Art of War Papers

Mission Command:

in Ancient Rome, 218 BC-AD 100

Michael J. Rasak, Major, US Army

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Michael J. Rasak, Major, US Army
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

Edited by Elizabeth J. Brown

Program Description

The Command and General Staff College (CGSC) Art of War Scholar's program offers a small number of competitively select officers a chance to participate in intensive, graduate level seminars and in-depth personal research that focuses primarily on understanding strategy and operational art through modern military history. The purpose of the program is to produce officers with critical thinking skills and an advanced understanding of the art of warfighting. These abilities sare honed by reading, researching, thinking, debating and writing about complex issues across the full spectrum of modern warfare, from the lessons of the Russo-Japanese war through continuing operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, while looking ahead to the twenty-first century evolution of the art of war.

Abstract

Over the last two decades, the concept of "mission command" has pervaded US Army doctrine and dominated much of its intellectual discourse. This manuscript seeks to contribute to this discussion by examining antecedents of mission command found in the armies of Ancient Rome (218 BC to AD 100). By drawing on extant literary evidence, the author argues that Rome's highly offensive and initiative-oriented way of war influenced its development of a command structure that prioritized battlefield dispersion, subordinate autonomy, information sharing, inherently flexible mission orders, and decentralized operations. The effort Roman leaders took to codify and institutionalize these processes moreover reveals their reliance on concepts resembling the modern principles of mission command. This manuscript draws three additional conclusions: (1) nineteenth century Prussia was not the first state to develop a command system akin to mission command, (2) mission command is a timeless approach to wartime leadership, and (3) the US Army should continue to employ mission command as its primary approach to command and control.

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Introduction

> On the actual day of battle the general should not take on too many tasks. He might exert himself too much, become worn out, and overlook some really essential matters.
>
> —Maurice, *Strategikon*

> Subordinates empowered to make decisions during operations unburden higher echelon commanders from issues that distract from necessary broader perspective and focus on critical issues.
>
> —HQDA, Army Doctrine Publication 6-0, *Mission Command*

Since the dawn of the Roman Republic, historians have spilled much ink examining the details of the Roman army. Quintus Fabius Pictor, writing in the third century BC, might mark the beginning of this tradition with his analysis of the Roman army during the Second Punic War.[1] Unfortunately, because so many historians have followed Fabius' lead, and because of the alluring nature of exploring an institution as capable as the Roman army, this tradition has resulted in a field so overwhelmingly saturated with historiography that the mere suggestion of writing on the Roman army carries with it a connotation of trite unoriginality. Yet this neglects to appreciate a genuine gap in the current body of knowledge regarding the Roman army's internal command and control philosophies and beliefs. Pat Southern goes as far as to claim that "how the army was controlled in battle or on campaign is one of the least illuminated aspects of Roman military history."[2] As such, scholars primarily attribute Rome's military effectiveness to some combination of its organizational structure, whole-of-state approach, military genius of some of its leaders, or professionalization of its soldiers. Little space has been devoted to analyzing the doctrines and theories surrounding Roman operational and tactical level leadership.

The purpose of this manuscript is to examine Rome's theory of military command and control and gauge what incorporated elements we would now label as the principles of "mission command." This question first asks whether the armies of Rome possessed a relatively unified theory of military leadership, to which I answer it did. This fact is apparent in the prevalence of resilient, institutionalized practices and common operating

procedures spanning the entire breadth of the period under examination. Moreover, extant theoretical military manuals reveal a desire among Romans to codify these institutions and practices for use by future military leaders.

Secondly, to frame how Rome employed leadership elements resembling modern mission command, I draw on the seven principles of mission command as outlined in the 2019 US Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*. By comparing the concepts found in Army Doctrine Publication 6-0 with the recorded beliefs and actions of Roman leaders, I draw the conclusion that the Romans indeed embraced many of the root principles underpinning modern US Army leadership doctrine. To a large extent, Rome's way of war was characterized by an intense desire to secure and maintain the initiative at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of war. This desire influenced the development of a military structure that prioritized such things as individual and sub-unit spacing, a high concentration of junior-grade officers, and a reward system that encouraged martial aggression.[3] It also influenced a command style that privileged autonomy of action at the lowest levels, broad, purpose-oriented mission orders, shared understanding at all echelons, the application of trust-building mechanisms, and a method of control that favored as much decentralization as possible. Such a method of leadership is not too dissimilar to the espoused goals of Army Doctrine Publication 6-0.

Modern military theorists and practitioners would benefit from an examination of mission command in the Roman army. This is particularly true as adversaries approach technological parity with the United States. Soon, the primary difference between future American defeats or victories may center on the underlying dimensions of leadership, decentralized decision-making, and unity of effort. Consequently, analyses of how previous armies and states coped with similar changes in circumstance are worthwhile. The armies of Rome, despite their temporal distance from modernity, offer a promising start to such a study.

Mission Command in Ancient Rome

Current US military doctrine places the origins of mission command in the nineteenth century, when Prussian military reformers grappled with how best to counter Napoleon Bonaparte's seemingly effortless advance across the European continent.[4] The French general's use of mixed-arms formations, his ability to coordinate multiple corps simultaneously, and his willingness to execute bold tactical and operational maneuvers com-

plicated traditional European modes of combat. No longer could adversaries anticipate the relatively straightforward parameters of limited warfare, fought with unwieldy block formations of heavy infantry. Instead, war now consisted of more numerous and dynamic formations, each one conducting semi-independent and mutually reinforcing actions at what must have seemed like dizzying speeds. Likewise, threats and opportunities emerged on a rapid basis, often imperceptible to a general until it was too late to react.

Prussian observers reasoned that as the complexity of warfare increased, the span of time needed to either exploit an opportunity or react to an emerging threat decreased. Thus, those officers positioned best to perceive events as they unfolded required some degree of authority to plan, maneuver, and react freely. A single general simply could not make the overwhelming number of decisions necessary to manage the fight. Moreover, for this method of command to work, subordinate officers needed a clear understanding of their assigned objective and the general's overall intent. Without these parameters in place, the army risked watching as its limbs failed to work in a single, orchestrated fashion to achieve its desired end state. German officers later codified these principles in their doctrine under a concept they termed *Auftragstaktik*, or "mission-type tactics."[5]

Though modern observers credit Prussian, and later German, military theorists with the origins of what we now term mission command, it would be worthwhile to examine its antecedents in the ancient world. To a large extent the complexities of war experienced by nineteenth century Prussian and French belligerents mirrored warfare two millennia earlier, in Republican and Imperial Rome. At the height of Roman power, field armies frequently numbered in the tens of thousands and often possessed some combination of skirmishers, infantry, cavalry, missile troops, and artillery. Roman commanders employed a variety of combined-arms formations, comprised of spearmen, swordsmen, archers, slingers, javelin throwers, light cavalry, heavy cavalry, missile cavalry, and an enormous collection of artillery pieces, siege engines, and maritime vessels. Likewise, they contended with enemies deploying specialty units, ranging from Macedonian pikemen to Persian cataphracts to Syracusan engineers operating the latest siege engines designed by the famed Archimedes. In short, there was no shortage of technological or tactical challenges confronting Roman armies. This is especially true when one considers the enormous assortment of disparate societies, tribes, and cultures spanning the breadth of the Roman frontier, each imbued with their own unique set of preferences and skills. Each of these units, formations, and systems came with their

own set of command considerations, both before and during battle. And, for every additional unique unit placed on the battlefield, Roman generals experienced an exponentially greater number of combinations and considerations that factored into their decision-making.

Distinctive unit types were not the only forces complicating the battlefield. Roman generals were routinely concerned with the defense or disruption of lines of communication, bases of supply, fortifications, urban areas, and key terrain—perhaps best evinced by Quintus Fabius Maximus' chess-like maneuvering with Hannibal Barca during the Second Punic War.[6] They were concerned with the quantity, quality, and capability of their engineers, who oversaw—often under direct enemy pressure—obstacle emplacement, bridge building, road laying, camp erection, siegeworks construction, and timber harvesting, as Julius Caesar's commentaries on the Gallic War can attest.[7] Generals, like Marcus Claudius Marcellus during his year-long siege of Syracuse, or Scipio Africanus during his seizure of New Carthage, found themselves commanding joint forces comprised of both maritime and land elements working in tandem towards a common goal.[8] Moreover, unlike their globalized counterparts two millennia later, Roman officers contended with enemies who employed completely foreign tactics, weapons, beasts, or machines, which were entirely unfamiliar to Roman minds, and sometimes only shortly before battle was to commence.

One must be skeptical of the notion that the inherently dynamic and chaotic nature of war pertains solely to modernity. Roman warfare, with its scale and complexity, was just as dynamic, chaotic, and uncertain to those who experienced it. This conclusion carries even greater weight when one considers the nature of the typical Roman army battlefield array. Unlike their eastern phalangite cousins (or sixteenth century AD pike and shot ancestors, for that matter), the Romans insisted on physically dividing their infantry formations into manipular or cohortal subunits, each capable of operating independent of the main body, and each requiring the direct leadership of their own subordinate officer. Likewise, Roman legions were expected to maneuver in immensely varied terrain, ranging from the Scottish highlands, to the deserts of Africa, to the forests of Germania, to the streets of Jerusalem. Caesar alone, for example, found himself fighting on the northern banks of the English Channel, in the hills of central Spain, along French rivers, within Egyptian Alexandria, and on the plains of Greece.

With these considerations in mind, it is a real possibility that the Romans stumbled upon the notion of mission command well before the

Prussians. Their ability to deploy multifaceted and organizationally complex formations of men, on varying terrain, under unpredictable conditions, and against differing enemies necessitated quality leadership at the tactical and operational levels, not to mention a consciously refined command and control system. It is unlikely this degree of leadership was achieved solely through the individual genius of its senior officials, despite what many of the nobility-venerating ancient sources might suggest. The harrowing blunders of generals like Gaius Flaminius at Lake Trasimine, Marcus Licinius Crassus at Carrhae, and Publius Quinctilius Varus at Teutoburg prove enough that individual genius was not necessarily rampant among leading Romans. Rather, it is likely that the Romans entrusted and empowered their subordinate officers with enough authority to exercise operational or tactical flexibility when it mattered most.

