase their personal honor by holding public office. The more offices a man held the more honor he accumulated, thus improving his potential for higher offices in a system called the *cursus honorum*. As one rose through the system other avenues for attaining honor became available. Only certain magistrates could command troops and aristocrats aspired to these military positions. Winning a military victory brought the highest level of prestige to an individual and his family, thus there was intense competition among aristocrats to hold the limited offices. Success in war and the honor it brought became vital to the Roman system of government and it was lavishly rewarded. This is demonstrated by the elaborate and public triumphs given to successful generals. For these men, winning victories for Rome became the most effective way to attain honor. However, the shame of defeat could shadow a family for generations and particularly disastrous defeats were ingrained in public memory.

⁴⁸ Carlin A. Barton, *Roman Honor* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2001), 18-19.

⁴⁹ J. E. Lendon, "Roman Honor," in *Social Relations in the Roman World*, 377-403 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 380.

⁵⁰ J. E. Lendon,

⁵¹ Carlin A. Barton, 22-23.

Family and personal prestige, however, were not the only avenues to political office. Wealth was extremely important in attaining political office and aristocrats invested significant capital to be elected. However, a person's wealth did not always assure a good reputation. Capital, while extremely important, was not in itself a way of accumulating honor. Roman authors were hostile to men with wealth who lacked honor. This hostility stemmed from the influx of new wealth into Rome which threatened the position of old aristocratic families. These new elites were deemed lesser in the eyes of the old aristocracy but they could increase their standing by following the established system. Honor for the Romans had to be earned in the accepted ways and false honor was harshly criticized.⁵² In fact, it was the pursuit of honor and glory that led one of the wealthiest men in Roman history, Marcus Licinius Crassus, to embark on a campaign in Parthia that eventually led to his death. This pursuit of honor was a constant struggle to maintain one's standing in society.

The orator Cicero wrote at length on the importance of honor. His letters and political writings often dealt with the question of honor and how it could be earned:

“...there is nothing better for man, nothing more desired, nothing more excellent, than honors, commands, and renown judged by the people; which indeed every excellent man aims at; but while he pursues that only true honor which nature has in view above all other objects...”

...qui nihil melius homini, nihil magis expetendum, nihil praestantius **honoribus, imperiis**, populari **gloria** iudicaverunt. Ad quam fertur optumus quisque veramque illam **honestatem** expetens, quam unam natura maxime anquirit...⁵³

. While his writings represent an ideal, Cicero's words provide valuable insight into this culture and the importance of honor in Roman society. Passages like this allow us to get a better understanding of the significance of honor for the Romans themselves and why it would have played such an important role in strategy.

⁵² J. E. Lendon, *Empire of Honour: The Art of Government in the Roman World*, 115.

⁵³ All translations unless otherwise indicated are my own. Cic. *Tusc.* 3.2

Honor changed during the imperial period but it remaining important in politics and war. The emperors' dominance over political and military command effectively ended the contest culture that allowed republican Rome to thrive. The honor of competition was replaced by the honor of the victor and the emperors attained a new level of prestige.⁵⁴ However, the emperors' position depended on their ability to maintain their prestige and glorious image. Emperors were still held to the same standards as the republican aristocrats but the stakes had increased.⁵⁵ The means of accumulating honor were the same but there were more opportunities available to the emperors.⁵⁶ They had a monopoly on political offices and controlled every military campaign and public festival.⁵⁷ That being said, it was still possible for aristocrats to gain prestige and thus threaten the emperor's position.⁵⁸ As a result many emperors sought adulation through triumphs (many of them false or exaggerated) and repeatedly controlled political offices such as the consulship.⁵⁹

Failure to maintain a good reputation in the eyes of the people could result in death or civil war. Unpopular leaders might be assassinated which could throw the entire empire into chaos. The honor of the emperor and the honor of the empire were very closely linked. In many ways the empire was seen as the emperor's household and any shame had to be dispelled. The events that brought the most honor or shame to the emperor and the empire were military victories and defeats. As discussed previously, military honors represented the highest level of prestige and brought the most glory. During the imperial period the emperor controlled the army

⁵⁴ Carlin A. Barton, 102.

⁵⁵ J. E. Lendon, *Empire of Honour: The Art of Government in the Roman World*, 108-109.

⁵⁶ J. E. Lendon, *Empire of Honour: The Art of Government in the Roman World*, 112.

⁵⁷ Carlin A. Barton, 102.

⁵⁸ J. E. Lendon, *Empire of Honour: The Art of Government in the Roman World*, 111.

⁵⁹ The amount of consulships held varies between emperors but all held the office more than once. Augustus says in his *Res Gestae* (4) that he was consul thirteen times, however Tiberius was consul only five times.

and thus the honor or shame associated with it. The relationship between war and honor meant that war became a legitimate means for the emperor to increase his honor.

The honor of the Rome itself was also an important aspect of Roman society. The Roman people were thought of as one entity and just as liable to suffer shame as an individual. The corporate honor of the empire had a historical precedent and Roman heroes were often seen as representing Rome itself.⁶⁰ The willingness of Rome's heroes to sacrifice themselves for Rome was a testament to the empire's honor. The Romans saw themselves as continuously under threat and were thus always on defense. The defeats of the past were trials that simply proved Rome's greatness and there was lasting glory attached to overcoming obstacles.⁶¹ The honor of the empire was dependent on Rome's ability to face challenges and prevail. Surrender or retreat were seen as incredibly shameful acts because of their impact on Rome's honor. Redemption played a key role in Rome's honor as a result of the Roman's perception of consistently being under attack. If Rome was shamed by a defeat, the Romans had to retaliate. Rome's honor was defined by its ability to prevail against all odds and dominate its enemies.

Rome's definition of honor must be taken into account when examining grand strategy. Romans equated honor with power and authority which had a direct impact on foreign policy on a grand scale. Attacks on Rome's authority were also slights to its honor. This meant that maintaining the emperors' honor along with the honor of the empire itself factored greatly into strategic decision making. As mentioned previously the laws of *iniuria* covered not only the person being slandered but also those under his power. In the case of the emperor, this included the entire empire. The notion that any attack on the empire was a direct attack on the honor of the emperor as well can explain actions on the frontier. The personal honor of the empire also had a

⁶⁰ Carlin A. Barton, 32.

⁶¹ Carlin A. Barton, 49-51.

major effect on foreign policy. The importance of military victory to a man's honor meant that emperors could use their positions as military leaders to maintain and increase their honor. Honor was a common justification for war in Roman sources and given the importance of honor in Roman society this is not simply a literary device. For the Romans, reputation was vital to authority and without it the empire could not be maintained. It is because of this that honor heavily influenced Roman strategy during the imperial period.

1.4 Methodology

In order to better understand how the Romans conceptualized grand strategy and what concerns may have influenced it, I have undertaken a detailed analysis of the sources that cover the early principate. This analysis focused on accounts of both foreign and domestic warfare in the early imperial period with an emphasis on the justifications given for campaigns and other strategic decisions (such as those regarding commanders and tactical maneuvers). The goal is not to assess the veracity of these accounts but rather to infer how the Romans thought based on how the sources characterized campaigns. These sources demonstrate that honor, and the related notions of shame, glory, and vengeance, often played an important role in discussions of military matters and was invoked as justification for war. This demonstrates that honor, prestige, and reputation were important factors in strategic decision making. Both the individual honor of the emperor as well as the corporate honor of the empire itself appear to have influenced foreign policy and military decisions. While this justification may at first glance appear irrational, however the important role of honor in Roman society must be taken into account. Repeated references to honor in the context of war suggests that honor did indeed drive strategy in the early imperial period.

Chapter 2: Honor and Empire

This chapter examines the ways in which the corporate honor of Rome influenced strategic decision making. References to the honor of the empire can be challenging to discern in the accounts of warfare in the early principate. These references are often more subtle and implicit than the references to the honor of the emperor which will be discussed in Chapter Three. The sources indicate that Rome itself was an entity that could experience shame and demand vengeance. Sometimes the sources refer to an action, battle, or tactic as shameful or mention vengeance was sought, without explicitly indicating who was shamed or avenged. In these cases it is reasonable to assume that what is being referenced is the honor of Rome itself. One of the major challenges in understanding Roman grand strategy is that explicit references to strategy are rare. The sources do however contain recurring themes of honor in their narrative and often offer subtle clues to the role honor played in strategic thinking. By examining these implicit references, it is possible to extrapolate how honor would affect strategy on a larger scale. This chapter is divided into three main parts. The first looks at the ways in which the empire's honor impacted tactical decisions, the second section considers how it influenced broader strategic decisions, and the final section examines honor in relation to foreign relations.

2.1 Honor and Tactical Decisions

References to tactical maneuvers provide a significant pool of evidence for the relationship between Rome's corporate honor and strategic planning. Whether or not to retreat, when to go on campaign, and how to conduct battle are often discussed in terms of honor, shame, or glory

which is what this section examines. Tactical decisions are often reflective of broader strategic concerns and thus should be considered in any study of strategy.

A noteworthy example comes from the Illyrian revolt in A.D. 6. Illyria had long been a Roman province, while the Roman legions were occupied in Germany several Illyrian tribes revolted. Cassius Dio notes that the Illyrians had long been unhappy and when the legions left they seized their chance.⁶² Augustus pulled several legions from the Rhine and sent Tiberius to deal with the rebels. During Tiberius' siege of the Illyrian town Adedtrium his supply trains were compromised.⁶³ Cassius Dio states that while the situation was dangerous, retreat was shameful.⁶⁴ With the encouragement of his soldiers, Tiberius decided to continue the siege and was eventually successful. The shame associated with retreat influenced Tiberius' decision to continue the siege despite the significant loss of his supply trains.

Boudicca's revolt in Britain in A.D. 60 further highlights how honor could influence tactical decisions. Boudicca managed to rally a sizeable rebellion of local tribes and won a significant victory at Camulodunum, destroying several Roman towns as a result.⁶⁵ The Roman response to this revolt was brutal and Tacitus provides the motivation for this brutality. He says that, "Illustrious glory through ancient victory was procured by all that day: for little less than eighty thousand Britons fell or surrendered, [only] four hundred Romans were killed and a not many more were wounded."⁶⁶ In Tacitus' narrative the source of glory for the Romans was the successful massacre of the Britons. While it is unclear if the need for glory was what motivated

⁶² Cass. Dio 55.29.1.

⁶³ Cass. Dio 56.12.

⁶⁴ Cass. Dio 56.13; ἀποροῦντος οὖν αὐτοῦ καὶ μὴ εὐρίσκοντος ὃ τι πράξει ἢ τε γὰρ προσεδρεῖα καὶ ματαία καὶ ἐπικίνδυνος ἐγίγνετο καὶ ἡ ἀποχώρησις ἐπαισχῆς ἐφαίνετο ἐθορύβησαν οἱ στρατιῶται,

⁶⁵ Tac. *Ann.* 14.32.

