

After the Romans took Veii in 396 BC, they began a period of expansion that continued for centuries, extending their control over the whole of the Italian peninsula. They fought the Greeks, Etruscans, Samnites, and a number of other peoples. The many regions the Romans conquered were each given separate peace treaties, and different statuses within the Roman political system. After the Romans defeated the Carthaginians in the First Punic War, they did something they had never done before: they established their power overseas, albeit very nearby, in Sicily. The Romans eventually came into conflict with the Carthaginians again, and the result of the Second Punic War, in addition to establishing *de facto* Roman dominance over the Mediterranean, brought the Romans into direct conflict with the Greek world, mainly because of Philip of Macedon's alliance with Hannibal. The result was Roman presence and exertion of force in Greece, Asia, Egypt, and Spain. Although in all of these regions the Romans seemed to have pursued different policies – direct enforcement of their demands, soft influence, and supporting leaders of whom they were in favor – and it appears that the way Romans handled their overseas involvement was disjointed and ineffective, a deeper look at Roman politics and resource allocation disproves this perception. Despite the many different peace treaties, at the root of all of Rome's actions overseas was one goal: achieve what is best for Rome by tailoring its approach to the needs of each region rather than wasting resources through inflexible consistency. True, the Romans sometimes found themselves in wars they may not have had to fight had they maintained a constant presence in Eastern cities, but they were able to focus their manpower on more pressing issues. Rome eventually came to dominate the world, and was able to do so only because it pursued wise policies overseas.

The period between the end of the Second Punic War (201 BC) and the sack of Carthage in 146 BC saw Rome's involvement increase all across the Mediterranean. In the East, the Romans pursued a number of policies, some more forceful than others. Erich Gruen asserts that their “behavior in the East seems too erratic, unsystematic and unpredictable to apply any neat labels.”¹ To an extent, he is correct

1 Erich S. Gruen "Rome and the Greek World." *Cambridge Companion to the Roman Republic*. Ed. H. Flower. New York: Cambridge UP, 2004. 246

in saying this; the policies pursued by the Romans seem to have been a hodgepodge combination, but when examined more closely, it appears that the Romans pursued policies to ensure that those who held power in the East were favorable to the Romans, and were stable in their power. When Rome saw it necessary to make a powerful statement, it would throw its weight in the form of legions as in the Macedonian Wars. Sometimes, however, Rome could use simple diplomacy or economic sanctions to assure what was in its best interest. Rome's policies in the East can be highlighted by a number of interactions. The wars Rome fought with Philip of Macedon and the sack of Corinth reveal that when necessary, Rome was willing to commit troops to ensure its influence. The economic warfare employed against the Rhodians shows Romans exerting their influence less directly, and finally, the way in which the Romans allowed many of the conquered cities of Greece maintain their political structures, as long as they were loyal to and willing to obey the Romans, exemplifies the preferred method of Roman hegemony in the East.

After the victory over Hannibal, Rome set out to punish Philip, King of Macedon, for the aid he provided Carthage during the Second Punic War. The Romans fought a major war, which, unlike the first war against Macedon, was “to be fought to a finish.”² Gruen provides a number of possible motives for the Romans deciding to wage war against Philip – anger, concern of an alliance against Rome, retribution for the previous war against Macedon – but all of them boil down to one factor: Rome wanted there to be no question that it had the right and ability to do whatever was best for Rome. After the war against the Macedonians, in which the Romans “smashed the Macedonian armies,”³ the Romans imposed their will. Philip had to give to the Romans “all Greeks under his rule and all town garrisons.”⁴ Although he was allowed to live, Philip had to pay a war indemnity, and the size of his military was severely limited.⁵

2 Gruen, 246

3 Ibid, 249

4Polybius in Dillon, M., & Garland, L. *Ancient Rome: From the early Republic to the assassination of Julius Caesar*. London: Routledge, 2005

5 Dillon and Garland, 251

The policies pursued against Philip after the Second Macedonian War are revealing of Roman desires. Perhaps the most important aspect of the treaty reached after the decisive battle of Cynoscephalae, is that Philip was allowed to survive. Rome recognized the stability that Philip was able to provide to the region. The Romans were not interested in occupying all of the East, but in making sure it was a stable region that would not threaten Roman interests, either economic or political. Although they wished to significantly reduce Philip's power so that he could not threaten his neighbors, the Romans recognized that committing troops to the region would be costly and perhaps not as effective as allowing an already established ruler, in a more limited sense, to continue to have some power. For this reason, they preferred, as John Rich notes, to “maintain indirect hegemony and avoid... military commitments as long as possible.”⁶ The way the Romans dealt with Greek cities after the Second Macedonian War is also revealing of their policy, and will be discussed later.