Definitions and Methodology

To analyze mission command in the Roman army, it is first necessary to identify and define the concept's seven principles: competence, disciplined initiative, risk acceptance, shared understanding, commander's intent, mission orders, and mutual trust. *Competence* refers to the tactical and technical proficiency of commanders and subordinates—the foundation upon which mutual trust and all other principles rest. *Disciplined initiative* refers to the duty subordinates have to exercise initiative within the bounds of the operation's overall purpose. *Risk acceptance* refers to the balancing of soldiers' safety with mission accomplishment, and the understanding that allowing subordinate initiative requires some degree of risk to both the mission and the force. *Shared understanding* occurs when both commanders and subordinates hold a common interpretation of the situation and concept of operations, usually achieved through collaboration and an exchange of dialogue.[9] *Commander's intent* refers to the commander's communication of a "clear and concise expression of the purpose of the operation and the desired military end state."[10] *Mission orders* refer to the directives given from commanders to subordinates emphasizing the *results* to be attained—not, *how* they are to be attained. Lastly, *mutual trust* refers to the "shared confidence" between commanders and subordinates that both can rely on each other to accomplish their assigned task.[11] Taking all these principles together, one can view mission command as an approach to command and control that encourages decentralized, purpose-oriented decision-making, enabled by mutual trust and confidence between commander and subordinate.

The first three principles—competence, disciplined initiative, and risk acceptance—are inextricably linked, and form the first lens through which the Roman army will be examined in chapter two. In this chapter, primary source commentary on Roman army institutional training and education is examined to ascertain the level of tactical and technical competence expected of military officers, ranging from the lowly centurion to the general himself. Special attention is paid to the timeframe under examination: the Middle Republican (ca. 264 BC to 133 BC) army, comprised of part-time citizen-soldiers, differed from their Late Republican (ca. 133 BC to 27 BC) and Early Imperial (ca. 27 BC to 117 AD) counterparts, usually made up of professionalized careerists. Ample evidence suggests that even Middle Republican Romans made a conscious effort to produce highly competent leaders. For instance Polybius offers a clear indication of the tactical expertise expected of soldiers subject to promotion as an officer.[12]

Examining competence in Imperial Rome is more difficult as fewer sources are available to reference, but enough exists to draw general conclusions. Late-fourth or early-fifth century writer Flavius Vegetius Renatus, for instance, records not only what type of training should be employed to develop legionary competence, but also what qualities subordinate and senior officers should possess.[13] Likewise, the military treatises of Sextus Julius Frontinus, Onasander, and Maurice provide useful information illuminating the level of intelligence and tactical prowess expected of officers; for instance, what operational decisions and maneuvers they, and subsequently their subordinate officers, should be capable of planning and executing.[14] It should be noted that unlike modern doctrinal references, these military "manuals" were not intended to be necessarily prescriptive in nature. Rather, the Romans viewed these works as suggestive compilations of what constituted sensible military thinking.[15] Vegetius, for instance, laments the fact that by the end of the fourth century the Romans seemingly lost their knowledge on erecting camp fortifications, naval affairs, and their high standard of training.[16] Whether one is examining the Roman armies of either the second century BC or the fourth century AD, there existed a generally accepted standardization of what qualities constituted *competence* within the military, and a desire among Romans to measure it.

The remaining two mission command principles analyzed in chapter two center on *disciplined initiative* and *risk acceptance*. Both are best understood by a close reading of extant battle narratives captured by authors like Polybius, Livy, Caesar, Josephus, and Tacitus, and to a lesser extent, Suetonius, and Plutarch. Unlike military manuals, which articulate

how an army *should* operate, battle narratives reveal how the army *actually* did operate. They also help the reader understand the breadth and depth of certain battlefields and offer a window to analyze the actions of subordinate units. For instance, Livy's description of the Battle of Pydna (168 BC), where numerous "small bodies of Roman troops" independently assaulted into the gaps of Perseus' Macedonian phalanx along a mile and a half front, offers a useful case for examining Roman subordinate disciplined initiative.[17] Battle narratives should be handled with care. Most ancient sources credit the preponderance of battlefield decision-making to the general himself. Likewise, where subordinate leaders do emerge in the record, they are frequently used to either enrich the text's moralist content or to justify Roman failures. Caesar, for example, blames his defeat at Gergovia in 52 BC on the reckless ambition of some of his centurions.[18] With this in mind, a level of prudent judgment must be applied when analyzing battle accounts, taking into consideration both the purpose of the publication and the physical realities of ancient combat.[19]

Beyond narratives, Roman military treatises also offer a wealth of information regarding disciplined initiative and risk acceptance. Manuals provide insight into what degree of control commanders could anticipate employing over their assigned forces, the signaling mechanisms at their disposal, and how far apart generals could realistically space their subordinate units.[20] Maurice, for example, tells his readers to assign raiding, ambuscade, and outflanking units, and he emphasizes the inherent authority each should have to flexibly accomplish their assigned task. He moreover stresses the importance of assigning an intelligent officer to command these forces—indicating these units could be well outside the sphere of the general's direct control and required a capable officer to lead them.[21] As with battle narratives, caution must be taken when referencing manuals as a source of evidence for the prevalence of subordinate disciplined initiative. Because the authors wrote manuals for consumption primarily by the Roman elite, they often demonstrate a highbrow, elitist opinion of lower-class officers and enlisted men, and subsequently cordon off consequential battlefield decision-making as a prerogative ostensibly possessed by the nobility.

The second three principles—shared understanding, commander's intent, and mission orders—form the basis of chapter three. As with the first three principles, I use both anecdotal evidence and military manuals to frame exactly how commanders collected intelligence to form an understanding of their operational environment, how they shared this understanding with their subordinate leaders, and the extent their orders were

either purpose-oriented or task-oriented. Specific attention is paid to the general's *consilium*—his board of military advisors, comprised usually of senior officers—and how the *consilium* served as a meeting where shared understanding, commander's intent, and mission orders occurred.

At the operational level, literary accounts of campaigns provide a foundation for an analysis of the second three principles. Plutarch's description of Pompey's war with the pirates in 67-66 BC provides a compelling example of how Roman armies overcame the tyranny of distance by employing mission-orders and commander's intent. Because Pompey commanded naval forces spanning the entirety of the Mediterranean Sea, he elected to divide the sea into thirteen disparate zones and assigned a single subordinate commander to clear each zone of the pirate threat. Pompey himself was in no position to oversee the daily activities of each subordinate commander. Instead, he offered purpose-oriented guidance: clear each zone.[22] Additional campaign narratives reveal a similar tendency: Caesar habitually dispersed his encamped legions by at least dozens of miles; Agricola operated in Britannia with multiple elements operating large distances from one another; and both Metellus Numidicus and Gaius Marius separated their forces to chase down Jugurtha.[23]

At the tactical level, the prevalence of shared understanding, commander's intent, and mission orders is more challenging to determine. On the one hand, large battles involving elements of a commander's force operating well outside of his sphere of direct control can be reasonably assumed to possess a substantial degree of mission orders and shared understanding. An example of this is Scipio Africanus's complex assault on New Carthage in 209 BC, where at least four independent forces simultaneously assaulted the garrison from four separate vectors (two of which were from the sea).[24] On the other hand, where battles are smaller in size and physical realities do not preclude the possibility of direct control, it is much more difficult to ascertain with any degree of certainty whether a commander genuinely issued his intent or provided mission orders. This is especially problematic when one considers the frequency with which the ancient sources viewed the battle from only the general's perspective and attributed all decisions of consequence to the general himself. Where this occurs, it is necessary to draw on the information found in military manuals regarding how generals *should* implement command and control procedures.

Mutual trust is the final principle under examination and forms the basis for chapter four. As noted, mutual trust centers on the shared confidence between leader and subordinate that each can and will carry out his

assigned task. Measuring this principle with any level of efficacy one must first take into account the time, geographic location, and type of unit under consideration. For example, leading officials viewed the legions of the Roman Republic, comprised primarily of ethnic Latin or Italian volunteers, with less skepticism than their foreign auxiliary counterparts—at least in terms of state allegiance. Conversely, the Imperial Roman army observed an increasing reliance on foreign mercenaries with questionable loyalties, thus degrading the possibility for genuine mutual trust to occur between Roman officer and foreign soldier.

Similarly, legions located on the distant frontiers of Rome often exhibited a lower level of trust than those positioned nearer the capital city. One reason for this was the notoriously harsh conditions of frontier garrisons, particularly those located along the Danube and Rhine Rivers or in Britannia. By the very nature of their location, soldiers posted along Rome's borders were exposed to the most frequent and greatest levels of danger; they suffered from chronic sustainment problems, owing to the logistical challenges of moving men and materiel that far from Rome (or the regional base of supply); and they experienced frequent pay shortages, owing to the lack of centralized Roman oversight over corrupt local magistrates who could make a habit of pocketing monies earmarked for soldiers' salaries. This perceived abuse could undermine a large degree of trust between legionary and officer, epitomized best by the 14 AD mutinies in Germania. Tacitus tells us that malnourished legionaries, fed up with their conditions, drew their swords and attacked their centurions, "flinging them, maimed, mangled, and in some cases lifeless…into the River Rhine."[25]

The fundamental nature of the Roman government also complicated the effective establishment of mutual trust at the operational level. Because military leadership was synonymous with political leadership, the vicious internal power politics of Rome—characterized by ambition, greed, corruption, and sabotage—often bled over into the Roman military establishment. Successful generals were blindsided with trumped up legal charges by envious colleagues, as with the case of Scipio Africanus, who, after defeating Hannibal in the Second Punic War, was so upset with the political backstabbing that he had his tombstone epitaph declare: "Ungrateful fatherland, you shall not even have my bones."[26] Likewise, leaders vied for imperial power vacuums, exemplified in 69 AD, the Year of the Four Emperors, when the generals Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian each committed their legions to seize the throne. Politicians also undercut one another for prestigious military assignments, as demonstrated by the vio-

lent competition between Gaius Marius and Lucius Cornelius Sulla over whom was to lead the potentially lucrative and glory-bound expedition into Parthia.

A combination of all these factors—era, ethnicity, proximity to Rome, and proximity to power—makes an analysis of mutual trust perhaps the most difficult of all the mission command principles. It was these very factors (and the obstacles they presented) that motivated Roman commanders to institute a variety of methods to foster and maintain intra-army and inter-army trust. Chief among these were Rome's institutionalization of military oaths, religious rituals, and battlefield orations. These three mechanisms, handled effectively by a competent general, often had the effect of binding legionaries to their general and to the state. They were used to suppress mutinous sentiment, minimize desertion or defection, and generate allegiance in times of tumultuous civil war. A certain degree of universal confidence must have been present for the military to function as effectively as it did. Civil-military leaders positioned in Rome indeed sent generals marching off on campaigns with little more than trust binding the two entities together. This fact is evident in the near-total power the Senate voluntarily granted generals like Fabius Maximus, Scipio Africanus, and Pompey. Likewise, generals like Caesar, who wittingly penetrated deep into enemy territory with little chance of being reinforced from Rome, demonstrated a high degree of confidence in the capability, commitment, and loyalty of his legionaries.