⁶⁶ Tac. *Ann.* 14.37 clara et antiquis victoriis par ea die laus parta: quippe sunt qui paulo minus quam octoginta milia Britannorum cecidisse tradant, militum quadringentis ferme interfectis nec multo amplius vulneratis.

the massacre, Cassius Dio remarks that the Romans felt humiliation because the rebellion was led by a woman.⁶⁷ For the Romans any defeat was humiliating but defeat at the hands of a woman was unthinkable. The Romans' desire for glory to remedy this humiliation can explain their conduct on campaign. This example presents a set of unique circumstances, however the desire for glory and revenge may have influenced conduct in other campaigns for which there are no explicit references in the sources.

Tacfarinas' rebellion in North Africa is an excellent example of honor and shame influencing strategic decision making. Tacitus' narrative highlights the shame and humiliation the rebellion brought to Rome. Tacfarinas led a series of raids on Roman territory that lasted almost a decade. He was able to get the support not only of neighboring tribes but also of people living within the Roman province and caused serious damage. Unlike Boudicca, Tacfarinas was able to continue his rebellion despite being defeated in battle, and he remained a major problem for Rome. His goal was to liberate Numidia which was at that time part of a Roman client state, but he was unable or unwilling to fight Rome in a pitched battle. As a result, Tacfarinas relied on guerilla warfare and was quite successful at plundering Roman Africa.⁶⁸ The Romans proved unable to capture him and end the war despite several victories over Tacfarinas' forces. Tacfarinas' success emboldened other enemies of Rome. The king of the Garamantians allowed his men to fight for Tacfarinas despite being Roman allies and many groups in the client state of Mauretania also fought against Rome.

One reason for the Romans' slow progress in North Africa is that they continued to use the same tactics despite their ineffectiveness against Tacfarinas' guerilla style of warfare.

Tacitus' narrative suggests that the Romans were unwilling to change the way they fought

⁶⁷ Cass. Dio 62.1.

⁶⁸ Tac. *Ann.* 3.20.

Tacfarinas because they viewed his methods as deceitful and dishonorable.⁶⁹ Roman unwillingness to dishonor themselves by engaging in shameful tactics explains why the war dragged on for so long and why the Romans continued to try to force Tacfarinas to fight a pitched battle. Eventually, however, the humiliation of the rebellion became too much to bear and the Romans decided to abandon the tactics they deemed honorable.⁷⁰ The Romans were finally successful when they employed new methods to defeat Tacfarinas' more mobile forces.⁷¹ Tacitus says that Tacfarinas had dared to send an embassy to Tiberius to sue for peace. This enraged Tiberius and he told the commander Blaesus to defeat Tacfarinas by any means necessary.⁷² This example demonstrates the significance of honor for strategic decisions. Firstly, Tiberius refused to negotiate with Tacfarinas because he was outraged that "a deserter and a brigand was acting in the customs of an enemy" and that Tacfarinas dared to go against Rome at its "most glorious height".⁷³ A peace with Tacfarinas could have put an end to such a drawn out rebellion, but Tiberius' honor and the honor of Rome refused to allow a settlement. Secondly, this humiliation changed the way the war in Africa was being conducted. The honorable modes of warfare were sacrificed to put an end to the humiliation of defeat. Honor played a key role in all these significant tactical and strategic decisions.

Tacfarinas' rebellion also provides examples of how honor influenced even small scale tactical decisions. In A.D. 17 Tacfarinas had been raiding and destroying villages when he

⁶⁹ Tac. *Ann.* 3.74.

⁷⁰ Tac. *Ann.* 3.73.

⁷¹ Tac. *Ann.* 3.74.

⁷² D. B. Saddington ("Notes on Two Passages in Tacitus (Ann. 4.24.3 and 15.25.3)." *The Classical Quarterly* (1978): 330-332.) discusses how some scholars have suggested that Rome was so desperate for victory they placed the Roman commander as a subordinate under Ptolemy who led the combined army Roman Mauritanian army. Saddington argues that while the army certainly worked with Ptolemy and his help was rewarded it is unlikely he was in full command. This discussion is compelling as it demonstrates the measures Rome may have taken to bring the war to an end.

⁷³ Tac. *Ann.* 3.73; quod desertor et praedo hostium more ageret; pulcherrimo... fastigio...

besieged a Roman cohort near the river Pagyda. The commander Decrius regarded the siege as shameful and led his cohort out to face Tacfarinas.⁷⁴ The cohort panicked, broke rank and Decrius was killed. Following this defeat the commander Lucius Appronius was so embarrassed he employed the ancient punishment of decimation, which Tacitus says was, "...rare at this time and something not done in [our] memory...".⁷⁵ Tacitus writes that Appronius was more concerned with the shameful actions of his own soldiers than the enemy's success.⁷⁶ The shame Decrius felt at being besieged caused him to lead the cohort into battle and the shame their flight caused led to the decimation. In both instances honor and shame played a key role in tactical decisions.

In A.D. 23 Blaesius was finally successful and Tiberius declared the war over, though Tacfarinas had yet to be captured.⁷⁷ Blaesius returned to Rome and received a triumph for his success. However, the war continued until the commander Dolabella brought it to a conclusion by killing Tacfarinas. Tacitus suggests that along with removing the commander Blaesius from the African campaign, Tiberius also reduced the number of troops.⁷⁸ Pulling the commander and troops prematurely from the campaign seems to be an illogical tactical decision. However, Tiberius wished to promote the image that the war was over which would have ended the shame associated with the rebellion. Ultimately the restoration of Rome's honor was a more pressing strategic concern.

⁷⁴ Tac. *Ann.* 3.20.

⁷⁵ Tac. *Ann.* 3.21; ...raro ea tempestate et e vetere memoria...

⁷⁶ Tac. *Ann.* 3.21; magis dedecore suorum quam gloria hostis anxius

⁷⁷ Tac. *Ann.* 4.23.

⁷⁸ Tac. *Ann.* 4.26.

2.2 Honor and Broader Strategic Decisions

Explicit references to strategy are infrequent in the ancient sources. This is in large part due to the fact that strategy was not a major concern for the authors. For historians and biographers, the ‘what’ was more important than the ‘why’. That being said, Tacitus provides us with the best clue as to how the Romans may have conceptualized grand strategy. In his account of Germanicus’ campaigns Tacitus writes, “at this time there was no war except to conquer the Germans, more to destroy the shame caused by Quintilius Varus and his army than a desire to extend the empire or for a worthy prize.”⁷⁹ This statement illustrates the Roman mindset when it came to war and expansion. The restoration of honor was sufficient to justify a campaign despite the apparent lack of strategic value. The importance of honor and reputation to strategy can explain Rome’s reasons for going to war even when, by modern standards, such action would seem impractical or ill-advised.

Retaliation for slights to Roman honor was provided as justification for several campaigns. The conquest of Egypt by Augustus can be seen as a retaliation for Cleopatra’s siding with Antony during the civil war. Indeed, Velleius Paterculus claims that the conquest was in response to Cleopatra’s interference with Roman politics.⁸⁰ Some of Augustus’ other conquests could be described as retaliation. Velleius Paterculus justified the conquest of Spain because of “...the loss of Roman people and the death of the commanders [which had] often

⁷⁹ Tac. *Ann.* 1.3. bellum ea tempestate nullum nisi adversus Germanos supererat, abolendae magis infamiae ob amissum cum Quintilio Varo exercitum quam cupidine proferendi imperii aut dignum ob praemium. The specific case of the Germanic campaigns will be covered in detail in chapter 4.

⁸⁰ Vell. 2.85-87. Cassius Dio reinforces this tradition (50.15-16.)

brought insult and even danger to the Roman empire.”⁸¹ Velleius’ account lists the dishonors suffered by Rome in Spain.⁸² He states that Rome had lost so many commanders in Spain that it was uncertain if Rome would ever conquer it. Velleius claims that the fighting in Spain and other provinces was interrupted by the civil war against Antony and when Augustus came to power he resumed the campaign. The rhetoric of shame and humiliation used to describe the completed conquest of Spain suggests that Augustus was driven to resume fighting and explains why he embarked on this campaign himself.

Augustus’ most famous retaliation, however, was not a military campaign but a diplomatic settlement. When Augustus became sole ruler of the empire two serious military defeats at the hands of the Parthians remained unresolved. Both Marcus Licinius Crassus and Marc Antony led failed campaigns against the Parthians and these defeats were a source of continual humiliation.⁸³ The theme of vengeance for this defeat was common in Augustan literature and action to restore honor was required.⁸⁴ Augustus negotiated a settlement with the Parthian empire to remedy this shame by reasserting Rome’s dominance. The sources record that Augustus negotiated the return of the military standards lost in both defeats and this was promoted as a great victory for Rome.⁸⁵ This victory was symbolic; Augustus did not gain any territory nor did he win the standards back through force of arms. However, the biggest concern

⁸¹ ...per annos ducentos in iis multo mutuoque ita certatum est sanguine, ut amissis populi Romani imperatoribus exercitibusque saepe contumelia, nonnumquam etiam periculum Romano inferretur imperio. Vell. 2.90.

⁸² Vell. 2.90; Velleius lists Roman defeats in Spain going all the way back to the Second Punic War. He lists specific famous commanders who were lost on Spanish campaigns (like Gnaeus Scipio) as well as the commanders who humiliatingly surrendered (like Quintus Pompeius). He also discusses the war with Viriathus.

⁸³ The Parthians were portrayed as almost arch nemeses of Rome. Parthia was always seen as a lingering threat and thus conflict never really ended. For more on how Parthia was seen by the Romans see; Rolf Micheal Schneider’s *Friend and Foe: The Orient in Rome in The Age of the Parthians* (2007).

⁸⁴ Susan P. Mattern-Parkes, "The Defeat of Crassus and the Just War." *The Classical World* (2003): 387-396, 393.

⁸⁵ Cass.Dio. 53.33; Aug. RG. 29; Suet. *Aug.* 21; Vell. 2.91

for the Romans was the unresolved defeats thus Augustus' focus on the symbols of defeat could still be seen as a victory.⁸⁶ In the sources, the most significant part of the settlement was the return of the eagles, symbols of Rome's invincibility and power.⁸⁷ Allowing them to remain in Parthian hands damaged Rome's reputation and honor. The return of the eagles was viewed as one of Augustus' greatest victories and marked the start of his Golden Age.⁸⁸ The importance of the return of the eagles in this settlement demonstrates the influence that maintaining Rome's honor had on foreign relations and negotiations.

When Augustus returned home from the east he received honors for his success and he placed the returned eagles in the Temple of Mars Ultor.⁸⁹ The placement of the eagles in this temple highlights the importance of vengeance in this settlement. Augustus highlights his role as avenger in his *Res Gestae* in which the Parthian settlement is discussed in its own section (29), in the part of the *Res Gestae* which celebrates his military victories. In the same section Augustus also claims to have recovered the standards lost in Spain, Gaul, and Dalmatia. The recovery of lost eagles was seen as an important expression of victory and a way to avenge defeats. One of the greatest insults to Rome was an unavenged defeat and vengeance was an significant justification for war.⁹⁰ Augustus' willingness to negotiate for symbolic representations of Roman honor and his prominent display of the eagles are excellent examples of how Roman honor could impact strategy.

⁸⁶ Mattern- Parkes, 398.