In 193 BC, the Romans withdrew their troops from Macedon, in accordance with their desire not to maintain an active military presence. Whether this was a good decision by the Romans could be debated. Just over 20 years after the Roman troops pulled out of Macedon, the Romans found themselves involved in the Third Macedonian War. Whether this war could have been prevented had they maintained a garrison can not be certain, but what is sure is that Perseus was able to build up his forces in Rome's absence. Even the build up of troops was not itself entirely frowned upon by the Romans. They had a peaceful relationship with King Perseus, and it was only because his buildup of troops threatened to “upset the political balance [of Greece] and bring instability to the region” that Rome decided to do something.⁷ Again, Rome destroyed its Macedonian foe, this time at the battle of Pydna in 168 BC. Gruen shows Pydna as a watershed, as the event that revealed to the Romans that they had to take a much more “forceful... posture... to bend the Greek world to Roman will.”⁸ Although the Macedonian wars were costly, they allowed the Romans to control Macedon and the many

6 John Rich in Rich, John. "Fear, Greed and Glory: The Causes of Roman War-making in the Middle Republic." *War and Society in the Roman World*. Eds. J. Rich and G. Shipley. New York: Routledge, 1993. 48

7 Gruen, 253

8 Ibid, 254

surrounding states with as little force as possible. They used their military only when diplomatic measures had been exhausted, and the manpower they saved during this time was essential to Rome's abilities to fight in northern Italy and Spain.

The sack of Corinth in 146 BC is another example of the Romans using brute force when they deemed it the most effective way of securing the stability of their interests abroad. Although the Romans had long enjoyed a loose alliance with the Achaean League, when they began to exploit Rome's benign neglect, and even treated Roman dignitaries disrespectfully, Rome decided it necessary to make a statement. They did this through the sack of Corinth. Pausanias describes how the “Romans slaughtered most of those they captured” or sold the rest into slavery.⁹ Corinth was completely demolished. Mummius, the consul at the time, made off with works of art and loads of other booty from the city. The Romans imposed restrictions on Greece, and limited the Greeks' ability to acquire property overseas (at least for some time).¹⁰ Just as they had with the Macedonians, the Romans reached the end of their patience with the Greek cities. They used Corinth as an example of what it meant to defy Rome. It was not necessarily the insulting way in which Corinth treated the Roman ambassadors that brought about the city's destruction, but just the Corinthians thinking they had the right to do so evinced an attitude that could eventually pose a threat to Roman interests. Just as happened in Macedonia, when Rome allowed the Achaean League to be at peace for too long, they lost some of their dominance. However, just as with Macedonia, the Romans were able to reenter the picture in full force, and assert that they were indeed the true power.

Was this policy of alternating war with extended periods of relaxation effective? One could certainly argue that had the Romans not relaxed their grip on Greece and Macedonia, had they simply used their full might once, and maintained strong garrisons in the regions, larger wars would have never erupted. But this argument ignores that the Romans had interests other than Greece. They were fighting in Spain and Northern Italy during this period as well, and perhaps could not have afforded to

⁹ Pausanias in Dillon and Garland, 267

¹⁰ Ibid

station troops on the Greek peninsula as well. After the sack of Corinth, Rome realized that it had to maintain its control over Greece with a stronger presence, which is why the Senate officially created the province of Macedonia (including southern Greece), but it did not do this until it became necessary. For almost half a century, the Romans had been able to more or less maintain stability in the region with as few troops as possible. These extended periods of peace (*e.g.*, 167-154 BC, as Rich shows through lower levels of legionary deployment during this period) would not have been possible had the Romans not been willing to occasionally commit large numbers of troops to fight wars.¹¹ Peaceful policies Rome pursued were also essential to the long periods of relative peace, but it was necessary for Rome, at times, to use brute force.

The Romans were sometimes able to avoid the use of force to secure their will. Perhaps the most interesting, and telling example of this, was the way in which Popillius, a Roman commander, dealt with Antiochus, who was attacking Alexandria in 168 BC. If the story told by Polybius is true, Popillius was able to secure peace between the warring factions almost instantly, by drawing a line around Antiochus and ordering him “to give his decision about the letter [demanding the cessation of his war against Ptolemy] while still inside the circle.”¹² While this story may exaggerate Rome's influence, it is indicative of the way Romans preferred to deal with threats to stability. Instead of having to commit vast numbers of men, all the Romans had to do was threaten to do so. With the great victories the Romans won (the battle of Pydna was also in 168 BC), it was difficult to doubt the efficacy of the Roman military, and it is clear from his willingness to avoid a confrontation with the Romans that Antiochus did not want to enter into conflict with the Romans at the time. Although they did so in a completely different way than with the Macedonians or Corinthians, the Romans dealt with Antiochus to ensure stability of the region, and thus the maintenance of Roman interests.