Overall, an accurate analysis of mission command in ancient Rome requires reading many of the primary sources "against the grain." The two best sources for the practice of mission command in the armies of Republican and Imperial Rome are Caesar and Josephus, respectively. Each carry with them their own set of considerations. Caesar's works were undoubtedly written for political purposes, consequently calling into question some of the technical military details he offers. Likewise, Josephus, being a relatively vulnerable prisoner-turned-supporter of Rome, had an incentive to embellish the efficacy of the Roman army, perhaps corrupting some of the information contained within his writings. Polybius, a former Greek military officer and direct observer of Scipio, offers the next best source of information. He suffers from the same issues plaguing the works of Livy, Tacitus, Appian, Cassius Dio, and Plutarch—namely, the relegation of non-elite subordinates to positions of inconsequence. In the minds of these ancient authors, the outcome of battle primarily centered on the effectiveness of the general or his immediate lieutenants—everyone else was just a passive actor, subject to the decisions of several powerful men.

Historiography

While no current scholarship exists analyzing the direct relation-ship between modern "mission command" and the Roman army, several historians have contributed to the discussion. Philip Sabin, for example, provides a generally accepted framework for understanding Roman battle-field mechanics. He identifies four key characteristics of infantry combat: (1) battle lines clashed for long periods of time, (2) battle lines could be "pushed back" great lengths before breaking, (3) supporting units played a pivotal role throughout the entirety of the battle, and (4) the victorious side would sustain substantially fewer casualties than the defeated side. Drawing on these features, Sabin argues that infantry lines likely clashed for only a short period of time before one side reached exhaustion and retrograded to a 'safety distance' a few meters outside of spear or sword range. Fighting would then resume once one side physically and mentally recovered and charged forward for another round.[27] This back-and-forth assaulting and retrograding of centuries, maniples, and cohorts, suggests that Roman warfare demanded tactical-level leaders who possessed the appropriate level of decision-making authority needed to lead their units to and from the safety distance.

Jordan F. Slavik and Alexander Zhmodikov's analyses of Rome's extensive use of the heavy *pilum* and light *telum* javelins add to Sabin's findings. Drawing on literary sources, Zhmodikov argues that the Ro-mans employed their *pila* not just at the beginning of battle as originally thought, but throughout the entirety of the battle.[28] Slavik builds on this argument and suggests that light infantry—most notably Roman *velites*—employed their javelins in the midst of battle to provide "covering fire" for heavy infantry units to maneuver, interchange lines, or conduct some other atypical task.[29] This observation helps elucidate how Roman lines could retrograde to the safety distance without prompting an enemy assault, how low-level leaders could buy time to reorganize their formations for a sec-ond charge, and how disparate units could maneuver independently. By pairing Slavik's and Sabin's findings, one can see not only how Rome's way of warfare called for semi-autonomous leadership at the tactical level, but the mechanisms Rome put in place to facilitate it.

Michael J. Taylor adds further to the discussion. By analyzing Ro-man frontages in comparison to their Macedonian counterparts, Taylor es-timates the length of the average gap between maniples to be around fifty percent of the width of a typical maniple front. This space, Taylor argues, allowed for several important actions to occur. First, it enabled light forces executing their support-role tasks to pass easily through the Roman le-

gion. Second, should the need arise, it allowed maniples to quickly change vectors—a feat Polybius identifies the Romans were capable of doing at the lowest echelons.[30] Lastly, it allowed "haphazardly maneuvering maniples to avoid entanglement."[31] Rome's segregated battle line draws a stark contrast to the single, block formations of other ancient armies. As Taylor demonstrates, Rome instead deliberately structured its army to allow for the flexible maneuvering of its subordinate units—a complex requirement that certainly demanded some degree of competent subordinate leadership.

J. E. Lendon explores Rome's tolerance for decentralized, low-level decision-making. Lendon examines Roman warfare through a cultural lens and argues Rome's method of warfare centered on its ability to strike a balance between two equally pervasive and dichotomous forces: *disciplina* and *virtus*. *Disciplina*, Lendon explains, emphasizes a soldier's strict obedience and steadfast commitment to holding one's position in the battleline, despite overwhelming emotional urges to either flee or attack. Conversely, *virtus* emphasizes unabashed, individual martial aggression, potentially at the risk of degrading the integrity of the formation. Lendon argues it was Rome's ability to harness and control both *disciplina* and *virtus* that provided the legions with their ultimate source of power, by allowing the young *velites* and front-ranking legionaries to freely exercise their *virtus*, while elder veterans maintained the battle line through strict observance of *disciplina*.[32] Using Lendon's theory, one could argue Rome's very culture necessitated tactical-level mission command; the natural pugnacity of its warriors demanded they be relatively unshackled from the chains of overbearing control, while the fragile nature of ancient battle formations simultaneously necessitated unit integrity.

Jeremiah McCall's recent analysis of Rome's manipular system offers further insight. He posits that the centuries-old institutional systems comprising the Republican military establishment enabled the state to place relatively inexperienced commanders at the head of her armies and still prevail. The level of competence inherent in a general's advisory board and his subordinate officer corps ensured his operational and tactical decisions were sound. McCall forms the basis of his argument on Sabin's model of combat and emphasizes the importance sub-commanders must have played in the actual conduct of the battle—suggesting that when an infantry unit successfully outflanked an enemy, it was often due to the initiative of a subordinate commander.[33]

Synthesizing the arguments of Sabin, Slavik, Zhmodikov, Taylor, Lendon, and McCall, offers a comprehensive foundation for the analysis of mission command at the tactical level. Rome did not group together

and smash a single, dense formation of men against an enemy line. Doing so would alleviate any requirement for decision-making below the general. Instead, separate centuries, maniples, and cohorts comprised Roman battle lines, each led by their own officer. Clashes occurred iteratively, to and from the safety distance. Spacing between subunits enabled them to assault, maneuver, or revector independently, in addition to facilitating the coordination and employment of mobile support elements. Likewise, cultural pressures encouraged both aggressive subunit action and disciplined synchronization. Indeed, these factors complicated Roman battlefield activities and likely demanded some form of decentralized, purpose-driven tactical command structure.

Modern scholars have a difficult time determining a general framework regarding institutionalized command and control practices when they elevate their analyses from the tactical to the operational level. This is partly due to how individual personalities could affect operational level leadership—subsequently, the prevalence of mission command—to a much greater extent than the relatively mechanistic nature of tactical leadership. Attempting to determine the extent that a typical legate was free to exercise disciplined initiative while on campaign, or the degree that a campaigning general shared his understanding of the operational environment with his subordinates, depended as much on the idiosyncrasies of that specific individual as it did on the institutional norms of the Roman military establishment.

Southern further elucidates how the temperament of Rome's highest magistrates could drastically influence operational level leadership. To maintain the Empire's security, the emperor needed to deploy capable armies led by competent commanders to its frontiers. These same commanders could present a credible threat to imperial rule; if too successful, influential and powerful these generals could (and often did) attempt usurpation. Because of this "continual dilemma," particularly paranoid or jealous emperors were inclined to deliberately curtail the autonomy and progress of certain generals—such as Claudius's recalling of Domitius Corbulo's legions operating east of the Rhine.[34] This practice could instigate a further trickling down of draconian, hierarchal leadership procedures and subsequently extinguish any potential for genuine mission command to occur.

When not deliberately constrained by overly-suspicious emperors, scholars largely agreed that generals enjoyed relatively free reign to prosecute their campaigns as they saw fit. Southern, for instance, notes that as long as generals operated within the overarching framework of the em-

peror's instructions, they were free to make decisions on the spot to meet their objectives.[35] Likewise, Nathan Rosenstein notes that the senate afforded Republican-era generals "a great deal of latitude" to make war and peace or otherwise act as they saw fit while on campaign.[36] This must have been particularly true as Roman territories expanded, lines of communication lengthened, and official guidance from Rome took an unacceptable amount of time to reach generals and their staffs. If one considers the great distances which generals operated from in central Italy, one might reason that the Roman military establishment necessitated a greater degree of operational-level mission command than even modern armies do.

Adrian Goldsworthy's analysis of the campaigning Roman army offers a compelling explanation for this phenomenon. Goldsworthy explains that Rome's method of warfare called for adopting the offensive as soon as possible, and its desire to bring a rapid, decisive conclusion to conflict encouraged generals to seize the initiative and dictate the course of the fighting.[37] Caesar in Gaul, Cestius Gallus in Judaea, and Decianus Catus in Britannia all reveal Rome's willingness to respond rapidly to emerging threats with whatever troops were available—even if these forces were drastically outnumbered—and indeed reflect the inherent authority commanders at almost every echelon enjoyed. The very nature of this method of warfare, then, mirrors modern doctrinal descriptions of mission command. Army Doctrine Publication 6-0 explains "decentralized execution is essential to seizing, retaining, and exploiting the operational initiative," particularly in uncertain, or rapidly changing environments.[38] Commanders, must achieve a "tempo and intensity that enemy forces cannot match," must disseminate information to the lowest possible level, articulate their intent, and empower subordinates to exercise disciplined initiative.[39]

Scholars' discussions of operational level leadership have had more to do with generals' personal activities before, during, and after battle, and less to do with how they implemented command and control mechanisms. Goldsworthy, for example, explains that the general's purpose was to "direct his army as units of troops to achieve victory…through the issues of orders and communications with subordinates and units," but the scope of his work largely precludes him from illuminating the topic much further.[40] Likewise, Rosemary Moore describes Roman commanders as being capable of "leading large, complex armies on long campaigns" but offers little in the way of judging how decisions were made at the general, legate, or tribune levels.[41] Again, this void in the body of knowledge could be a consequence of the difficulty of interpreting and reducing the beliefs and actions of countless individual personalities spanning hundreds of years into

some useful overarching framework. But if political historians can piece together and describe the root beliefs underpinning something like Roman foreign policy, then military historians should be able to do the same for Roman military leadership principles.

Notes

1. Fabius Pictor's work has not survived, though it informed the histories of Livy (1.44) and Polybius 1-14-15; see also Simon Hornblower, Antony Spawforth, and Esther Eidinow, eds., *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* 4th ed. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), 564.

2. Pat Southern, *The Roman Army: A Social and Institutional History* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007), 199.

3. Throughout this thesis, I use the term 'junior officers' to refer primarily to the line centurions (and their non-commissioned officer-like subordinate officers) occupying command positions within the legion (not the more senior *primi ordines* of the first cohort). I use the term 'senior officers' to refer to the military tribunes, legates, and generals (e.g., consuls, *praetors*, proconsuls, and *propraetors*) actually leading the legions themselves.

4. Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces* (Washington, DC: Army Publishing Directorate, 2019), vii.

5. On the evolution of *Auftragstaktik*, see Gunther E. Rothenberg, "Moltke, Schlieffen, and the Doctrine of Strategic Envelopment," in *Makers of Modern Strategy*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 296-325.

6. Polybius, *The Histories*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3.89-92.

7. Caesar, *The Gallic War*, trans. Carolyn Hammond (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3.12, 4.17, 7.24.