⁸⁷ In the narratives of Cassius Dio and Velleius the return of the eagles is the only part of the settlement that is mentioned. Suetonius provides more concessions given to Rome by the Parthians but the only thing Augustus demands is the return of the eagles.

⁸⁸ Schneider, 54.

⁸⁹ The significance of the temple of Mars Ultor as well as the political maneuvering involved in the honor Augustus received as a result of the settlement are further discussed in J. W. Rich, 1998. "Augustus' Parthian Honours: The Temple of Mars Ultor and the Arch in the Forum Romanum." *Papers of the British School at Rome* 66: 71-128.

⁹⁰ Mattern-Parkes, 392.

2.3 Honor and Foreign Relations

Foreign relations were a significant aspect of strategy and the Romans had complex relationships with foreign leaders. Triumphs played a key role in demonstrating Rome's power and dominance over its enemies. One aspect of triumphs in particular held significance for foreign relations. It was common in Roman triumphs to parade enemy combatants and leaders in front of the Roman people in a public display of submission. These parades sometimes ended in the execution of these prisoners in front of the gathered populous. According to the sources, Rome's enemies were aware of these displays and feared them. Many conquered enemies begged to be spared and some committed suicide rather than face the humiliation. Perhaps the most famous example of this is Cleopatra's suicide. Suetonius writes that, "[Augustus] desired to preserve her for his great triumph..." but she committed suicide before that could happen despite Augustus' efforts to save her.⁹¹ Cassius Dio is more explicit saying that Augustus wanted to protect her so that she could accompany his triumph. "She suspecting this, considered it to be worse than a thousand deaths and longed to die..."⁹² Cassius Dio goes on to say that "[Augustus] was very distressed for himself because he thought he had been robbed of all his victory."⁹³ The relationship between this public display and victory demonstrates the link between public perception and honor. For a victory to bring prestige it had to be visible to the people. While the public display of a fallen leader served the strategic purpose of a deterrent the Romans seemed more concerned with the prestige associated with the display. Cleopatra's suicide to avoid display was not an isolated case in the Roman sources. The rebel Tacfarinas apparently threw himself on Roman spears rather

⁹¹ Suet. *Aug.* 17. ...servatam triumpho magno opere cupiebat...

⁹² Cass. Dio. 51.13.2. ...ὅπως οἱ τὰ ἐπινίκια ἐπιλαμπρύνῃ. τοῦτό τε οὖν ὑποτοπήσασα, καὶ μυρίων θανάτων χαλεπώτερον αὐτὸ νομίσασα εἶναι, ὄντως τε ἀποθανεῖν ἐπεθύμησε...

⁹³ Cass. Dio. 51.14.6. αὐτὸς δὲ ἰσχυρῶς ἐλυπήθη ὥς καὶ πάσης τῆς ἐπὶ τῇ νίκῃ δόξης ἐστερημένος.

than be captured and Boudicca may have drank poison.⁹⁴ Unlike Cleopatra's example it is not explicitly stated that this was to avoid being paraded in a triumph but it is clear that capture by the Romans was something conquered leaders wanted to avoid at all costs.

The case of Cleopatra's suicide is particularly interesting because of the debate surrounding the historicity of the event. Whether or not Cleopatra committed suicide and how has long been called into question. Powell speculates that Augustus himself may have had her killed.⁹⁵ If this is the case, then the Roman narrative is pure propaganda. This in itself is interesting as it is an excellent example of how the Romans saw themselves and how they wanted to be seen. The display of Cleopatra before the Roman people was an important expression of victory and the honor of Rome, however, if she was deemed too dangerous to keep alive, it is possible that the suicide story was created to explain why Augustus was unable to fulfil this important aspect of victory.

The practice of putting captured people or submissive leaders on display before the Roman people was a common one. An excellent example is Claudius' display of Caratacus the famous leader of the Catuvellauni who led the resistance in Britain.⁹⁶ Tacitus describes how Caratacus and his family were paraded in front of the people of Rome along with the spoils of war. Caratacus addressed Claudius saying; "[m]y present lot is to me degrading but to you magnificent" and that should he be spared, "[he] would be an eternal example of [Claudius'] clemency."⁹⁷ This entreaty shows what these parades were meant to be - eternal examples of Rome's honor. Tacitus goes on to compare this triumphal parade with other famous parades in

⁹⁴ Tac. *Ann.* 4.25. Tac. *Ann.* 14.37.

⁹⁵ Powell, "Anticipating Octavian's Failure: from Tauromenium to the death of Cleopatra." *Hindsight in Greek and Roman History*, 171-200.

⁹⁶ Tac. *Ann.* 12.36.

⁹⁷ Tac. *Ann.* 12.37. praesens sors mea ut mihi informis, sic tibi magnifica est... aeternum exemplar clementiae ero.

the past such as when Syphax was brought to Rome by Publius Scipio and Perseus by Lucius Paulus, demonstrating that this practice was a long-standing and memorable one.

These displays were not always used as part of a triumph but could be used as a diplomatic concession. As part of surrender or submission enemies could be asked to appear before the Roman people. The newly appointed Armenian king Tiridates agreed to submit to Nero as part of his coronation which was the diplomatic solution to a long drawn out conflict with Parthia. Though Armenia had technically not been conquered this grand show of submission brought great honor to Rome. Tacitus notes, "...now the descent [was] reversed, Tiridates [was] about to depart as a show for the people, little less than a captive..."⁹⁸ Tiridates appeared before the Roman people and not only received his crown but kneeled before Nero and called him master.⁹⁹ Cassius Dio notes that this was humiliating for Tiridates saying that, "he expelled his pride since he was a slave to his need and did not care if he spoke submissively..."¹⁰⁰ The inclusions of such displays as part of diplomatic negotiations demonstrates how important honor was in foreign policy decisions for the Romans.

Similarly, the deposed king Mithridates agreed to submit to Rome as part of his surrender. Mithridates attempted to retake his kingdom from his brother but was defeated. He surrendered to another local king who negotiated his surrender with Rome. Interestingly, Tacitus notes that one of his terms of surrender was that he should not appear in a triumph.¹⁰¹ Claudius,

⁹⁸ Tac. *Ann.* 15.29. at nunc versos casus; iturum Tiridaten ostentui gentibus quanto minus quam captivum...

⁹⁹ Cass. Dio 62b.2-6. This is an example of proskynesis which was a common display of submission in the Parthian empire and it was seen by the Romans as the ultimate form of humiliation. A similar form of humiliation was forcing an enemy to walk under the yoke to symbolize their subjugation. The Romans incorporated both into triumphs as displays of their own glory.

¹⁰⁰ Cass. Dio 62b.5.1. ...καὶ ἐκβιασάμενος τὸ φρόνημα τῷ τε καιρῷ καὶ τῇ χρείᾳ ἐδοῦλευσε, μηδὲν φροντίσας εἴ τι ταπεινὸν φθέγγαιτο...

¹⁰¹ Tac. *Ann.* 12.19. ...sed ne triumpharetur neve poenas capite expenderet.

however, agreed to accept his surrender but displayed him on the rostra before the people of Rome.¹⁰² Tacitus provides another interesting piece of information regarding this incident. He claims that Claudius was at first reluctant to accept Mithridates surrender because he was, “driven by the pain of injury and the desire for revenge.”¹⁰³ This is another example of how retaliatory campaigns were used to regain honor, as previously discussed. Claudius’ response to Mithridates allows us to view the thought process influenced strategic decisions. Claudius wanted vengeance for the humiliation but ultimately a quick end to the fighting was deemed more desirable. The public humiliation of Mithridates was used to compensate for the loss of honor caused by the war instead. This is a unique example of the ways in which different tactics to maintain Roman honor could be employed in foreign policy decisions.

An interesting aspect of public displays of defeated enemies is how Roman sources portrayed these defeated leaders. In some cases, the sources appear to admire Rome’s enemies and praise their virtues. Both Caratacus and Tiridates were called noble, and Mithridates faced his fate with dignity.¹⁰⁴ The same almost grudging respect was given to the German leader Arminius and the Illyrian leader Bato despite them being extremely troublesome to the Romans.¹⁰⁵ These descriptions seem to garner sympathy for the defeated leaders and thus go against the idea that the humiliation of the enemy brought prestige to Rome. Yet it appears that the more honorable the enemy, the more glory there was in their defeat. Tacitus writes,

¹⁰² Tac. *Ann.* 12.21.

¹⁰³ Tac. *Ann.* 12.20. hinc dolor iniuriarum et libido vindictae adigebat.

¹⁰⁴ For Caratacus: ne Romae quidem ignobile Carataci nomen erat... Even in Rome his name was not ignoble... Tac. *Ann.* 13.36

For Tiridates: αὐτός τε γὰρ ὁ Τιριδάτης καὶ ἡλικία καὶ κάλλει καὶ γένει καὶ φρονήματι ἦνθει... Tiridates himself flourished with youth, beauty, breeding, and spirit... Cass. Dio 62b.1.

For Mithridates: vultu quoque interrito permansit, cum rostra iuxta custodibus circumdatus visui populo praeberetur. His face remained undaunted even when ordered by guards on the rostra to be exhibited to the faces of the people. Tac. *Ann.* 12.21.

¹⁰⁵ Vell. 2.118.2; Cass. Dio 56.16.

“[Claudius] while increasing his own honor gave glory to the conquered.”¹⁰⁶ There was less honor in defeating a weak enemy but defeating a great and noble enemy brought great prestige. Not all of Rome’s enemies were described in the sources in this way but the glory of defeating great leaders explains why some were described in such favorable terms.

2.4 Conclusion

The honor of the empire played a key role in shaping how the Romans viewed grand strategy. Ancient sources suggest that Rome’s prestige and reputation was a major concern and may have had an impact on how the Romans considered foreign policy. While Roman authors do not address grand strategy itself, the smaller scale strategic decisions that they do discuss can lead us to infer what grand strategy may have involved and to identify the concerns and motivations that influenced it. Analysis of the accounts of conquest, revolts, and foreign negotiations reveals implicit references to strategy. Ancient Roman sources link honor and warfare and highlight the honor and glory of Rome in their accounts of military endeavors. These authors provide tantalizing hints that honor had a significant influence on foreign policy. It is impossible to tell what the emperors and commanders were thinking, but the ancient sources provide insight into Roman society and into what concerns and values may have impacted strategic decisions. It is only by studying these sources that we can form an idea of how the Romans themselves may have conceptualized grand strategy.

¹⁰⁶ Tac. *Ann.* 12.36. Caesar dum suum decus extollit, addidit gloriam victo.

Chapter 3: Honor and the Emperor

The honor of the emperors played an important role in imperial Rome so it is hardly surprising that it influenced strategy. Roman authors justified certain campaigns and strategic decisions by citing the emperors' need to increase or maintain their reputation. The reputation and prestige of the emperor was vital to his control of the state and threats to his honor had to be dealt with quickly or he would risk being assassinated. The accounts of Roman authors show that the emperor's individual honor factored into strategic decisions ranging from who commanded legions to when to wage war. A study of these sources reveals how the emperors may have conceptualized this honor and how they attempted to maintain it. This chapter is divided into three parts: the first examines how emperors' honor was protected and maintained, the second looks at the tools the emperors used to maintain their honor, and the final section demonstrates the link between honor and war. Examination of these factors gives us a better idea of the Roman view of honor in relation to the emperor and its impact on strategy.