In addition to using the stick, Romans used carrots to encourage their friends and dissuade potential enemies from pursuing policies that would prove to the detriment of Roman interests. Take,

¹¹ Rich, 46

¹² Polybius in Dillon and Garland, 262

for example, the way in which the Romans dealt with the Aetolian League when it was first founded in 212. The Romans offered the Greek members of the league substantial booty for their loyalty. Rome wanted only enough to pay for what they had spent on wars they were involved in in the region, but gave to the Aetolians any cities and territories that were taken over in war.¹³ In addition to this, after the Second Macedonian war, the Romans granted freedom to a number of cities that had recently been under the rule of Philip.¹⁴ The Aetolian League and granting of freedom to so many cities had multiple beneficial externalities for the Romans. First, by granting such favorable conditions to a large number of people, the Romans hoped to assure friendly and peaceful relationships within Greece. That they did not have to send in a large military force to deal with the Aetolians for more than half a century (until the sack of Corinth in 146 BC) reveals that this was an effective policy. It also checked the power of those Rome did have to deal with militarily. By taking away so many of Macedon's former cities, they deprived Philip and his descendents of substantial pools of power. Rome was able to ensure the continued support of smaller states by offering them protection against larger states. As seen in the treaty of Apamea in 188 BC (after the Romans defeated Antiochus), the Romans made sure to obtain treaties that would be favorable not only to Rome, but to its Eastern allies as well. Instead of occupying all of the lands Antiochus had formerly dominated, the Romans freed from tributes all cities that had been loyal to Rome throughout their struggle.¹⁵

In addition to aiding their allies, the Romans could punish those who proved unfaithful, and not only through military means, as seen with the Macedonians. Rhodes proves a prime example of the costs of defying Roman power. Although it did not openly oppose Rome in the third Macedonian war, Rhodes' attempt to mediate between Rome and Macedon was less than the desired loyalty to Rome, and they were consequently punished. Just as Corinth served as an example of what would happen if a state defied the Romans, the Senate decided that it “would make an example of Rhodes.”¹⁶ Although they

13 Dillon and Garland, 251

14 Polybius in Dillon and Garland, 251

15 Polybius in Dillon and Garland, 258

16 Gruen, 254

contemplated war, the Romans settled on ruining the economy of Rhodes. Rome revoked its friendship with Rhodes, and declared Delos a free port.¹⁷ Rhodes was dependent on its importance as a shipping center, and with Delos emerging as a competitive port, the revenues to Rhodes were severely cut.¹⁸ Rome's authority was not to be questioned. Although the Romans did not always dictate how their Eastern acquaintances could act, Rome did demand that when they required support, it was fully given. Rhodes suffered immensely for not actively supporting Rome, and in this way, served as an example to the rest of the Eastern world.

Although the many different ways in which the Romans dealt with their Eastern influences seem to have no continuity, when they are all examined more closely, it is clear that they all had one commonality. In each case, the Romans pursued what they believed to be the most efficient allocation of their resources. When they believed it necessary, the Romans were willing to commit troops to their cause. When they did this, the Romans were almost unmatched in their military abilities. Although they sometimes faced formidable opponents, the Romans came out on top, as seen in the Macedonian wars, the war against Antiochus, and eventually, over Carthage in 146 BC. The Romans ability to maintain their dominance over Greece for centuries speaks to the efficacy of their policies. Although this rule was sometimes tested, as was seen early with the Macedonians, Corinth, and even Rhodes, and the Romans had to reassert their control, they were able to do so mercilessly, and in a way that allowed them to generally devote their resources elsewhere. The Romans did not actively pursue an overseas empire, and did not wish to have a permanent presence. Macedonia became a province only when it had become necessary to maintain a legion in the region.

In addition to being involved in the eastern Mediterranean, the Romans had substantial interests in the Iberian Peninsula. After defeating Hannibal in the Second Punic War, the Romans took on a more active role in Spain. Spain was essential to Roman taxation, and housed “considerable numbers

17 Dillon and Garland, 263

18 Gruen, 255

of Roman and Italian civilians.”¹⁹ Rome was intent on maintaining its deep-seated interests in Spain. Just as in the East, the Romans were not able to pursue a single policy, but had to take on a mixed approach. Sometimes, as in the East, the Romans had to fight in pitched battles to prove their military superiority and to assert their will. Appian recounts Cato's battle in 195 BC – which may have been exaggerated, as the account may have come from Cato's own writings, though his battles must have been impressive as he was awarded a triumph – in which he was surrounded by 40,000 enemy troops, but was able to inspire his troops by sending away his ships, taking away any possibility of escape.²⁰ This victory seems to have given the Romans the same clout they held in the East, and after the victory, Cato was able to use Roman influence, rather than Roman might, to achieve goals in Spain. One effective means of “soft” policy carried out by Cato was the threat to enslave any town that did not dismantle its walls. Because of his impressive victory, every tribe feared “that, if they were the only ones [to resist] that they would be powerless” so “they all considered their own safety to be of prime importance and hastily dismantled their walls.”²¹ Though not exactly parallel, Cato's great victory at Emporion in Spain resembles the victory at Pydna, which revealed Roman dominance in the East, and gave Rome a much more powerful voice.