8. Livy, *The History of Rome*, trans. Rev. Canon Roberts (New York, NY: E.P. Dutton, 1912), 25.23-24; Polybius, 10.10-14.

9. HQDA, Army Doctrine Publication 6-0, 1-6–1-14.

10. HQDA, Army Doctrine Publication 6-0, 1-6-1-10.

11. HQDA, Army Doctrine Publication 6-0, 1-7–1-12.

12. Polybius, 6.24.

13. Vegetius, *Vegetius: Epitome of Military Science*, trans. N. P. Milner (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2001), 2.14.

14. Because *Strategems* is less of a 'manual' and more of a collection of leadership anecdotes, I sparingly draw on Frontinus to contextualize/illustrate points made by other military treatise authors. Despite its lateness, see on the value of Maurice's Strategikon Philip Rance, "Maurice's Strategicon and 'the Ancients': the Late Antique Reception of Aelian and Arrian" in *Greek Taktika: Ancient Military Writing and its Heritage*, ed. Philip Rance and Nicholas V. Sekunda (Gdansk: Foundation for the Development of Gdańsk University, 2017), 217-255.

15. For instance, Frontinus suggests that he wrote *Strategems* to furnish future commanders "with specimens of wisdom…which will serve to foster their own power of conceiving and executing like deeds." Frontinus, Stratagems, Aqueducts of Rome, trans. Charles E. Bennett (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univer-

sity Press, 1925), 1.1. Likewise, Onasander states his *Strategikos* is little more than a "summary sketch of what the Romans have already accomplished," and that its utility, if nothing else, offers readers "for what reason some generals have stumbled and fallen, but others have prospered." Onasander, *Strategikos*, trans. Illinois Greek Club (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1923), prooemium, 1-6. Milner moreover suggests Vegetius' *de Rei Militari* was not much more than Vegetius' attempt to reinvoke the successful practices of "ancient" Republican Roman armies. Milner, xxviii.

16. Vegetius, *Mil.*, 1.21, 2.4, 4.41.

17. Livy, 44.4. Scholars have questioned the reliability of Livy as a credible military source. Samuel Koon has challenged this belief and offers an extensive analysis of the vocabulary and common themes found in Livy's, Polybius', and Caesars' battle narratives as proof that Livy's accounts generally reflect the realities of combat. Sam Koon, *Infantry Combat in Livy's Battle Narratives* (Oxford, UK: Archaeopress, 2010), 86.

18. Caesar, *B.G.*, 7.50-52.

19. Jeremiah McCall, for instance, conservatively estimates the infantry line of just one half of a standard consular army (i.e., two legions) would have measured over a mile in length—well outside of audible, and likely visual, contact with subordinate forces. Jeremiah McCall, "The Manipular Army System and Command Decisions in the Second Century," in *Romans at War: Soldiers, Citizens, and Society in the Roman Republic*, ed. J. Armostrong and M. Fonda (New York, NY: Routledge, 2020), 222.

20. Frontinus, *Strat.*, 3.12; Vegetius, Mil., 2.22.

21. Maurice, *Maurice's Strategikon: Handbook of Byzantine Military Strategy*, trans. George T. Dennis (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), 4.3.

22. Plutarch, *The Parallel Lives*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1923), https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Lives/home.html, *Pomp.* 25.

23. Caesar, *B.G.*, 5.24. Tacitus, *Agricola and Germany*, trans. A. R. Birley (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), 25-26; Sallust, *Catiline's Conspiracy, The Jugurthine War, Histories*, trans. William W. Batstone (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010), 55-57.

24. Paul Bentley Kern, *Ancient Siege Warfare* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 267-270.

25.Tacitus, *The Annals*, trans. J. C. Yardley (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1.32.

26. Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Deeds and Sayings*, trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 5.3.2.

27. Philip Sabin, "The Face of Roman Battle," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 90 (2000): 14-15, https://www.jstor.org/stable/300198.

28. Alexander Zhmodikov, "Roman Republican Heavy Infantrymen in Battle (IV-II Centuries B.C.)," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 49, h. 1 (2000): 67-78, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24432811.

29. Jordan F. Slavik, "Pilum and Telum: The Roman Infantryman's Style of Combat in the Middle Republic," *The Classical Journal* 113, no. 2 (December 2017-January 20018): 166, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5184/classicalj.113.2.0151.

30. Polybius, 15.15.

31. Michael J. Taylor, "Roman Infantry Tactics in the Mid-Republic: A Reassessment," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 63, h. 3 (2014): 320, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24432811.

32. J. E. Lendon, *Soldiers and Ghosts: A History of Battle in Classical Antiquity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 190-191.

33. McCall, 229.

34. Southern, 173.

35. Southern, 200.

36. Nathan Rosenstein, "Military Command, Political Power, and the Republican Elite," in *A Companion to the Roman Army*, ed. Paul Erdkamp (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2011), 141-2.

37. Adrian Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War, 100 BC–AD 200* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1996), 114.

38. HQDA, ADP 6-0, 1-5.

39. HQDA, Army Doctrine Publication 6-0, 1-5.

40. Goldsworthy, 119.

41. Rosemary Moore, "Generalship: Leadership and Command," in *The Oxford Handbook of Warfare in the Classical World*, ed. Brian Campbell and Lawrence A. Tritle, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 470.

Chapter 2
Competence, Disciplined Initiative, and Risk Acceptance

> When the storm of war is at hand repeatedly shattering, overthrowing, and bringing varied conditions, the sight of present circumstances demands expedients based on the exigencies of the moment, which necessity of chance rather than the memory of experience suggests.
>
> —Onasander, *Strategikos*

> War is inherently chaotic, demanding an approach to the command and control of operations that does not attempt to impose perfect order, but rather makes allowances for uncertainty created by chance and friction.
>
> —HQDA, Army Doctrine Publication 6-0, *Mission Command*

Displays of competence, disciplined initiative, and risk acceptance are the most easily recognizable indicators of whether a military organization operates under a mission command construct. This is due largely to the overt nature of the principles themselves. Unlike the relatively abstract concepts of "shared understanding" or "mutual trust," the decisions and actions of commanders and subordinates are concrete and measurable—they either happened or they did not. This quality makes an analysis of these three principles not only a useful starting point, but a necessary one, as the conspicuous absence of just one would significantly detract from the possibility that the Romans embraced the holistic concept of mission command in any meaningful way.

Grouping these three principles together is also necessary because of their symbiotic relationship. Commanders are only willing to accept and underwrite the risks associated with subordinate decision-making if they are confident in their subordinates' level of competence. That is, a prudent commander must have faith that their subordinate leaders are intelligent and capable enough to make the right decisions at the right times before assigning them a task. Any military organization hoping to apply and profit from decentralized command must therefore take an active approach in developing the tactical and technical aptitude of its subordinate leaders.

Throughout this chapter, I argue Rome's unique battlefield organization required an approach to command and control that acknowledged and encouraged a large degree of subordinate disciplined initiative. Ev-

idence of Rome's manipular, and later cohort, structure reveals an army consisting of dozens of independent and distinct formations of men—each requiring local leadership and a comparatively large amount of maneuver space between adjacent units. Roman commanders frequently relied on this segmented formation to achieve success by capitalizing on the semi-autonomy of its disparate elements to flexibly assault into the gaps of enemy lines, reinforce holes in Roman lines, or rapidly exploit fleeting battlefield opportunities.

I further argue that the difficulty commanders had observing and controlling these complex field armies resulted in a general willingness to assume the risks associated with such decentralized decision-making. Commanders' limited ability to rapidly communicate complex orders often precluded any attempt by them to establish strict, hierarchical control. Instead, commanders both acknowledged the need for and rewarded local decision-making—in essence, relying on the judgement of the collective to offset the impracticability of relying on the judgement of a single person.

Lastly, I argue this method of warfare compelled Rome to establish and maintain a competent, meritocratic subordinate officer corps. Rome's reliance on subordinate disciplined initiative and its willingness to assume the risks associated with decentralized decision-making provided an impetus for the state to internalize a common understanding of what constituted a "competent" leader, and furthermore put mechanisms in place to ensure those leaders were identified and elevated through the ranks.

The Roman Battlefield

The Roman battlefield was a chaotic place. Heavy infantry formations clashed, retrograded, revectored, interchanged lines, and clashed again; light infantry formations ebbed and flowed through battle lines, skirmished ahead of the army, seized key terrain, and massed missile fire; cavalry formations conducted pursuits, harassments, and frontal, flank, and rear assaults; and detached combined arms formations conducted envelopment, raiding, and ambuscade operations. Contemporary military manuals attest to the chaotic nature of the Roman battlefield: Onasander compares battle to the volatile conditions of sea voyage, Maurice to the movement of water, "which flows now forward now backward," and Vegetius alerts his readers to the ubiquitous presence of untethered, mobile detachments, flexibly operating throughout the depth of the battlefield.[1]

One reason for the complexity of Roman warfare derives from its army's intricate battlefield organization. Unlike Classical Greek phalanx-

es (ca. fifth and fourth centuries BC), or Hellenistic pike formations (ca. fourth through second centuries BC), each characterized by dense formations of spearmen standing shoulder-to-shoulder in a single line, Middle Republican Rome (third and second centuries BC) physically divided its legions into four segmented and mutually supporting lines.[2] At the head of the army stood a single line of roughly twelve hundred *velites*—the youngest soldiers in the legion, armed with a small shield, a sword, and several javelins. As the legion's principal skirmishers, *velites* enjoyed near total autonomy, free to assault the enemy and withdraw as battlefield conditions permitted.[3] They had no officers commanding their formation, but were instead internally driven by the powerful cultural force of *virtus* and the desire to be recognized for martial prowess.[4] *Virtus* and a lack of strict hierarchical control resulted in a shapeless mass of light infantrymen—encompassing nearly 30 percent of the legion's total strength—swarming the enemy like hornets, able to poke holes and exploit cracks in the enemy line.

The remaining three lines were more refined in structure, but no less complex: the second line consisted of twelve hundred *hastati* swordsmen, only slightly older and slightly better equipped than the *velites*; the third line consisted of twelve hundred *principes* swordsmen—men at the "prime of their life" and likewise more experienced than the *hastati*; and the last line was made up of six hundred *triarii* spearmen—the most experienced, but oldest, soldiers in the legion. Each line was subdivided into ten equal-sized maniples, colloquially translated as "handfuls" of men. The maniples of the *hastati* and *principes* were further subdivided into two, sixty-man centuries, each led by a junior officer, the centurion. Once arrayed on the battlefield, maniples were physically separated by a space equaling roughly fifty percent of a maniple's width, and each line would be offset from the line ahead of it, so that the formations appeared like checkers on a checkerboard.[5]

Understanding the force array of the legion allows one to better visualize the number of independent, moving pieces present on a Roman battlefield.[6] A cursory survey of just the legion's infantry reveals a formation of men extending nearly three quarters of a mile in length, divided into four distinct lines in depth, with nine clear breaks in the second, third, and fourth lines.[7] The entire infantry formation would boast fifty-one distinct groupings of men, each (save for the leaderless *velites*) led by a centurion. An emphasis would be placed on physically dividing the formations, a tradition unique to the Romans, facilitating the flexible commitment of secondary and tertiary lines at critical moments.[8]

POLYBIAN (MANIPULAR) LEGION

Figure 2.1. Polybian Manipular Legion, ca. Third Century BC.