3.1 Maintaining Honor

In the early principate an emperor had to maintain a difficult balance. On the one hand, he was the sole ruler, responsible for the administration of a large empire. On the other, he had to play a delicate political game in which he attempted to show the republic was still in place. This dynamic changed over time but its influence in the formative years of the principate had a significant impact on later emperors. This dichotomy shaped how emperors were viewed by their people and determined what constituted a 'good' emperor.

Self-promotion and propaganda were important tools, enabling emperors to demonstrate they had the requisite characteristics to rule. Augustus' *Res Gestae* is an excellent example of this. In it Augustus lays out his accomplishments and includes detailed descriptions of his political and military career. He lists his political offices and the powers granted to him but is careful to mention, "[He] received no magistracy offered contrary to the customs of the ancestors."¹⁰⁷ This is followed by description of his impressive building program and the gifts and spectacles he gave to the people. Augustus finishes by listing his extensive conquests saying, "[he] increased the borders of all the provinces of the Roman people to neighboring nations not subject to our rule."¹⁰⁸ This list of conquests takes up a significant amount of the inscription.¹⁰⁹ The *Res Gestae* also condemns the factionalism and civil war that led to Augustus' rise to power.¹¹⁰ Augustus presents himself as the perfect example of an honorable ruler. This is useful in determining which qualities added to the prestige of an emperor. Conquests were the subject of a substantial part of the inscription, demonstrating the importance of warfare to the honor of the emperor. This relationship had clear ramifications for strategic decision making.

The prevalence of jealousy in the ancient narratives provides some of the best evidence for the impact of the emperors' honor and prestige.¹¹¹ These accounts suggest that emperors were particularly jealous of successful commanders. These men were portrayed as a threat because

¹⁰⁷ Aug. RG. 6 nullum magistratum contra morem maiorum delatum recepi.

¹⁰⁸ Aug. RG. 26 Omnium provinciarum populi Romani quibus finitimae fuerunt gentes quae non parerent imperio nostro fines auxi.

¹⁰⁹ Chapters 25-33 of the inscription.

¹¹⁰ Livia and Augustus discuss factionalism and dissent at length in Cass. Dio 55.14-21. This debate is interesting because of how well it lines up with the values extolled in the *Res Gestae* 1-3.

¹¹¹ Jealousy is extremely common in most of the sources. It is not always explicitly stated as jealousy but often fear of potential rivals. While fear does not equal jealousy both stem from the desire to possess what one does not have (qualities, prestige, status etc.); Cass. Dio 53.23., Cass. Dio 55.16-19., Cass. Dio 57.21., Cass. Dio 57.3-5., Cass. Dio 59.20., Cass. Dio 59.27. Cass. Dio 61.30. Cass. Dio 62.23., Tac. *Ann.* 1.7., Tac. *Ann.* 1.69., Tac. *Ann.* 2.26., Tac. *Ann.* 2.41., Tac. *Ann.* 2.52., Tac. *Ann.* 13.6., Tac. *Ann.* 13.53., Tac. *Ann.* 14.47., Tac. *Ann.* 15.15., Suet. *Cal.* 34-35., Suet. *Nero.* 33. Suet. *Cl.* 1.

they displayed honor equal to or surpassing the emperor's. They were loved and admired by the public because they possessed the qualities an emperor should embody. It is impossible to know if the emperors themselves genuinely considered these men threats to their power but Tacitus, Cassius Dio, and Suetonius all cite jealousy as the reason behind foreign policy decisions.

For example, Tacitus claims Germanicus accused the emperor Tiberius of being so jealous of his success that he called him back from his command on the German frontier.¹¹² Similarly, Suetonius says that, "[Tiberius] described Germanicus' glorious victories as wholly ineffective and even harmful to the state..." and goes as far as accusing Tiberius of poisoning Germanicus.¹¹³ Cassius Dio describes a similar incident during the reign of the emperor Claudius. The general Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo was recalled from Germany because Claudius feared his success and Cassius Dio remarks that Corbulo, "...had been hindered by the emperor by reason of jealousy."¹¹⁴ Tacitus expresses this fear and jealousy bluntly when he describes the same event. "...[I]f [Corbulo] is successful an eminent man is a threat to peace and a burden to a cowardly emperor."¹¹⁵ Corbulo was also an important and successful commander under Nero. According to Cassius Dio Corbulo could have made himself emperor, "...since the men were thoroughly aggrieved by Nero, but all admired [Corbulo] in every way...".¹¹⁶ Nero eventually grew suspicious of him and his successes and ordered Corbulo to commit suicide.¹¹⁷

¹¹² Tac. *Ann.* 2.26.5

¹¹³ Suet. *Tib.* 52. ut et praeclara facta eius pro supervacuis elevarit et gloriosissimas victorias ceu damnosas rei p. increparet.

¹¹⁴ Cass. Dio 61.30 αὐτὸς δ' ὑπὸ τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος διὰ τὸν φθόνον ἐνεποδίσθη.

¹¹⁵ Tac. *Ann.* 11.19.3 sin prospere egisset, formidolosum paci virum insignem et ignavo principi praegravem.

¹¹⁶ Cass. Dio 62.23. ...ἄτε καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων τῷ τε Νέρωνι δεινῶς ἀχθομένων καὶ ἐκεῖνον ἐς πάντα δὴ πάντως θαυμάζόντων...

¹¹⁷ Cass. Dio 63.17.

Such jealous actions appear to be short sighted strategically yet they are consistent with larger political concerns. The emperors depended on the support of the legions to maintain their power and threats to that support had to be taken seriously no matter the strategic ramifications. Indeed, Germanicus was acclaimed emperor by the Rhine legions according to Tacitus.¹¹⁸ Suetonius corroborates this account, describing how Tiberius' unpopularity led the Rhine legions to try to make Germanicus emperor.¹¹⁹ Emperors recalling or assassinating popular commanders to prevent them from seizing power is a direct example of how the emperors' honor impacted foreign policy decisions.

3.2 Tactics for Maintaining Honor

Emperors promoted their honor by securing a virtual monopoly on triumphs. Emperors put an end to the competition for triumphs, which helped suppress potential rivals and promote their own image as a successful commander. Triumphs were an effective propaganda tool; they gave the emperor a platform to display the qualities important to maintaining or growing their reputation. An excellent example of this self promotion is Claudius' triumph for his conquest of Britain. Cassius Dio says that he only spent 16 days in Britain, yet he received the highest triumphal honors including the title of Britannicus, which he conferred on his son.¹²⁰ This triumph was important for Claudius in order to present himself as a conqueror. The public display of his victory was essential to his receiving the glory and prestige associated with a successful campaign.

¹¹⁸ Tac. *Ann.* 1.35

¹¹⁹ Suet. *Tib.* 25

¹²⁰ Cass. Dio 60.22-23.

The monopoly emperors had on triumphs also allowed them to promote their own supporters and thus generate loyalty in men who could oppose them. While other generals could receive triumphal honors, it was in association with the emperor. Emperors could choose which generals received a triumph and when. For example, during the revolt of Tacfarinas Tiberius gave a triumph to Junius Blaesus despite the fact that the war was not yet won but he refused one to Publius Dolabella who actually finished the war.¹²¹ As discussed in the previous chapter, Tacitus argues that Tiberius was attempting to promote that the war was over. This example demonstrates the strategic value of triumphs. Emperors could claim victories as their own or, if it suited their purpose, they could reward loyal generals thus exerting their control over military elites.

The emperor could lay claim to triumphal honors because he was the commander in chief of all of Rome's armies. The generals in the field were subordinate to the emperor who could assume command of any legions he chose. This allowed emperors to claim victories in which they did not take part. Cassio Dio says that Claudius received triumphal honors for a campaign in Mauretania despite the fact that, "...he had not gained any success and had not yet come to power when the war was finished."¹²² The emperor Caligula attempted to hold a triumph for his 'victory' over the sea and over the Germans. Although he cancelled his triumph, he did get an ovation.¹²³ Suetonius also claims that Caligula threatened the senate for trying to cheat him of his triumph. It is unclear if the senate actually had the ability to prevent an emperor from claiming a triumph as there is no evidence of it in this period. However, if the senate did indeed try to

¹²¹ Tac. *Ann.* 3.72. Tac. *Ann.* 4.26.

¹²² Cass. Dio 60.8; οὐχ ὅτι τι κατορθώσαντα, ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἐν τῇ ἀρχῇ πω ὄντα ὅτε διεπολεμήθη.

¹²³ Suet. *Cal.* 46-49.

prevent Caligula from receiving such a ridiculous triumph it would demonstrate the seriousness with which Romans viewed triumphs.

Honor was shared among the entire family and as a result familial honor had an effect on the individual. This link was especially important for the imperial family who was always in the public eye. Augustus went to great lengths to keep his family free of scandal, exiling his own daughter for inappropriate behavior. The honor of the imperial family also played a role in foreign policy. Male family members were often given political offices and military commands. Some of the most successful generals in the early imperial period were members of the imperial family.¹²⁴ In many ways military command on the frontier became a method of training future emperors. It allowed potential successors to increase their standing with the army and gave honor to the emperor through his family. Cassius Dio says that Augustus received more honors because of the exploits of Tiberius and Drusus.¹²⁵

Augustus extensively used his stepsons Tiberius and Drusus as military commanders. Drusus was engaged primarily on the German frontier and was extremely successful. The sources show that he was beloved by his troops and fearless in battle.¹²⁶ Augustus gave Drusus military honors and political titles. In addition, the posthumous honors given to Drusus included, “...the name Germanicus to him and his children, honors, statues, an arch, and an empty tomb for him next to the Rhine.”¹²⁷ Suetonius hints that there may have been some jealousy but scoffs at the idea saying that, “...Augustus felt such love for his works and life...” and goes so far as to

¹²⁴ Such as Augustus’ stepsons, Drusus and Tiberius, his son-in-law Agrippa, and Tiberius’ nephew Germanicus.

¹²⁵ Cass. Dio 54.33.

¹²⁶ Suet. *Cl.* 1.1. Cass. Dio 55.1-2. Vell. 2.97.2-3.

¹²⁷ ...Γερμανικός τε μετὰ τῶν παίδων ἐπονομασθείς, καὶ τιμὰς καὶ εἰκόνων καὶ ἀψῖδος κενотаφίου τε πρὸς αὐτῷ τῷ Ῥήνῳ λαβών. CassDio.55.2.3.

suggest that Augustus was actually his father not stepfather.¹²⁸ Unlike other commanders, Drusus' close familial ties to Augustus meant that any success he had as a commander as well as the honors he received were directly linked to Augustus and the rest of his family.