The wars fought in Spain demonstrate the multiple purposes of war in Roman society. Besides controlling potential enemies and eliminating current threats, war was able to help satisfy Rome's need for competition. Roman citizens strove to outdo one another, and war was a way to channel this force for the benefit of Rome. Soldiers and commanders were able to prove their abilities and bravery and were able to win glory in hopes of solidifying their political legacies.²² This method diverting an impulse that could cause internal strife into an external benefit for Rome again reveals the thoughtful process by which Rome managed its overseas affairs.

19 John S Richardson. *Hispaniae, Spain and the Development of Roman Imperialism, 218-82 BC*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire] ;: Cambridge UP, 1986.

20 Appian in Dillon and Garland, 270

21 Appian in Dillon and Garland, 271

22 Richardson, 177

The Third Punic War, concluding with the sack of Carthage in 141 BC, is another example of the Romans calibrating their use of force to the specific circumstances. There is a debate whether Carthage was actually enough of a threat to legitimize a full scale invasion of Africa and elimination of a people. Nevertheless Rome had faced sufficiently significant threats from Carthage in the past (the first two Punic Wars) to be willing to risk another large scale war. Although Carthage faced a crippling defeat in the Second Punic War, it was able to quickly recover, and once again began threatening Roman assets overseas.²³ This proved disconcerting to Cato, who, after a trip to Carthage where he saw how thriving the city had become in such a short time, and added the famous phrase “*'Delenda est Carthago'*... Carthage must be destroyed” at the end of every speech he gave to the Senate.²⁴ Although Rome had perhaps hoped to end the threat posed by Carthage at the end of the third century, Cato discovered a city “well populated with good fighting men... [and] immense wealth.”²⁵ Carthage represented a serious threat to Rome, just as it had a century before, just as Philip did in Macedonia. This caused unease in Rome, and Cato was finally successful in convincing the Romans to demolish Carthage once and for all.

Carthage posed a military threat, and like the Corinthians, learned that to oppose Roman hegemony would result in punishment. The Carthaginians were prohibited by treaties with Rome from waging war on Masinissa. When they attacked Masinissa in 151 BC, they gave the Romans the excuse Cato had been looking for to attack and destroy Carthage. At the beginning of the war, it appeared that Roman soft power would be enough. The Carthaginians handed over all of their arms. But when they refused to relocate their city 10 miles away from the sea (a demand that would have proven detrimental to the Carthaginian economy, based on their maritime capabilities), Rome went to war to maintain its power in the region.²⁶ In the war, many of Cato's fears came true. The Carthaginians proved that they were still worthy adversaries, and prolonged the war for almost a decade. They were able to quickly

23 Dillon and Garland, 227

24 Plutarch in Dillon and Garland, 227-9

25 Ibid, 228

26 Ibid

build up their forces, producing almost “140 fitted shields, 300 swords, 500 spears, and 1,000 catapult missiles” every day²⁷. This wartime ability must put to rest any argument professed by the likes of Polybius who argued that Rome simply “preferred” fighting against the Carthaginians.²⁸

Roman policy abroad seems an incredibly mixed bag. A superficial examination reveals a jumble of war, diplomacy, incentives and punishments. The Romans had assets all across the Mediterranean, from Spain to Asia, and were intent maintaining these. What is important to realize, however, is that Rome did not simply roll the dice to determine which policy to pursue, but instead made deliberate decisions, that it hoped would most efficiently allocate its resources. Rome pursued a policy that boiled down to one thing: the safety and continuity of Roman civilization, and of all of its interests. Many times, the Romans were able to do this simply by maintaining friendly relations with leaders, even with those against whom they had waged war, but the Romans were not unwilling to commit troops when it became necessary. The argument that Roman management of overseas assets was unwise is simply incorrect. The Romans were able to maintain an empire for centuries, and as the Third Punic War reveals, it was from a continuation of the policy of mixing diplomacy, warfare, and incentives that allowed them to do so.

27 Strabo in Dillon and Garland, 230

28 Dillon and Garland, 227