Source: Created by author.

Moreover, because legionaries were predominantly swordsmen and not spearmen, each legionary required greater spacing between each man *within* the formation, permit his unimpeded rotation of sword and shield. Polybius comments that where Macedonian spearmen required only three feet of space per man, the Roman legionary required six.[9] Overall, the deployed Roman legion appeared more analogous to a modern army's battlefield array—*with* segregated companies and platoons physically dispersed but generally in line formation—than a condensed army sporting a single, mass block of men.[10]

The Roman army's gradual transition from a manipular to a cohortal structure in the second century BC. changed the fundamental principles of maintaining unit spacing and local leadership only slightly. Instead of four lines divided into ten maniples each, the Roman cohortal structure typically fielded three lines—the *triplex acies*—with four cohorts in the first line and three cohorts each in the second and third lines. Cohorts were still subdivided into centuries, with the first cohort possessing five 150-man centuries, and the remaining nine cohorts possessing six eighty-man centuries. A single centurion still led each century, and the *pilus prior*—the cohort's senior ranking centurion—likely dual-hatted the responsibilities of commanding both his respective century, and the cohort in its entirety.[11] Under the cohortal structure, physical separation of units and the reliance on subordinate leadership still characterized Rome's principal battlefield organization, as did the capacity to flexibly commit rear-echelon cohorts to the fight.
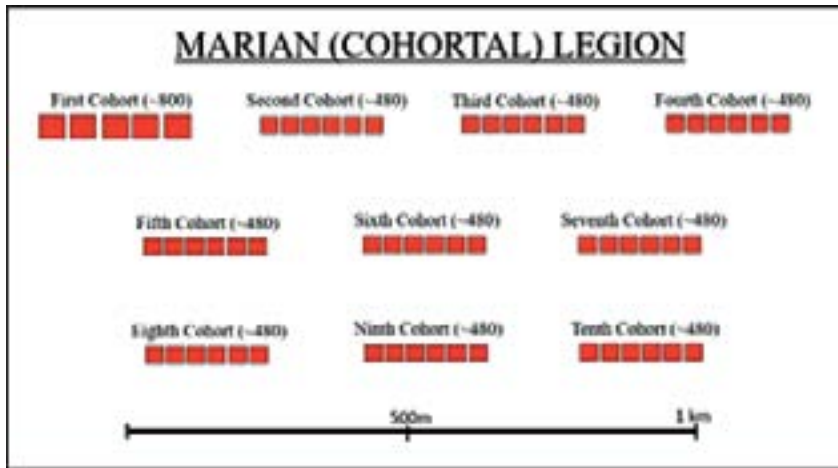
Figure 2.2. Marian Cohortal Legion, ca. Late Second Century BC.

Source: Created by author.

Julius Caesar's struggle at the Battle of the Sambre in 57 BC reveals what could happen should subunit spacing and low-level command become compromised. During the battle, Caesar observed the legion on his right flank as it quickly compressed from the weight of a Nervii ambush. He writes: "Because their standards were crowded together the men of the Twelfth were packed so close that they obstructed one another in the fighting." He goes on to state that all but a few of the legion's centurions had been killed or wounded, creating a void in critical leadership at the century and cohort echelons. Seeing these issues, Caesar writes that he made his way to the front line and ordered the remaining centurions to assault forward and open the ranks, so that the men could more easily fight.[12] Though this anecdote could perhaps amount to little more than a moment of shameless self-aggrandizement, the reasoning Caesar provides his readers for the legion's inability to effectively counter the ambush—namely, a lack of subordinate maneuver space and local leadership—nonetheless reveals his belief that both of these conditions needed to exist for the proper functioning of the army.

Tactical Disciplined Initiative

Given the historic difficulty of maintaining unit cohesion in ancient battle calls into question why Rome elected to deploy such a complicated and dispersed array. The answer lays in the benefits this organization offered the army. Unlike a contiguous phalanx, each independent century

and maniple enjoyed both the local leadership and physical space it needed to effectively react and maneuver upon emerging threats or opportunities. Polybius explains, "the order of a Roman force" enables "every man individually and in common with his fellows to present a front in any direction, the maniples which are nearest to danger turning themselves by single movement to face it."[13] Over two hundred years later, Josephus demonstrates this enduring quality by characterizing Roman ranks as fluid in their maneuvers and legionaries as highly responsive to orders, signals, and necessary actions.[14] Indeed, the Roman tradition of warfare was a calculated risk—a careful balance of loosening direct control over subordinate units just enough to capitalize on the natural fluidity and responsiveness it afforded the army. In other words, the Romans continuously gambled on the idea that the benefit of tactical flexibility outweighed the risks associated with decentralized subordinate decision-making.

Several compelling examples reveal the dynamic and relatively loose internal order of a fielded legion. Livy tells us that a customary oath legionaries swore to one another before battle declared that no man would "quit the ranks, save to fetch or pick up a weapon, to strike an enemy, or to save a comrade."[15] The oath's caveats allowing internal maneuverings under these specific circumstances are noteworthy: if a formation was threatened, a piece of equipment retrievable, or an enemy vulnerable, legionaries were wholly permitted, if not encouraged, to maneuver forward, laterally, or diagonally in the midst of battle.

Battle narratives repeatedly demonstrate this phenomenon. During the Battle of Pydna in 168 BC, Cato's son, Marcus, lost his sword in battle, so he "ran along the ranks telling every friend and companion whom he saw," until he gathered a "goodly number of brave men…and fell upon the enemy," in order to recover it.[16] Marius' pitched battle against Boeorix and the Cimbri during the Battle of Vercellae in 101 BC was a similar occurrence. Though Marius observed Boeorix conducting a feint on his left flank, threatening to overextend the Romans' line, Marius could not prevent one of his subordinate formations from pursuing the enemy, thus falling into the trap.[17] Likewise, during the fight for Antonia in 70 AD, the Syrian auxiliary Sabinus, followed by eleven others, personally elected to assault the fortified walls to break through the Jewish defenses. His actions were not only self-directed, but implicitly approved by Titus, commander of the overall force.[18]

Rome's acceptance of subunit semi-autonomy existed because its military command and control structure relied to a large extent on subordinate disciplined initiative. This fact is evident in both extant military

manuals and battle narratives. Maurice repeatedly advises that outflanking formations should possess the ability to launch an immediate attack if they observed an unorganized enemy.[19] He likewise states ambuscade parties and flanking elements, led by "courageous and intelligent officers," should have the authority to decide when and where to strike an enemy's rear, flank, or baggage train.[20] Vegetius, too, emphasizes the importance for officers to capitalize on fleeting opportunities. He states, "opportunity in war is often more to be depended on than courage," and that good officers engage in actions when induced by opportunity.[21]

Polybius' account of the Battle of Cynoscephalae in 197 BC—Rome's first significant victory against Philip V's Macedonians—reveals these military treatise's principles in action. Polybius writes:

> The main body of the Roman right followed and slaughtered the flying Macedonians. But one of the tribunes, with about twenty maniples, *having made up his mind on his own account what ought to be done next*, contributed by his action very greatly to the general victory. He saw that the division which was personally commanded by Philip was much farther forward than the rest of the enemy, and was pressing hard upon the Roman left by its superior weight; he therefore left the right, which was by this time clearly victorious, and directing his march towards the part of the field where a struggle was still going on, he managed to get behind the Macedonians and charge them on the rear.[22]

In this case, the tribune not only observed and exploited an enemy vulnerability, but he did so explicitly under his own authority. Moreover, his actions fell in line with the oath Livy records that expressly authorizes soldiers to break formation if it was to strike an enemy or to save a comrade.

The Battle of Pydna, 168 BC, between the armies of Lucius Aemilius Paullus and the Macedonian king Perseus, illustrates one of the best examples of Roman generals relying on junior officer disciplined initiative. Polybius writes that a well-formed Macedonian phalanx, with its impenetrable front of overlapping sarissa pikes, was an insurmountable force unless uneven terrain disrupted its formation.[23] But broken terrain alone does not defeat a phalanx; this task requires an enemy force flexible enough for independent segments to rapidly assault into the phalanx's gaps. This is what occurred at Pydna. Livy states that "the most probable explanation of the victory is that several separate engagements were going on all over the field," and that the Macedonian phalanx was "forced to meet the

repeated charges of small bodies of Roman troops…and wherever there were gaps [in the phalanx,] the Romans worked their way amongst [the Macedonians'] ranks."[24]

Admittedly, Plutarch, in his account of the battle, suggests Paullus himself divided the legions into subunits and ordered their independent assaults, but this claim seems to embody the hallmark characteristic of sources attributing all decisions of moment to the commander.[25] There are two reasons why Plutarch's description likely falls under this category. First, Livy makes no mention of Paullus directing these independent assaults. Second, Taylor estimates that the battle lines at Pydna likely extended over a mile and a half in length—a distance difficult for a single general to effectively observe, much less control. On horseback it would take Paullus at least ten minutes to simply swing around from one side of the battlefield to the other, and that is assuming there were no stops for cover or to issue orders along the way.[26] Instead, it is reasonable to presume that the numerous, independent and simultaneous assaults were the result of Rome's tradition of encouraging subunit initiative—a fact evinced by Plutarch's own description of a local Pelignian commander in the same battle who, unprovoked, hurled his unit's standard into the Macedonian phalanx to compel his formation to assault the enemy line.[27]

The multi-line battlefield array likewise illustrates how disciplined initiative was a built-in feature of the Roman command and control system. Goldsworthy, drawing on several of Caesar's battle narratives, concludes that the legion's second line often quickly became involved in combat soon after the first line met the enemy—only the third line was generally free for the general to employ as a reserve.[28] Though Caesar's exploits occurred a century and a half after the 202 BC Battle of Zama, Goldsworthy's observation falls generally in line with Polybius' description of the battle. Polybius explicitly states that when the first line of *hastati* maniples became disorganized after clashing with Hannibal's Carthaginians, it was the officers of the second line *principes* that made the decision to commit their maniples to reinforce the first line. Only once the Carthaginian line collapsed did Scipio himself resume direct control over the movements of his subordinate forces.[29] The implication of this phenomenon is that the second line was never intended to be subject to direct, hierarchical control—at least not until the enemy was routed. Rather, the local officers of the second line themselves held the responsibility of determining when to commit their maniples to the fight.