Augustus' eventual successor Tiberius received similar training. He commanded legions in Germania, Pannonia, Rhetia, and Armenia and received triumphal honors. While this served the practical purpose of giving Tiberius important military experience to aid in his leadership it also greatly increased Tiberius' prestige. Even hostile sources recognized his success as a military commander. Tacitus admits that he was, "esteemed in war".¹²⁹ Velleius Paterculus, a soldier who served under Tiberius, had a deep admiration for Tiberius as a military commander and as a leader.¹³⁰ Tiberius' success as a commander brought Augustus' family great prestige and enhanced Tiberius' reputation when he first came to power.

When Tiberius became emperor he was less active in military campaigns, instead leaving command to his generals. He too utilized family members to fill these command roles. The campaigns of his nephew and adoptive son Germanicus are well documented as are his own son Drusus' military exploits.¹³¹ Tiberius gave the command of the unstable Rhine frontier first to his nephew Germanicus then to his son Drusus, choosing them over other potentially more experienced commanders.¹³²

¹²⁸Suet. *Cl.* 1.4; ...Augustus tanto opere et vivum dilexerit...; Suet.*Cl.*1.1.

¹²⁹ ...spectatum bello... Tac. *Ann.* 1.4. *Spectatum* is an odd word choice here as its most common translation simply means "to observe" however it can be translated as "esteemed" or "respected" due to the relationship between prestige and visibility. By choosing this word Tacitus highlights the link between honor and being seen.

¹³⁰ Vell. 2.111-114. Velleius describes how Tiberius' presence was enough to win battles and that he always knew what was right to win a battle. He describes Tiberius saying, *tantum in bello ducem, quantum in pace videtur principem*. "[Tiberius was] as great a leader in war as a ruler in peace."

¹³¹Germanicus' campaigns will be discussed at length in chapter 4. For Drusus see; Tac. *Ann.* 2.62.

¹³² G.V. Sumner ("Germanicus and Drusus Caesar." *Latomus* (1967): 413-435.) highlights the use of family members in military commands as a way to secure a dynasty. Augustus advanced several family members at a young age and Germanicus and Drusus the Younger were groomed although Drusus was

Familial honor also extended to those who married into the imperial family. Augustus cemented the link between he and his friend Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa by having Agrippa marry his daughter Julia. This made Agrippa Augustus' heir despite their similar ages. Agrippa was one of Augustus' most successful generals and was responsible for the victory that brought Augustus to power. Through marriage into the imperial family, Agrippa's reputation and prestige became associated with the emperor. opportunities to marry into the imperial family were rare given the scarcity of imperial children. It was possible, however, for important figures to be linked to the imperial family through extended family. Corbulo, who gained an impressive reputation as a general under Claudius, was linked to the imperial family at one point as Caligula's brother-in-law. Cassius Dio says that Caligula made Corbulo a consul which helped start his military career.¹³³ While this link did not really bring honor to the imperial family it demonstrates how the imperial family could be linked to powerful allies.

The assignment of military commanders played a major role in foreign policy decisions and could impact the outcome of a given campaign. Mistakes made by inexperienced generals could prove disastrous for the legions in the field. The honor of the imperial family was important in maintaining the emperors' position of power, and the glory gained by successful campaigns could explain why generals were selected based on familial ties rather than qualifications.¹³⁴

3.3 Honor and War

held back initially seemingly as a reserve should other family members perish. Thus the use of family members in high military positions served a twofold function in securing a dynasty and increasing honor.

¹³³ Cass. Dio 59.15.

¹³⁴ Suet. *Aug.* 64. Augustus' adopted sons Gaius and Lucius were sent as commanders in the provinces as soon as they came of age at 18.

Roman sources were extremely critical of emperors who were not successful military commanders themselves. Whether the general populace shared this opinion is unclear, but several emperors made the effort to personally lead campaigns. The sources justify emperors' decisions to lead campaigns by the honor and glory that could be attained. A successful campaign greatly increased the emperors' prestige and could rehabilitate their reputation if necessary. Augustus widely promoted his own conquests, which are memorialized in his *Res Gestae*. During his reign, Augustus increased the size of the empire and he occasionally went into the field personally. Augustus' campaigns brought him great prestige, gave him a fierce reputation, and allowed for effective propaganda. Cassius Dio describes a campaign where even the mention of Augustus' imminent arrival incites the enemy to surrender; "...the barbarians learning... that [Augustus] was advancing with an army, returned to their own territory and made peace, giving hostages."¹³⁵ Augustus' participation on campaigns allowed him to secure his reputation as a great conqueror, which was vital to his position.

The impact, or perceived impact, on an emperor's honor could also lead him to decide not to go on campaign. During Tiberius' reign there was a revolt in Gaul but Tiberius suppressed news of this revolt until it was successfully put down by his generals. When he finally informed the senate of the revolt he claimed that neither he nor his son Drusus were present to suppress the revolt because his prestige would be damaged if he left Rome for every small uprising.¹³⁶ It was beneath his dignity as a ruler to react to minor rebellions. Tiberius, however, then informed the

¹³⁵ Cass. Dio 54.20; οἱ γὰρ βάρβαροι... καὶ ἐκεῖνον στρατεύοντα πυθόμενοι ἔξ τε τὴν ἑαυτῶν ἀνεχώρησαν καὶ σπονδὰς ἐποιήσαντο, ὁμήρους δόντες.

¹³⁶ Tac. *Ann.* 3.47; simul causas cur non ipse, non Drusus profecti ad id bellum forent, adiunxit, magnitudinem imperii extollens, neque decorum principibus, si una alterave civitas turbet omissa urbe, unde in omnia regimem

senate that he would go to arrange the final settlement.¹³⁷ Tiberius wanted to appear strong and composed in the face of danger and only involved himself at the end of the campaign to promote his role as protector.

The willingness of less competent emperors to go on campaign further demonstrates the link between the emperor's honor and his decisions concerning military matters. Unfortunately, there was no guarantee that the emperor's actions would result in prestige or improve his reputation. Indeed, the unstable emperor Caligula, feeling the need to present himself as a conqueror, embarked on a campaign in Germany that was not well received. Suetonius claims that Caligula's campaign was a farce and "[s]ince there was not enough opportunity for war he ordered a few of his German guards to be taken across the Rhine and hide, after lunch it was announced to him that the enemy was present in a great tumult. At this he set out with some companions and part of the praetorian cavalry into the nearby woods..."¹³⁸ Caligula had little concern about properly governing the empire but even he felt compelled to lead a campaign. In Suetonius' narrative Caligula was most concerned about the glory associated with war. He engaged in little fighting yet he erected monuments and collected spoils and planned a grand triumph.¹³⁹ Caligula's campaign may have been a sham but it demonstrates the importance to the emperor of his participation on campaign.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Tac. *Ann.* 3.47; nunc quia non metu ducatur iturum ut praesentia spectaret componeretque. decrevere patres vota pro reditu eius supplicationesque et alia decora.

¹³⁸ Suet. *Cal.* 45; Mox deficiente belli materia paucos de custodia Germanos traici oculique trans Rhenum iussit ac sibi post prandium quam tumultuosissime adesse hostem nuntiari. Quo facto proripuit se cum amicis et parte equitum praetorianorum in proximam silvam...

¹³⁹ Suet. *Cal.* 46- 47.

¹⁴⁰ Some scholars like David Woods ("Caligula's Seashells." *Greece & Rome* (2000): 80-87. And "Caligula's Gallic Captives." *Latomus* (2007): 900-904.), Anthony Barrett (*Caligula: The Corruption of Power*. London: B. T. Batsford, 1989.), and Marc Kleijwegt ("Caligula 'Triumph' at Baiae ." *Mnemosyne* (1994): 652-671.) have tried to redeem Caligula in regards to his military endeavors. They highlight the amount of planning involved in Caligula's various military actions. Caligula did indeed take the time to prepare his campaign and he made rational decisions with regards to commanders. He also may have been reacting to genuine fears on the German frontier. Barrett highlights the fact that Caligula came from a line

Claudius' conquest of Britain further demonstrates the link between the emperor's honor and foreign policy and strategy. The sources justify the conquest of Britain because the emperor Claudius wanted the glory associated with a successful campaign.¹⁴¹ Claudius was an odd emperor who, if one believes the sources, came to power in a most undignified way. He is said to have had a limp and a speech impediment and, while he had a reputation as a scholar, he was not seen as a strong leader.¹⁴² Claudius' position as emperor was precarious. According to Suetonius and Cassius Dio some in the senate wished to restore the republic and, while Claudius managed to take power, he was not very imposing.¹⁴³ Suetonius writes that while he had received triumphal honors previously, these were "...beneath his dignity..." and that "...Britain was where glory could be most readily earned."¹⁴⁴ Suetonius also highlights the connection between Britain and Julius Caesar which further increased the prestige of the conquest.

Claudius' involvement in the invasion of Britain appears to have been limited. Aulus Plautius was sent ahead and he won several engagements against the Britons. Plautius pushed the Britons to the Thames and it was only at this point that he sent for the emperor. Cassius Dio writes that Plautius was struggling and sent to the emperor for help as they had agreed before Plautius departed.¹⁴⁵ Claudius then arrived in Britain with fresh supplies including a contingent

of famous military commanders and that military glory was very appealing to him (124). He also notes that Caligula likely wanted to invade Britain and made the preparations necessary to do so but may have been discouraged by his lack of success in securing Germany first (131).

¹⁴¹ Modern scholars like A. A. Barrett ("Claudius' British Victory Arch in Rome." *Britannia* (1991): 1-19.), J. G. Hind ("The Invasion of Britain in A.D. 43 - An Alternate Strategy for Aulus Plautius." *Britannia* (1989): 1-21.), and Graham Webster (*The Roman Invasion of Britain*. London, New York: Routledge, 1999.) accept this justification for Claudius' campaign with little examination. That Claudius launched his campaign because he needed to earn glory and prestige is widely accepted but its significance to Roman strategy is not examined.

¹⁴² Suet. *Cl.* 3-4.

¹⁴³ Cass. Dio 60.3; Suet. *Cl.* 11.

¹⁴⁴ Suet. *Cl.* 17; Cum decretis sibi a senatu ornamentis triumphalibus leviorē maiestati principali titulum arbitretur velletque iusti triumphī decus, unde acquireret Britanniam potissimum elegit...

¹⁴⁵ Cass. Dio 60.21.

of war elephants.¹⁴⁶ Both Cassius Dio and Suetonius agree that once Claudius arrived the Britons surrendered and Claudius was able to capture the capital of Camulodunum.¹⁴⁷ Cassius Dio paints the picture of Claudius as a dashing hero coming to save the day, however, it is far more likely that the Britons had been subdued before he arrived. Claudius remained in Britain for only six months and subdued only a small fraction of the island. He left for Rome to receive his triumph and left Plautius to continue the campaign.¹⁴⁸

Nevertheless, Claudius achieved great glory for this campaign and acquired the honors that came with a successful conquest.¹⁴⁹ He received a massive triumph and the title of Britannicus for him and his son. Claudius also received two triumphal arches, one in Rome and one in Gaul, that celebrated his victory.¹⁵⁰ Later, in A.D. 51, the defeated leader Caratacus was captured and brought to Rome. Tacitus claims that Caratacus had become quite famous and Claudius, "...while increasing his own honor gave glory to the conquered."¹⁵¹ Claudius' invasion of Britain was a success because it allowed him to not only gain the favor of the people but also the respect of the armies in the field.¹⁵² He capitalized on this opportunity by making a grand public spectacle of his victory and cemented his place as one of the conquering emperors.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁶ Cass. Dio 60.21.