While subordinate initiative generally afforded Rome a battlefield advantage it could also occasion disaster, as illustrated by the Battle of

Cannae in 216 BC, see Figure 2.3.). During the battle, Hannibal deployed his formation in a convex line, with the bulged-out center facing toward the Roman army. He positioned his less reliable Celtic auxiliary forces in the center and his Carthaginian heavy infantry on the wings. As the two armies met, the Roman maniples, observing the Carthaginian center's ostensibly exposed flanks, executed their traditional authority to seize an opportunity: they revectored their maniples to converge on the Celtic formation from both sides, subsequently driving Hannibal's center back. This maneuver converted Hannibal's convex line into a concave one, placing his heavy Carthaginian infantry behind Rome's now congregated maniples. Hannibal closed the trap by executing a simultaneous double-envelopment, leading to the utter annihilation of the Roman army.[30] Hannibal's cleverness at Cannae was not just his ability to envelop Roman forces, but his ability to anticipate and develop a scheme of maneuver centered on countering Rome's tradition of decentralized command.

Rome's system of military rewards provides additional insight into the degree that the army sought to foster subordinate disciplined initiative. Because ancient warfare required individuals to wittingly assault into the teeth of the enemy, many scholars categorize the reward structure as a mechanism simply intended to induce martial courage in the face of imminent danger.[31] But this view seems to capture only half of its purpose; the other half deals with recognizing subordinate leadership potential and promoting those who exercise initiative in the absence of orders. Polybius, for instance, explicitly states men received military rewards not just for killing an enemy, but for doing so when "individual risk-taking [was] not inescapable."[32] That is, rewards encouraged and incentivized legionaries to act beyond the conventional, expected scope of their assigned duties— to do more than simply follow orders. In practice, this could manifest as launching an un-ordered assault, or quickly maneuvering to save a group of fellow Romans.

Though possibly rife with allegory, Pliny the Elder's description of the actions of the centurion Cneius Petrius Atinas provides an example of subordinate leaders receiving recognition for their initiative. Pliny states that Atinas' legion, cut off in all directions by Cimbrian forces, struggled as its indecisive military tribune hesitated to act. Atinas, observing the issue, elected to kill the tribune, take control of the formation, and lead his legion to safety. For his actions, Atinas received the *corona graminae*, or "grass crown"—perhaps the most venerated of all military crowns, and one bestowed upon someone who saved an entire legion from annihilation.[33]

The Battle of Cannae, 216 B.C.

Numidian Cavalry

African Heavy Infantry

African Heavy Infantry

Carthaginian Cavalry

Celtic Auxiliary

Roman Cavalry

Roman Maniples

Allied Cavalry

Celtic Auxiliary

African Heavy Infantry

African Heavy Infantry

Roman Maniples

Roman Cavalry

Carthaginian Cavalry
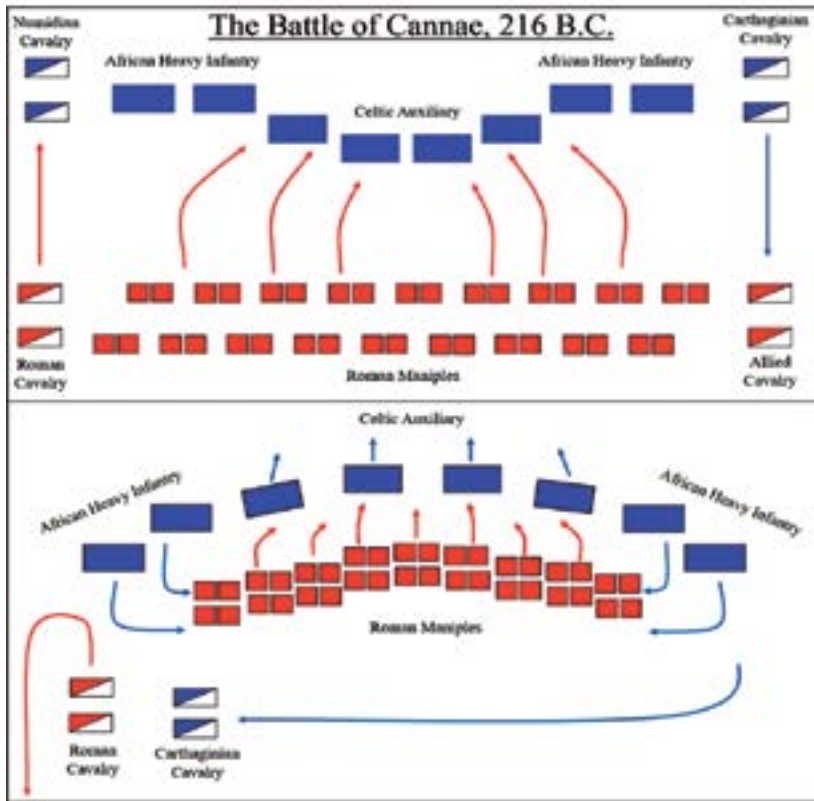
Figure 2.3. Battle of Canne, 216 BC.

Source: Created by author.

Those who displayed this kind of initiative were usually rewarded not just with increased pay or public symbols denoting valor, but in leadership promotion—a clear indication of Rome's deliberate attempt to place individuals with these attributes into positions of command. Onasander states that a general "should honor those soldiers who have faced danger most bravely" with "appointments to commands, such as over fifties, over hundreds, over companies, [and] over squads."[34] Likewise, Caesar frequently rationalizes his decision to either promote or demote legionaries on the grounds of their bravery.[35] The story of fabled Titus Pullo and Lucius Vorenus, in fact, brings to life both Polybius' and Onasander's descriptions of whom should be rewarded and how. The two centurions, both competing for promotion to *primus pilus*, agreed that the dispute could be best settled by their launching of an attack against the besieging Gallic

forces.[36] Both Pullo and Vorenus understood the Roman promotion system and the importance disciplined initiative played in achieving the next higher position of command.

Tactical Risk Acceptance

Rome's tradition of relying upon a relatively decentralized command and control system is probably also a result of the natural difficulty commanders had both observing and controlling their subordinate forces. On a battlefield that could extend up to two miles in length, commanders possessed few options for communicating to their subordinate forces, each with their own limitations: instruments, smoke, fire, couriers, or their own presence. Instruments (e.g., bugles, trumpets, horns) offered the most expedient method but could fail to reach the ears of distant soldiers engaged in combat. This happened to Caesar during the Battle of Gergovia, where he incurred significant losses after all but his Tenth Legion failed to hear his signal to halt.[37] Instruments were also limited by their ability to communicate only pre-planned, simple messages—such as halt, advance, or retreat.[38] As any modern commander can attest, simple messages are useful only if operations occur according to plan but fail when conditions become complex. Rome's disaster at the Teutoburg Forest, 9 AD, illuminates this fact. Tacitus cites the confusion and disorganization of the ambush as the primary reason for soldiers' inability (or unwillingness) to quickly respond to signals and orders.[39] Fire and smoke offered a similarly rapid expedient, capable of quickly carrying messages over great distances, but were likewise limited by their capacity to convey only simple messages.[40]

The use of couriers is the next viable option, and perhaps the best one for communicating complex ideas, but it suffers from its own set of problems. Onasander states that passing orders down the line is time consuming, can cause confusion, and orders can become skewed given the likelihood of "one man, through ignorance, add[ing] something to what the general has said and another omit[ting] something."[41] Confusion is what occurred during the Battle of Philippi, 42 BC, when Marcus Junius Brutus' couriers failed to synchronize their delivery of his orders to attack, resulting in the line assaulting unevenly.[42] Couriers might also not make it to their destination, as demonstrated during Crassus' defeat at Carrhae, where several of the general's couriers were either killed or disrupted by Parthian forces.[43] More importantly, generals' use of couriers to control the actions of subunits already engaged in combat must have been extremely difficult, owing to the length of time it would take a courier to reach the subordinate unit, locate the local commander, and convey the message, all

while under the threat of missile fire or direct enemy confrontation. Marius' inability to effectively communicate to his left flank during Boeorix's feint, discussed earlier, illustrates this fact.[44]

Lastly, a general could attempt to directly control his formation by personally riding up and down the line issuing orders.[45] This method has obvious limitations, and is one Onasander describes as a mark of an inexperienced commander.[46] To begin with, a single commander could only observe a small portion of a battle at any given time and therefore could have difficulty knowing where his leadership was most needed. Goldsworthy, drawing from the Victorian *Artillerist's Manual*, estimates a general could only distinguish between a cavalry and infantry formation at 1,190 meters, and could only make out uniforms at 450 meters. This fact clarifies the frequency with which the sources mention leaders and soldiers mistaking friend for foe, or vice versa.[47] Additionally, even if a general could observe the entire battlefield, he could not be everywhere all at once, limiting his ability to effectively control various events occurring simultaneously across a wide front. Vegetius points out that, given "the confusion of battle," a single voice simply could not issue the number of orders needing to be executed "on the spur of the moment," and required the use of instruments at a minimum.[48] This is especially true if the army under question is a massive one. Tiberius, for instance, felt his army of ten legions in Pannonia was simply too large a force for him to effectively manage, and he thus sent a portion of it back to Rome.[49]

Overall, the physical realities of ancient combat impeded any notion of relying on a single general to control the actions of an entire army. This is especially true with the particularly complex Roman legion, which could field upwards of fifty distinct subunit formations. Commanders therefore willingly accepted some degree of risk, by allowing their centurions and tribunes the authority to make pertinent decisions and execute them without first seeking approval. This level of risk did not have to be great, and many commanders doubtless took measures to reduce it. Maurice, for instance, recommends generals should "know the inclinations and tendencies of each officer," so that he "will know better what duties should be assigned to each one."[50] Likewise, Onasander emphasizes that while a general should never gamble with his entire army, he should grant certain soldiers the right to take high-payoff risks—"for if they succeed they are of great assistance, but if they fail they do not cause corresponding loss."[51]

Tactical Competence

Because Rome relied on subordinate disciplined initiative to offset the difficulty commanders had in controlling their formations, Rome placed significant emphasis on the competence of its junior leaders.[52] To begin with, simply earning a promotion to the rank of centurion took a considerable amount of time; Southern estimates it took an ordinary legionary around twelve to fifteen years of service.[53] Compared to the roughly six years it takes a modern American officer to reach an equivalent rank, the qualifications of earning a position as a centurion demanded a considerable amount of military experience. The storied career of Spurius Ligustinus, who spent two decades campaigning in Spain and Greece—earning six civic crowns and serving as first centurion of the *triarii* on four occasions along the way—provides one example.[54] Despite possessing such an extensive military resume, Livy tells us Ligustinus' appointment as a centurion was not a guarantee; only after publicly making his case, pointing to his years of service and previous awards for valor, did the Senate and tribunes assign him the rank.[55]

Not all junior officers possessed Ligustinus' tactical experience. A member of the equestrian class could simply purchase the rank of centurion, as demonstrated by several extant inscriptions.[56] This usually resulted in the new officer commanding one of Rome's auxiliary forces until he demonstrated his potential to lead in the legion proper.[57] Likewise, as Rome transitioned from Middle to Late Republic, qualifiers like social status, nobility, or wealth increasingly mattered less compared to martial experience. Marius' speech denouncing the military capabilities of his aristocratic opponents reveals the extent many Romans by the Late Republic prioritized merit over blood. Regarding his combat experience, he states: "What they have but heard or read, I have witnessed or performed. What they have learned from books, I have acquired in the field; and whether deeds or words are of greater estimation, it is for you to consider."[58]

In any event, the collective experience resident within the centurion ensured the whole institution was a highly capable and intelligent body. The sources repeatedly allude to such a fact: Polybius tells us senior centurions served on a general's military council; Onasander states a general should call upon his trusted subordinate commanders before making a decision; and a volume of descriptions offered by Tacitus, Plutarch, Livy, Caesar, and Josephus all reveal the influence centurions had on their commanders' decisions.[59] Livy describes how the centurion Quintus Navius developed an innovative tactical approach for countering Hannibal's recently enlisted Capuan cavalry during the Second Punic War. His actions

received him recognition from the general.[60] Likewise, Livy tells us three centurions dispatched by Scipio to train Numidian forces so impressed the Numidian king Syphax that the latter asked Rome if one could remain to serve as his permanent military advisor.[61] Moreover, many of the appointed military tribunes of the Middle Republic came from the ranks of the centurionate.[62] Perhaps most revealing of all is the fact that the Senate selected a centurion, Marcus Centenius, as commander of an eight thousand man force to halt Hannibal after suffering a string of catastrophic defeats at the Carthaginian's hands.[63]

Indeed, though Rome had no standardized war college or institutionalized metric for measuring competence, the state certainly still managed to develop and recognize tactically proficient junior and mid-level officers. The sources usually couched their descriptions of "competent" leadership in the simple terms of "courage" or "valor," but this is likely because the ancient authors felt little need to expound deeper on a subject so acutely entrenched in their *virtus*-driven society. To an observer far removed from Rome's cultural idiosyncrasies, it seems "competence" involved more than simple courage; it involved understanding the situation, making decisions, seizing opportunities, taking control, and turning chaos into order. It involved the *judicious* application of courage. Caesar's centurion Marcus Petronius—who led a heroic assault against the Gauls—was still an incompetent leader because his assault was reckless, driven by visions of glory, and it resulted in significant losses.[64] In comparison, officers like Cneius Petrius Atinas—ones who weighed options, took calculated risks, and acted boldly—Rome styled as "competent" leaders.

Operational Disciplined Initiative

Like all pre-modern, pre-radio militaries, the armies of Rome had almost no ability to institute direct, hierarchical control at the operational level—the distances involved were simply too vast and the methods of communication too slow. At optimum speeds, messages from Raetia (roughly modern-day Switzerland) to Rome could take as long as three days; from Germania they could take six; from Britannia, nine to ten days; and from the eastern provinces, they could take upwards of two weeks.[65] It is worth considering for a moment exactly how far on-the-ground conditions could change in such a length of time. In just three days, armies could travel somewhere between thirty and sixty miles.[66] In six days—the time it would take for a general to send a message from Raetia to Rome and receive a reply—armies could move upwards of sixty to 120 miles, or the road distance from Rome to Naples. In fact, it would take about as

much time for Caesar to send a message to Rome and receive a reply as it did for him to build his famous bridge across the Rhine and launch a punitive campaign into Germania.[67] Several other examples provide useful context: Hannibal purportedly crossed the Alps in sixteen days;[68] Scipio Africanus assaulted and seized New Carthage in only a few days;[69] and within only a week of Caesar crossing the Rubicon, Pompey and the consuls were forced to withdraw from Rome.[70]

Given such considerable time lags, any change in campaign strategy directed from Rome could be woefully late in execution or potentially entirely irrelevant. Gaius Suetonius Paulinus' campaign against a festering resistance in Britannia is a good example. In 60 or 61 AD, Paulinus, then governor of the province, decided to seize the small northeastern island of Mona in the hopes of removing his enemy's primary source of supply. His army's temporary absence from the mainland prompted Boudica, leader of the Britons' resistance movement, to strike deep south into Rome's provincial holdings. The results were devastating—her armies looted and pillaged multiple towns, destroyed garrisons, crushed at least one Roman response force, and threatened the empire's control over the province in its entirety. Upon hearing the news, likely at least a week after the fact, elites in Rome recalled Paulinus and replaced him with a more reserved, amenable commander in the hopes of mollifying future restlessness.[71] Though their actions were prudent, the distances involved ensured they could not take effect until after Boudica's rebellion killed perhaps seventy thousand Roman citizens and allies.[72]

Time-distance issues were not only an affliction on Roman high command but plagued campaigning generals themselves. This was particularly true if commanders were conducting a form of warfare necessitating the dispersion of their forces—for example, during counter-guerilla, counterinsurgency, or regional stability operations. Given the vast territorial expanses frequently involved in these activities, generals executing them often granted a great deal of authority to their subordinate commanders. A good example of this occurred in Numidia during the Jugurthine War.

Jugurtha, after losing control of his principal base of operations, took to a form of irregular warfare that centered on disrupting Roman sustainment efforts, launching surprise attacks, and avoiding pitched battle. In response, Metellus, Rome's overall commander in the theater, divided his army into two forces, one led by Gaius Marius and the other led by himself. Sallust tells us both forces generally operated near enough to mutually support one another, but on at least one occasion Jugurtha was able to deliberately exploit the army's separation. Jugurtha massed his forces on

Marius' detachment while the latter was conducting resupply operations in Sicca—a town almost thirty-five miles away from Metellus' forces at Zama. Though Jugurtha nearly trapped and annihilated Marius' formation, the latter managed to repel Jugurtha's forces, complete his mission, and make his way back to reinforce Metellus.[73]

Caesar's war in Gaul is perhaps the best evidence of a generals' dispersed army requiring the empowerment of subordinate commanders. In fall of 54 BC, after four years of campaigning in Gaul, Caesar divided his legions into eight different camps, each separated up to one hundred miles apart (see Figure 2.4.).[74] His reasons for doing so were twofold: first, his army's supply requirements simply demanded he split his army. Second, dispersing his army enabled Caesar to stabilize the region and consolidate his recently seized holdings. While encamped, several Belgic tribes took up arms and threatened a series of attacks on the isolated legions. Upon hearing this, the Fourteenth Legion, led by the legates Cotta and Sabinus, elected to break camp to link up with a neighboring legion. Though Cotta's and Sabinus' legion would ultimately fall into an ambush and become annihilated nearly to a man, their ability to analyze the current situation, develop a course of action, and execute it without orders from Caesar demonstrates their inherent authority. Though Caesar castigates Sabinus for his decision, he does not fault him for taking the initiative per se, merely that it was a *rash* decision.[75]

Labienus, another of Caesar's encamped legates, also demonstrates the extent subordinate commanders were free to make decisions—this time with a more positive outcome. As Caesar and his legates were combatting Nervii forces elsewhere, Labienus observed an enemy force of the Treveri tribe conducting patrols in his vicinity, threatening to besiege his camp. In response, Labienus raised a significant cavalry force from across neighboring villages and conducted an incursion against the Treveri with effective results. His detachment chased down and killed Indutiomarus, leader of the tribe's force, and slaughtered the remaining Gallic combatants. Caesar lauded Labienus' initiative and states his efforts resulted in the dispersion of the remaining pockets of resistance in the region, thereby allowing "rule over relative calm in Gaul."[76]

It is important to note that while the ancient sources tend to reflect more deeply on pitched battles given the weight of their outcome on the political stage, dispersed stability operations were more likely the day-to-day norm in Roman military affairs. To be sure, Rome's initial annexation of territories owes to its rapid success in major offensive operations. But ultimate *control* of any territory, particularly those recently annexed, owes

to the routine, decades-long process of continuous, wide-area security.[77] Consider the fact that around 100 AD, Rome positioned eight legions with attached auxiliaries along the Rhine, six along the Danube, three in Hispania, three in Britannia, two across Africa, and six along their eastern border with Parthia.[78] Each of these strung out army groups were necessary not only to maintain a defensive perimeter against invasion, but to manage Rome's control over its territories most prone to insurrection. Indeed, the disproportionate amount of military effort Rome placed on dispersed operations helps to explain its institutional internalization of subordinate disciplined initiative at the operational level.

Figure 2.4. Caesar's Encamped Legions, Winter, 54/53 BC.

Source: Created by the author using map from Kurt A. Raaflaub and Robert B. Strassler, eds., *The Landmark Julius Caesar* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 2017), 163.

Frontier armies contended not only with perpetual regional instability but with the possibility of enemy invasion from virtually any direction by any number of differing enemies. This omnipresent, hybrid threat presented no single entity upon which Roman commanders could orient their actions. It likewise made the military situation at any given moment difficult to predict—thereby warranting a significant loosening of hierarchical control. The sudden uprising of a Frisian force in Germania in 28 AD illus-

trates this point. Tacitus explains that unchecked Roman rapacity towards the Frisii incited a local military response, resulting in a Roman garrison quickly falling under siege. Lucius Apronius, governor of the province, immediately responded by raising a combined army from legions spanning both Upper Germany and Lower Germany and marching against the tribe. Although Apronius' actions ultimately raised the siege, at least thirteen hundred legionaries died in the span of only two days.[79] Such sudden and monumental shifts in the operational environment indeed cemented the need for local autonomy.