¹⁴⁷ Cass. Dio 60.21; Suet. *Cl.* 17.

¹⁴⁸ Cass. Dio 60.22.

¹⁴⁹ Cass. Dio 60.22.

¹⁵⁰ Cass. Dio 60.22.

¹⁵¹ Tac. *Ann.* 12.36; Caesar dum suum decus extollit, addidit gloriam victo.

¹⁵² Webster, Roman Invasion of Britain, 168-169.

¹⁵³ A. A. Barrett ("Claudius' British Victory Arch in Rome." *Britannia* (1991): 1-19.) discusses the aspects of Claudius' triumph and the monuments of victory and highlights how these aspects of Claudius' invasion are the most covered in scholarship. Indeed, even for Claudius the expressions of victory were the most important aspects of his campaigns. Barrett demonstrates how the monuments erected to commemorate this victory display how Claudius wanted to be remembered.

The example of Claudius' conquest of Britain demonstrates just how significantly the honor of the emperor could impact strategy. The invasion shows that the emperors' honor could lead to extensive campaigns and massive territorial acquisitions. Conquest for the sole purpose of honor seems irrational by modern standards, however, for the Romans this was completely justified.¹⁵⁴ Martial honor played an important role in Roman society and the emperor's position was related to his abilities as a commander. As a result, honor and the pursuit of glory were seen as reasonable justifications for war.

3.4 Conclusion

The ancient literary sources demonstrate that the emperors' desire to enhance their own honor and that of their family was an important factor in foreign policy and strategic decisions. The emperors were in a precarious position during the early imperial period. They had to maintain the illusion that the republic was still intact and one of the ways to do that was to maintain republic ideals of leadership. Roman leaders were expected to be successful commanders and conquest brought great glory and prestige. The emperors' desire for glory influenced how the army behaved on the frontier in various ways. In many instances the jealousy of the emperor cost the legions an experienced commander. In other cases, the importance of the reputation of the imperial family resulted in generals who were not only unqualified but could be as young as 18. Most significantly the need to maintain and increase the emperor's honor resulted in declarations

¹⁵⁴ Both Cassius Dio and Suetonius suggest that Claudius invaded Britain to increase his personal prestige and this explanation is accepted by several modern scholars as well. See: Graham Webster's *The Roman Invasion of Britain* (London, New York: Routledge, 1999), Giles Standing's *The Claudian Invasion of Britain and the Cult of Victoria Britannica* (Britannia (2003): 281-288) and A. A. Barrett's *Claudius' British Victory Arch in Rome* (Britannia (1991): 1-19).

of war and the expansion of the empire. The importance of honor was deeply ingrained in their society and making strategic decisions based on the personal or familial honor of the emperor would have been perfectly justified. Roman authors use the honor and reputation of the emperor to justify many foreign policy decisions and this justification should not be so easily dismissed. As such, we must consider the honor of the emperor when considering how the Romans may have conceptualized grand strategy.

Chapter 4: The Battle of Teutoburg Forest and its Aftermath

The greatest military disaster during the early principate was the Battle of Teutoburg Forest in A.D. 9. Three Roman legions were destroyed in less than a week, leaving one of the most volatile frontiers open to invasion. This disaster provides us with an opportunity to examine the factors that influenced Roman foreign policy. The Battle of Teutoburg Forest and its aftermath are useful as a case study not only because of the impact this loss had on the Roman empire, but because there exists a wealth of source information about this event. This enables us to get a more accurate picture of events and serves to eliminate some of the source bias. By studying the Battle of Teutoburg Forest and its aftermath we can get a better idea of the way in which the Romans viewed grand strategy.

This case study is divided into three parts: the first presents an overview of the battle and its aftermath, the second examines the ways these events were influenced by the honor of the empire, and the final section examines the ways these events were influenced by the honor of the emperor. The various facets of the Battle of Teutoburg Forest and its aftermath demonstrate that Rome's grand strategy was heavily influenced by honor. Honor played a major role in Roman society and the honor of the emperor as well as the corporate honor of the empire itself appears to have a major impact on foreign policy. Ancient Roman sources used honor to justify many aspects of the Teutoburg disaster and these justifications should be considered when studying grand strategy.

4.1 The Battle of Teutoburg Forest and Its Aftermath

By A.D. 4 Augustus claimed he had secured Roman power all the way to the Elbe river encompassing nearly all of modern day Germany.¹⁵⁵ While, his armies managed to conquer large swaths of territory and subdue several tribes, nevertheless local resistance remained active.¹⁵⁶ In A.D. 6 many of the legions were relocated from Germany to Illyricum to deal with the revolt there. It was at this time that local resentment grew. Quintilius Varus became governor and, Cassius Dio notes, “he ordered [the locals] like they were slaves and exacted money like they were subjects...”.¹⁵⁷ Corruption was rampant and “many preferred the customs they were used to that had been established than foreign rule.”¹⁵⁸ This resentment combined with the withdrawal of the legions created the perfect conditions for rebellion.

The German resistance was led by Arminius, the son of chief of the Cherusci, who had been sent to Rome as a hostage. He grew up in Rome and was educated in Roman military matters, and when he was older he was sent to Varus as an advisor. Velleius describes him as a “youth of noble birth, strong hands, quick mind, with greater ingenuity than visible in barbarians...”.¹⁵⁹ Arminius betrayed Varus, and secretly organized several Germanic tribes against Rome. Finally, he set a trap and led Varus and his legions to a narrow pass in the Teutoburg Forest. The Romans were ambushed during a storm and slaughtered.¹⁶⁰ The army

¹⁵⁵ Aug. RG. 26.

¹⁵⁶ Cass. Dio 56.18.

¹⁵⁷ Cass. Dio 56.18; καὶ τὰ τε ἄλλα ὡς καὶ δουλεύουσιν σφισιν ἐπέταττε καὶ χρήματα ὡς καὶ παρ’ ὑπηκόων ἐσέπρασεν...

¹⁵⁸ Cass. Dio 56.18; καὶ τὰ πλήθη τὴν συνήθη κατάστασιν πρὸ τῆς ἀλλοφύλου δεσποτείας προτιμῶντες...

¹⁵⁹ Vell. 2.118.2; Tum iuvenis genere nobilis, manu fortis, sensu celer, ultra barbarum promptus ingenio...

¹⁶⁰ The most detailed descriptions are Cass. Dio 56.20-21. And Vell. 2.119-120.

faced a harried retreat that lasted four days and resulted in the deaths in most of the legionaries and almost all the commanders. The Germans pushed the Romans all the way back to the Rhine, recovering nearly all the territory that Augustus had conquered.¹⁶¹

In Rome the response to this disaster was dramatic. Augustus feared that Rome's defeat at the hands of the Germans would not only threaten the frontier but the entire empire.¹⁶²

Tiberius was sent as quickly as possible to stop the Germans from going any further across the Rhine. Velleius Paterculus says that Tiberius led a few retaliatory campaigns across the Rhine to stabilize the region after the attacks although Cassius Dio says he remained on the other side and monitored the enemy.¹⁶³ Whatever the case, the Germans were halted at the Rhine and the frontier was secured for the time being.

When Tiberius returned to Rome in A.D. 12, his nephew Germanicus took over control of the Rhine legions. Germanicus was popular and a successful military commander. In A.D. 14, soon after Germanicus took command in Germany, Augustus died leaving Tiberius as emperor. Shortly thereafter, the legions along the Rhine and Danube mutinied. They demanded better pay and shorter terms of service and on the Rhine they tried to make Germanicus emperor.¹⁶⁴ Germanicus managed to subdue the mutiny and led several campaigns into Germany in order to keep the legions occupied. He recovered several of the eagles lost during the Teutoburg disaster

¹⁶¹ Cass. Dio 56.22.

¹⁶² Suet. *Tib.* 17; "the victorious Germans would have joined with the Pannonians if the rebellion in Illyricum had not been stopped first." *nemine dubitante quin victores Germani iuncturi se Pannoniis fuerint, nisi debellatum prius Illyricum esset.*

¹⁶³ Vell. 2.120.7; Cass. Dio 56.24; In this case Velleius is a more reliable source as he was writing closer to events. Velleius, however, may have exaggerated the extent of these campaigns. He claims that not a single Roman soldier was killed which could be feasible if these were smaller raids rather than actual campaigns. In this case Suetonius (*Tib.* 18) provides a compromise saying that Tiberius did not launch a large scale invasion as Cassius Dio says but he sent small groups of soldiers over the Rhine to reestablish order.

¹⁶⁴ Vell. 2.125.2; Tac. *Ann.* 1.31; Cass. Dio 57.4.

and recovered and buried the Roman soldiers who died in the battle. He defeated several tribes, including the Marsi and Bructeri, and secured Rome's alliances with their old allies. The shining moment of these campaigns was the Battle of the Weser River (A.D. 16) in which Germanicus was able to soundly beat Arminius and his coalition.

Germanicus' campaigns were an attempt to take back lost territory and take revenge on the German leader Arminius and his followers. His campaigns met with mixed results. Germanicus was quite successful against the German alliance led by Arminius but he was not able to regain control over the territory that had been lost in the Teutoburg disaster. Germanicus was recalled by Tiberius in A.D. 17 and was sent to Asia.

After Germanicus was recalled, the German frontier remained relatively secure. In A.D. 21 Arminius was killed by his own tribe and no leader replaced him. The Germanic tribes turned to fighting among themselves and posed less of a threat. The Romans kept a large number of legions on the Rhine frontier and, while the Rhine frontier remained unstable, Rome was not under the same threat as in the period following the Battle of Teutoburg Forest. Rome remained active in the region and was involved in local disputes. The Romans led fewer large scale invasions and there were fewer serious revolts.

4.2 The Honor of the Empire and the Battle of Teutoburg Forest

A careful analysis of the events surrounding the Battle of Teutoburg Forest helps us understand what factors may have influenced Roman strategy. Tacitus' account of the Roman response to the Teutoburg disaster is the best evidence for the relationship between honor and strategy. Tacitus justifies Germanicus' campaigns in terms of honor: "at this time there was no war except to conquer the Germans, more to destroy the shame caused by Quintilius Varus and his army than

a desire to extend the empire or for a worthy prize.”¹⁶⁵ Tacitus provides explicit motives that Germanicus was sent to Germany to dispel shame, which was a serious strategic concern for the Romans and was a perfectly logical reason to launch a campaign. Tacitus identifies other justifications for war in this statement, yet he places the need to dispel shame alongside them presenting it as equally if not more important. This statement reinforces the significance of honor in war for the Romans.

Early in Germanicus’ command in Germany the troops on the Rhine mutinied. This was a serious concern for the Romans on such an unstable frontier. According to Tacitus, the Romans feared, “if the enemy [was] aware of the Roman mutiny and if the riverbank was abandoned they would invade...”¹⁶⁶ The Roman fears represent rational strategic concerns as this vulnerability appears to have inspired the enemy. Arminius apparently told his troops not to fear the Romans and their mutinous army.¹⁶⁷ However, Tacitus’ account is most concerned with the loss of honor the mutiny represented. In order to stop the mutiny and regain any lost honor, Germanicus started his punitive campaigns. He led a particularly brutal raid against the Marsi and slaughtered them all while they slept after a festival.¹⁶⁸ Germanicus used the anger that led to the mutiny to destroy the enemy. Tacitus justifies this action saying Germanicus urged his troops “...to turn guilt into glory.”¹⁶⁹ In Roman society military discipline was a major point of pride and the maintenance of discipline justified the use of extreme measures.¹⁷⁰ Mutiny was seen as a shameful act and so the idea that a mutinous army would need to regain their glory may have

¹⁶⁵ Tac. *Ann.* 1.3; bellum ea tempestate nullum nisi adversus Germanos supererat, abolendae magis infamiae ob amissum cum Quintilio Varo exercitum quam cupidine proferendi imperii aut dignum ob praemium.

¹⁶⁶ Tac. *Ann.* 1.36; augebat metum gnarus Romanae seditionis et, si omitteretur ripa, invasurus hostis...

¹⁶⁷ Tac. *Ann.* 1.59; ne inperitum adolescentulum, ne seditiosum exercitum pavescerent.

¹⁶⁸ Tac. *Ann.* 1.51.

¹⁶⁹ Tac. *Ann.* 1.51;culpam in decus vertere.

¹⁷⁰ Tac. *Ann.* 1.35; ubi modestia militaris, ubi veteris **disciplinae decus**

factored into the decision to go on campaign. This may also have had an impact on how the campaign was conducted as brutal campaigns were seen as glorious.

The sources' treatment of Arminius is also interesting. Velleius treats him with a surprising amount of respect and gives him many honorable attributes. Tacitus also imparts noble qualities to Arminius and ascribes many elegant speeches to him. However, it is not just Arminius who receives this respect in the sources. When Velleius describes Maroboduus the leader of the Marcomanni he uses many of the same descriptors.¹⁷¹ The Romans gained more honor from defeating a worthy enemy, and as a result sources often attempted to increase the honor of enemy leaders.¹⁷² Velleius highlights that both German leaders were not the average barbarian but more intelligent and rational. Fighting, and eventually defeating, enemies who were honorable greatly increased the glory of victory.

The events surrounding Battle of Teutoburg Forest demonstrate the ways in which concerns about the honor of Rome itself influenced strategy. While the Romans may have had other strategic concerns, honor played an important role in the narrative presented by the ancient sources. This may simply be a literary device however, the ideas these authors present fit with the concerns and values of Roman society. Teutoburg and its aftermath demonstrates why the Romans may have felt compelled to go to war and why they deployed certain tactics. The honor, shame, and glory expressed in relation to these events, while rooted in similar notions of public perception and honor, is distinct from the notion of personal honor. This demonstrates that the honor of the empire itself was also significant and had an impact on strategic decisions on the German frontier.

¹⁷¹ See Vell. 2.118.2 (Tum iuvenis genere nobilis, manu fortis, sensu celer, ultra barbarum promptus ingenio...) and Vell. 2.108.2. (Maroboduus, genere nobilis, corpore praevalens, animo ferox, natione magis quam ratione barbarus...) for comparison.

¹⁷² For more on the glory in defeating honorable leaders see Chapter 2.

4.3 The Battle of Teutoburg Forest and the Honor of the Emperor

Roman emperors were concerned with their personal prestige and reputation which were related to the military success of Rome. The Battle of Teutoburg Forest and its aftermath demonstrates the ways in which the emperors' honor influenced strategy. The campaigns surrounding the Battle of Teutoburg Forest provide us with several examples of how the emperors' honor could influence strategic decisions. One way emperors could increase their personal prestige and that of their families was by placing family members in command. The campaigns that dealt with the aftermath of the Teutoburg disaster were commanded by members of the imperial family.

Augustus initially sent Tiberius, his step-son and future heir, to deal with the immediate aftermath of the disaster. When Tiberius was forced to return to Rome he left his nephew Germanicus in command of the Rhine legions. Finally, when Germanicus was eventually recalled Tiberius sent his son Drusus to replace him claiming, "...there was no other enemy but the Germans where it was possible to obtain the name imperator and receive honors."¹⁷³

Familial honor was an important aspect of Roman honor and the prestige of your family had a direct link to your personal prestige. For emperors this meant that the honor and reputation of their family had an impact on their honor. Deploying family members as generals enabled emperors to increase the prestige of the imperial family. The German frontier offers an excellent example of the role the imperial family played as commanders.¹⁷⁴ Not only were all the

¹⁷³Tac. *Ann.* 2.26; qui nullo tum alio hoste non nisi apud Germanias adsequi nomen imperatorium et deportare lauream posset.

¹⁷⁴ Choosing commanders based on familial relationships rather than qualifications could produce negative results. Germanicus, while successful in battle, did not actually regain the territory lost after the Battle of Teutoburg Forest (his goal according to Tacitus), despite expending considerable resources. Tacitus also accuses Tiberius' son Drusus of creating disputes between the German tribes so he could gain honor for himself (Tac. *Ann.* 2.62). Herbert W. Benario ("Teutoburg," *The Classical World* (2003): 397-406.) argues that an inexperienced commander was likely the reason for the Teutoburg disaster. He

campaigns after the Teutoburg disaster led by members of the imperial family but the campaigns in Germany that preceded the Battle of Teutoburg Forest were also led by the emperor's family. Tiberius and his brother Drusus led the campaigns that pushed the Germans to the Elbe. These campaigns brought great prestige to the imperial family and thus the emperor. In fact, Germanicus was so named because of his father Drusus' successes in Germany.

Germanicus' recall is another interesting piece of evidence for the impact of the emperor's honor in strategy. Despite his successes against Arminius and his forces and his familial relationship to Tiberius, Germanicus was recalled to Rome in A.D. 9 and sent out to the eastern frontier. The sources claim that Tiberius recalled Germanicus because he was jealous of him and feared his success. While Tiberius was a successful commander, he was not nearly as popular as his nephew Germanicus. Tacitus suggests that Germanicus' success was too much of a threat to the emperor¹⁷⁵ and Suetonius suggests that Tiberius' was so jealous of Germanicus he had him killed.¹⁷⁶ Tacitus also states that Germanicus was afraid of the emperor's jealousy and tried to promote his loyalty to Tiberius.¹⁷⁷

It is possible that jealousy had nothing to do with Tiberius' decision to bring Germanicus back to Rome. Germanicus had not been able to reestablish Roman control over the territory lost after the Teutoburg disaster and he had expended considerable resources. David Shotter suggests that Tiberius was concerned that Germanicus was too reckless and that he was looking for any

argues that had Varus been more experienced he would not have so easily been deceived (401-402). Benario states that while the emperor's familial relationships could produce successful commanders, like Tiberius, this was not always the case. He argues that one of the main reasons Varus was given command in Germany was because of his close ties to Augustus and the fact that he was actually related to the emperor by marriage (403). The honor of the imperial family was a concern for the emperor and it justified the use and promotion of seemingly unsuccessful and inexperienced commanders.

¹⁷⁵ Tac. *Ann.* 2.26.

¹⁷⁶ Suet. *Cal.* 2.

¹⁷⁷ Tac. *Ann.* 2.22.

reason to recall him.¹⁷⁸ Shotter highlights Germanicus' melodramatic character and poor decision making.¹⁷⁹ He also rejects the idea that Tacitus may have distorted facts in Germanicus' favor and demonstrates that Tiberius' hostility was justified.¹⁸⁰ Linda W. Rutland also argues that Tacitus was highly critical of Germanicus' flaws.¹⁸¹ She also argues that Tiberius was justified in relieving Germanicus of command because he had serious character defects that influenced his command. She claims his suicide threat was ineffective and overly dramatic, and he could be naïve and overly mild.¹⁸² Mary Frances Williams rejects the idea that Germanicus was melodramatic and naïve. She claims that the way Germanicus dealt with the mutiny in Germany was very similar to the way Drusus and Blaesus dealt with the mutiny in Pannonia and he was more effective and collected than Blaesus the experienced commander.¹⁸³ She also notes that Tiberius had a legitimate reason to be jealous of Germanicus as he presented a real threat to the emperor and Germanicus appeared to be most concerned with securing the loyalty of the troops.¹⁸⁴ Jealousy was a common justification in Roman sources and given the popularity and means of Germanicus it should be considered seriously. There is also no evidence that Tiberius was concerned with Germanicus' conduct on campaign or that his behavior was abnormal for a Roman commander. It is not evident that Romans themselves thought that Germanicus was unsuccessful. Germanicus was apparently popular in Rome and the Rhine legions tried to make him emperor, which suggests that Tiberius' jealousy was not unfounded. The emperor's position

¹⁷⁸ D.C.A Shotter, *Tiberius Caesar*, (London, New York: Routledge, 2004), 41.

¹⁷⁹ D. C. A. Shotter, "Tacitus, Tiberius and Germanicus." *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* (1968): 194-214, 198-200.

¹⁸⁰ D. C. A. Shotter, "Tacitus, Tiberius, and Germanicus", 195.

¹⁸¹ Linda W. Rutland, "The Tacitean Germanicus: Suggestions for Re-Evaluation." *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* (1987): 153-164. 154.

¹⁸² Rutland, 155-158.

¹⁸³ Mary Frances Williams, "Four Mutinies: Tacitus "Annals" 1.16-30; 1.31-49 and Ammianus Marcellinus "Res Gestae" 20.4.9-20; 24.3.1-8." *Phoenix* (1997): 44-74, 53.

¹⁸⁴ Mary Frances Williams, 51.

depended on the support of the army and any threats to that support needed to be dealt with.

Tiberius' decision to relieve Germanicus of command was likely influenced by his jealousy of a rival who possessed great prestige. This decision had an impact on the campaign in Germany.

Major incursions into German territory were halted under the new commander in favor of smaller expeditions.

Germanicus' burial of the soldiers who died in the ambush and his recovery of the eagles lost is another example of how the Romans attempted to restore the honor lost in the disaster.

This symbolic victory is similar to Augustus' negotiation of the return of the Parthian eagles.¹⁸⁵

The loss of men at Teutoburg was a major tragedy for the Roman people. Germanicus, while fighting the Bructeri, recovered an eagle lost by Varus, which inspired him to pay tribute to the fallen.¹⁸⁶ He led the army to Teutoburg Forest and Tacitus describes the site of the battle in

gruesome detail, including altars where Roman leaders were sacrificed and skulls nailed to trees.¹⁸⁷ Germanicus dutifully buried the nameless dead and built a burial mound in their

honor.¹⁸⁸ Cassius Dio, whose account of Germanicus' campaign is limited, lists the burial of the fallen soldiers as one of Germanicus' most honorable deeds.¹⁸⁹ The burial of the dead at

Teutoburg was a way for the Romans to assert some level of control over the battlefield.¹⁹⁰

Tacitus provides evidence that this may have also had an effect on the enemy. Shortly before the

¹⁸⁵ Susan Mattern-Parkes in "The Defeat of Crassus and the Just War" argues that as with the Parthian settlement the return of the symbols of defeat represented a significant act of vengeance. (394)

¹⁸⁶ Tac. *Ann.* 1.60.

¹⁸⁷ Tac. *Ann.* 1.61.

¹⁸⁸ Tac. *Ann.* 1.62.

¹⁸⁹ Cass. Dio 57.18. This event seems to be universally praised and it is also mentioned in Suet. *Cal.* 3. The only source that seems to present a negative view of this is actually Tacitus who says that while he thinks Germanicus' actions were honorable the emperor Tiberius did not approve. Tacitus blames this disapproval on Tiberius' jealousy. Tac. *Ann.* 1.62.

¹⁹⁰ Victoria E. Pagan ("Beyond Teutoburg: Transgression and Transformation in Tacitus *Annales* 1.61-62." *Classical Philology* (1999): 302-320.) argues that Germanicus' return to the site of the Teutoburg disaster was an attempt to transform the defeat into victory (314). She notes the effect the imagery of the unburied dead would have had and the shame this would have caused (306).

Battle of the Weser River the Chatti destroyed the mound.¹⁹¹ The burial mound itself had little strategic importance and the effort expended seems to make little sense. The strategic value of the burial of the fallen soldiers is what it represented for each side. For the Romans the burial lessened the shame represented by the unburied dead and for the Germans the subsequent destruction of the burial mound represented humiliation to Rome. The burial of the fallen was significant for both the honor of the empire and the honor of the imperial family. Burying the dead helped restore Rome's honor and brought Germanicus great prestige.¹⁹² While it may seem illogical to divert legions from a campaign to bury the dead this further demonstrates the impact that honor had on strategic decisions.

4.4 Conclusion

The Battle of Teutoburg Forest and its aftermath provide us with an important case study to support our examination of the way the Romans conceptualized strategy. The battle was one of the worst military disasters in Roman history and had a lasting impact on the Romans. Fear that another German offensive may have similar consequences seems to have influenced how the Romans behaved on the German frontier. From Claudius trying to prevent more German campaigns to Tiberius encouraging the Germans to fight among themselves rather than continue the war, the Teutoburg disaster seems to have left a lasting impression. Tacitus claims that even 50 years after the Battle of Teutoburg Forest Arminius' success inspired Boudicca's rebellion.

¹⁹¹ Tac. *Ann.* 2.7.

¹⁹² Tacitus says that Tiberius did not approve of Germanicus burying the fallen at Teutoburg Forest. He says Tiberius was worried that it would demoralize the troops and that "a commander presiding over the office of augur and most ancient ceremonies should avoid conducting funerals." neque imperatorem auguratu et vetustissimis caerimoniis praeditum adtrectare feralia debuisse. (*Ann.* 1.62.)

Tacitus writes that the Britons believed that if the Germans could keep the Romans out with only a river than they could keep them off the island of Britain.¹⁹³

It can be argued that the campaigns after the Teutoburg disaster had no strategic value. The Romans were not able to regain control over the areas lost and the region remained unstable. Germanicus also expended considerable manpower to achieve little in terms of regaining territory or riches. However, when considered as retaliation for the loss at Teutoburg Forest, Germanicus' campaigns do have strategic value. Honor was important in Roman society and military honor was paramount. Because of this significance it would have made strategic sense for the Romans to launch their campaign in Germany. The duration of the campaign along with some of the specific actions taken by the Romans lend credence to Tacitus' claim that Germanicus went to war against the Germans to dispel the shame of defeat. This is echoed by Tacitus at the end of Germanicus' campaigns when Tiberius tells him, "[he could] leave the Cerusci and other rebel tribes to internal strife now that Rome's vengeance [had] been served."¹⁹⁴ In the eyes of the Romans the strategic value of the campaigns was that Rome could regain the honor lost in the disaster.

The way the Romans reacted to and dealt with this disaster allows us to get a better idea of what concerns may have influenced strategy and foreign policy. Roman authors claim that honor not only influenced decisions during the campaigns but justified the war itself. Teutoburg shows how both the honor of the empire and the honor of the emperor could impact strategy. Honor could influence when and why the Romans went to war, what tactics were used, who the commanders were, and how the legions devoted their time. The way in which the sources discuss

¹⁹³ Tac. *Agr.* 1.15.

¹⁹⁴ Tac. *Ann.* 2.26; posse et Cheruscos ceterasque rebellium gentis, quoniam Romanae ultioni consultum esset, internis discordiis relinqui.

these events reflects the significance of honor to Roman society. The intense shame felt by the loss of Varus and his legions left an impression on the various authors who covered the disaster, a fact clearly depicted in their accounts. The Battle of Teutoburg Forest and its aftermath demonstrates how the Romans may have conceptualized strategy and how it was applied in real campaigns on the frontier.

Conclusion

Honor played an important role in Roman society thus it is not surprising that it influenced Roman strategy. Honor for the Romans was based on public perception of both the individual and his family. It was vital for political success during the republic and the subject of intense competition for elites. Aristocrats competed for offices that would bring them honor and prestige and competition was toughest for political offices that came with military command. War and conquest brought illustrious glory to commanders and their names were remembered for centuries. During the imperial period offices and military honors were controlled by the emperor. However, the emperor remained in competition for honor with popular elites and successful generals and as a result the emperor's reputation was an important concern. Emperors promoted their personal prestige and that of their families and the best way to achieve glory was through military success. The link between the emperors' honor and martial success meant that honor had a major impact on strategy. However, it was not just the individual honor of the emperor but the corporate honor of Rome that influenced strategy. Roman honor was also related to the honor of the household and this notion could be expanded to include the empire itself. The honor of Rome was at stake every time the Romans went to war and the need to defend or avenge Rome's honor played a role in strategic thinking.

Ancient Roman sources often discuss warfare in terms of honor but this link has largely been ignored by modern scholars who examined Roman grand strategy. Given the importance of honor in Roman society this rhetoric is more than just a literary device. Discussions of honor in the context of war should be taken seriously as genuine strategic concerns. Roman sources justify both smaller scale strategic decisions and strategy on a grand scale based on the honor of

Rome and the honor of the emperor. Studying how the sources describe campaigns, revolts, foreign negotiations, and celebrations of victory demonstrate a pattern of similar language that allows us to better understand how the Romans conceptualized strategy. Repeated usage of words like honor, glory, shame, vengeance, disgrace, and jealousy when discussing military endeavors illustrate how Roman honor manifested itself in strategy.

This thesis examines honor and its influence on strategy from several perspectives. Chapter 2 examined the ways in which the honor of the empire influenced strategic decisions. The empire's honor impacted what tactics were used, as shown by Tiberius' refusal to retreat in Illyria because it was shameful. It influenced negotiations and surrenders, demonstrated by Claudius' concerns when negotiating the surrender of Mithridates. Finally, it impacted how foreign leaders were dealt with, exhibited by Augustus' apparent desire to use Cleopatra in a triumph after his victory over her and Antony. Chapter 3 examined the way the personal honor of the emperor influenced strategic decisions. The emperors' honor influenced who was in command. Emperors employed members of the imperial family like Augustus' step son Tiberius as commanders to enhance their own reputation or recalled commanders like Corbulo over jealousy. It also influenced how wars were conducted, exhibited by Caligula's conduct on his German campaign and his desire for glory. Most importantly, the honor of the empire and the emperor influenced when and why Rome went to war. Claudius' conquest of Britain, or Germanicus' campaigns in Germany are specific examples. Finally, Chapter 4 examined the Battle of Teutoburg Forest and its aftermath to demonstrate honor's influence on strategy in a specific campaign.

The examples presented in this thesis show the ways honor influenced strategic decisions at any level. Thus we should consider honor in any discussion of Roman strategy. The sources have often been dismissed in the examination of grand strategy because of their lack of specific information. However, the prevalence of honor in their narratives about war demonstrates that they do indeed have something to say about strategy.

Strategy influenced by honor may seem irrational, however, this is common in pre-industrial states. Patricia Crone's work on pre-industrial societies demonstrates that when strategic decisions had a logical explanation they were often discussed in terms of honor. Leaders as late as the 18th century saw honor as a perfectly reasonable justification for war.¹⁹⁵ Crone demonstrates that warfare was endemic for pre-modern societies and that in many ways it was the primary function of the state.¹⁹⁶ Elites most often gained their power as a result of their ability to make war, and in many societies military leaders predate kings.¹⁹⁷ In most pre-industrial societies elites equated war with honor and thus acquiring honor and glory represented a genuine strategic concern. Leaders were expected to be successful in war and their success was related to their honor. Crone's work demonstrates that the link between warfare, leaders, and honor was common in early states and so it is not remarkable to suppose the same was true for the Romans.

The link between honor and strategy is also not limited to the time period discussed in this thesis. It is possible to see similar patterns in other periods of Roman history. For example, Julius Caesar justified his invasion of Gaul because the Helvetii had defeated and humiliated a Roman army 50 years before.¹⁹⁸ Earlier, during the Second Punic War, Polybius and Livy claim

¹⁹⁵ Patricia Crone, *Pre-Industrial Societies*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1989), 63.

¹⁹⁶ Crone, 61.

¹⁹⁷ Crone, 65.

¹⁹⁸ Caes. *B Gall.* 1.7. Caes. *B Gall.* 1.12.

that the ‘Fabian Strategy’ was initially abandoned partly because it was seen as shameful.¹⁹⁹ Similar patterns can also be seen in the later imperial periods. Tacitus’ claims that Domitian’s jealousy was behind the recall of Agricola from Britain.²⁰⁰ Honor was also used to justify Trajan’s wars. Cassius Dio says that he conquered Mesopotamia because he desired renown and that his Dacian campaign was pursued largely because of Domitian’s humiliating settlement.²⁰¹ Even in the late empire, Ammianus Marcellinus claims the emperor Julian’s ill-fated conquest of Persia was because he not only wanted revenge on the Persians for their repeated defeats of the Romans, but also because Julian himself wanted the glory of conquest.²⁰² Honor pervades narratives about warfare and it is possible to see how honor impacted strategy throughout Roman history.

It is not surprising or shocking to imagine that honor played an important role in strategic thinking for the Romans however it is rarely addressed in discussions about strategy. Scholars have tended to dismiss honor as it relates to strategy because it does not align with modern ideas of strategy. I believe the Romans did have some notion of grand strategy but that it would likely be different from how we would conceptualize it today. Ancient Roman sources provide us with valuable insight into what concerns and values would have influenced Roman strategic thinking and they demonstrate that honor had a major impact on strategy. While honor was surely only one of many factors that shaped Roman foreign policy, surviving Roman sources suggest that it was significant. Thus when we imagine Roman grand strategy we need to consider the acquisition and maintenance of honor as a part of that strategy.

¹⁹⁹ Liv. 22.14. Polyb. 3.89.3

²⁰⁰ Tac. *Agr.* 39-40.

²⁰¹ Cass. Dio 68.17.1, Cass. Dio 68.6.1.

²⁰² Amm. Marc. 22.12.

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