Operational Risk Acceptance

If risk acceptance is measured in a leader's willingness to underwrite the honest mistakes of his subordinates, then Rome certainly embraced this concept at the operational level. Rome's high command notoriously overlooked the failures of its campaigning generals.[80] Marcus Minucius Rufus' disaster at the Battle of Geronium in 217 BC provides a clear example. Polybius states that although participants of the battle understood it was Minucius' overconfidence and brazen actions that led him into Hannibal's trap, resulting in significant casualties, the Senate instead blamed it on the inexperience of the soldiers themselves.[81] One year later, Livy states the citizens of Rome thanked Gaius Terentius Varro for "not having despaired of the state," despite the very fact that he had been chiefly responsible for the virtual eradication of eight Roman legions at the Battle of Cannae.[82] The consul Quintus Marcius Philippus, who suffered a serious defeat in Liguria in 186 BC after blundering into an ambush not only went unpunished but was "later reelected to the consulship in a year when serious campaigning appeared imminent."[83] Likewise, Paulinus, whose Mona operation prompted the Boudican rebellion, evidently experienced no significant reprimand short of losing his governorship over Britannia.[84] This is not to suggest all incompetent generals were entirely free from scrutiny, but enough evidence exists to indicate that overall, Rome, at least during the Middle to Late Republic, generally took a restrained approach when penalizing the professional command failures of its generals.[85]

Rome's relative willingness to overlook the tactical or operational (though not ethical) faults of its generals contrasts with the practices of other contemporary states. Carthage was notoriously brutal toward those commanders who failed to demonstrate sufficient skill in battle. Richard Miles posits that although Carthaginian commanders "made decisions with considerable autonomy while on campaign," Carthage's ruling elite would retrospectively audit their actions and, if needed, assign punish-

ments accordingly. Periodically their judgement would result in the literal crucifixion of a particularly incapable general.[86] Likewise, though outside of our period, Thucydides' fate for failing to save Amphipolis during the Peloponnesian War was a twenty-year exile—a punishment Athens frequently leveraged against ineffective or morally corrupt commanders.[87]

Rome's general reluctance to viciously punish those commanders who led their armies into large operational blunders should not be mistaken as an example of its tolerance for failure, or some inherent form of intragovernmental mercy. Instead, it should be viewed as a consciously developed and institutionally enforced mechanism intended to encourage rapid decision-making in operational environments where the benefits of such rapidity more often outweighed its associated risks. Vegetius' description of when to use punishments and when to use rewards illustrate this idea: "Soldiers are corrected by fear and punishment in camp, on campaign hope and rewards make them behave better."[88] Ancient authors recorded defeats like Trebia, Trasimene, Cannae, and even Teutoburg not solely because of their devastating military effects, but because they were entirely uncommon. The countless number of engagements and battles Rome undertook *not* recorded in history are the true testament to the efficacy of its risk-tolerant leadership philosophy. Indeed, while many observers characterize Rome's draconian discipline system as a source of its military strength, it is worth noting that Rome's application of such discipline extended primarily to those who demonstrated cowardice in battle or complacency while in camp. Otherwise, the ancient sources are relatively silent when one looks for evidence that Rome strictly punished those tribunes, legates, or generals who attempted to seize the initiative while on campaign.[89]

Operational Competence

Ascertaining the importance Rome placed on fielding competent legates and generals one must first consider the era under examination. Early to Middle Republican Rome fielded armies led almost exclusively by the nobility. Aristocratic blood was a prerequisite for command, occasioning the possibility that men with little previous military experience could be thrust into significant positions of leadership. This fact, at face value, might suggest Rome placed almost no emphasis on the professional expertise of its senior officers. Such logic fails to acknowledge Rome's interconnected cultural relationship between the nobility and martial leadership. The primary activity of Republican Roman aristocrats centered on public service—whether that be in religious, political, or military realms—and

often exposed those nobles hoping to climb the political ladder to military service early on in their careers. Polybius evinces this fact by suggesting no citizen was eligible to hold public office until he had completed at least ten years of military service.[90] The actions of Marcus Fabius Buteo adds additional context. After the 216 BC Battle of Cannae, where Rome saw its senators slain in battle, Fabius was tasked with appointing a number of new senators to fill the vacant billets. Livy states Fabius first selected men who had previously held offices as junior magistrates, then selected men with no prior political service but whom had "spoils of an enemy set up in their houses or had received a 'civic crown'."[91]

Military service as a precondition to serve in public office also helps to explain the number of instances where the sources attest to young elites accompanying and observing senior campaigning commanders.[92] Caesar, for instance, references junior prefects whom, "out of friendship," followed him during his exploits in Gaul. He specifically cites their inexperience as a cause of their cowardice before the Battle of Vesontio.[93] Likewise, Tiberius Gracchus, while in his early twenties, accompanied Scipio Aemilianus to Africa during the Third Punic War.[94] Quintus Metellus Numidicus' twenty year old son, too, accompanied his father during the Jugurthine War.[95] The exposure young aristocrats had to martial leadership by virtue of their proximity to campaigning generals undoubtedly offered them an opportunity to at least observe the art of command during their formative years. This should not be construed as a formal, institutionalized system of training, but its informal method of indoctrination at least provided a baseline level of knowledge from which prospective senior officers could draw upon later in their careers.[96]

There is little doubt that Republican Rome required significantly less proof of professional expertise when selecting its senior officers—its legates (often drawn from among the senators) and generals (often elected consuls)—than from more junior ones—primarily, its tribunes and centurions. This has led McCall to argue that the internal systems and processes of the Roman army simply alleviated the need for competent senior leadership; its junior officer corps and its centuries-old institutional mechanisms were enough to often guarantee success on the battlefield.[97] Others have argued that a modern, anachronistic understanding of what constitutes competent generalship corrupts our view of what was considered "competent" generalship during the Republic and Principate eras. Goldsworthy suggests it was not a general's ability to envisage and execute grand strategy that made him competent, but rather his ability to interpret intelligence, decide when and where to fight, and his ability to employ his

reserves at the proper time—demanding tasks, indeed, and ones that many generals during this time were wholly capable of executing.[98]

In either case, Republican Rome's willingness to assign comparatively inexperienced commanders is not necessarily an indication that it placed no value on the competence of its senior leaders. Instead, it could simply be an indication that its military establishment placed a greater portion of its faith in the abilities of a general's staff and his subordinate leaders to provide him sound counsel. As mentioned previously, Roman generals routinely relied on the advice offered to them by their senior centurions. Likewise, the legions' twelve military tribunes—the commander's direct subordinates—often augmented a commander's abilities. Polybius states military tribunes were required to possess at least five to ten years of military service, and those of the first four raised legions were voted into office by the assembly, rather than simply appointed by the commander himself. This voting process suggests tribunes possessed at least some universally agreed upon degree of military qualifications.[99] Moreover, the military tribunes were often drawn from among the centurionate or the *equites*, presumably bringing with them a wealth of experience and tactical know-how.[100] It is safe to assume that any risk Rome undertook by appointing an inexperienced member of its nobility to a position of command was mitigated by the number of experts resident within his council.

The pipeline for developing commanders during the Empire took on a more formal approach than their Republican ancestors. The general career path of a senator began in his twenties, where he would serve as *tribunus laticlavius* for several years in a legion. Afterwards, he may serve in a civil administrative role until his next appointment as a legate, commanding a legion for three to four additional years.[101] By this time, the officer was usually in his thirties and possessed relatively extensive experience leading men in both a military and civil capacity. An indication that the Roman Empire increased the importance placed on competent senior leadership was also evident in the increasing social mobility for non-aristocrats to move into the equestrian class, and for those equestrians to move into positions historically reserved for the nobility.[102]

Though Rome enacted a series of more stringent requirements for the career progression of senior officers during the Principate, the requirement for demonstrated military "competence" at this echelon still paled in comparison to those requirements found in the centurionate. Elevation from standard legionary to centurion usually took over a decade of hard campaigning, wrought with danger and backbreaking labor. Despite several notable attempts to make senior officer promotions meritocratic, these

legacies from Republican Rome continued, with ever-present tensions between status and ability frequently weighing in favor of the former.

Conclusion

Several themes emerge offering compelling evidence that the Roman army not only encouraged subordinate disciplined initiative but relied on it. Rome's battlefield array was expansive and highly dispersed, with subordinate units deliberately positioned to best maximize their mobility. Moreover, Rome routinely found itself engaged in counter insurgency, wide area security, and stability operations, demanding the spreading out of numerous formations of soldiers executing independent tasks. To manage this, its legions boasted a high concentration of junior- and middle-grade officers, each empowered with a considerable degree of decision-making authority. Rome's reward system incentivized *virtus* and aggressive spirit, and its promotion system favored those who demonstrated a history of prudent, battlefield initiative. Moreover, its disciplinary system typically neglected to punish officers who met with tactical failure, so long as their actions were offensively minded. Conversely, Rome labeled failures to *act* as instances of cowardice or indiscipline, inviting harsh penalty. It was a combination of all these factors—legionary organization, officer density, battlefield array, geographic distances, *virtus*, discipline, rewards, promotions, and punishments—working in tandem that influenced Rome's employment of these first three principles of mission command.

Notes

1. Onasander, *Strat.,* 32.10; Maurice, *Strat.,* 3.11; Vegetius, *Mil.,* 3.19. Vegetius refers to these elements as *drungi* (Latin: *globi*), which could be either infantry or cavalry formations, with the task of turning enemy flanks, ambushing, or attacking the enemy's rear.

2. Maurice, contrasting between the single-line formations of his own time with those of the "ancients" (referring to the Romans during our period), states: "The older military writers [ancients] organized their armies into [independent sub-units] of varying strength as conditions dictated…*so they can be quickly called to support any unit that may give way in battle.* For they [did] not draw themselves up in one battle line only. But they form[ed] two, sometimes even three lines, distributing the units in depth, especially when their troops are numerous, *and they can easily undertake any sort of action.*" Maurice, *Strat.,* 2.1. Emphasis added.

3. See Polybius, 2.30.

4. Lendon, 187.

5. Taylor, 319.

6. It should be noted that this force structure, strength, and array represents the "ideal" Roman army setup. Often, legions were not manned at full capacity. This could become even more exacerbated during long campaigns, where significant battlefield losses reduced the commander's overall combat power.

7. Polybius tells us each legionary requires three feet of space for his person, plus an additional three feet of space between each man. If a maniple positioned its two centuries abreast, with ranks three-men deep, this would make a total of 240 feet per maniple. If maniples were separated by fifty percent of the width of a typical maniple front, this would place the entire width of the legion's infantry front at roughly 3,480 feet. Polybius, 18.28-32.

8. A "peculiar feature of Roman battle tactics"; Polybius, 2.33.

9. Polybius, 18.28-32.

10. This is a loose comparison, as the range of modern weapon systems allow for a much greater degree of physical separation between formations than the weapons of antiquity. Consider the fact that the legionary's principal ranged weapon—the *pilum*—had an effective range of approximately 30 meters, which was the estimated distance separating maniples. Similarly, modern formations often separate according to the approximate range of their organic weapon systems, so that each can mutually support the other.

11. Though no ancient source explicitly states what, if any, officer led the cohort, Goldsworthy argues it was likely the cohort's *pilus prior.* Goldsworthy, 15.

12. Caesar, B.G., 2.25; Plutarch, *Caes.,* 20.

13. Polybius, 15.15.

14. Josephus, *The Jewish War,* trans. Martin Hammond (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2017), 3.104-106.

15. Livy, 22.38.

16. Plutarch, *Aem.,* 21.

17. Plutarch, *Mar.,* 26.

18. Josephus, *B.J.,* 6.54-67.

19. Maurice, 3.11, 3.14.

20. Maurice, 4.3.

21. Vegetius, *Mil.,* 3.26.

22. Polybius, 18.26. Emphasis added.

23. Polybius, 18.28-32.

24. Livy, 44.41. See also Michael J. Rasak, "Following the Transverse Crest: Centurion Autonomy on the Battlefield, 218 BC–AD 73," *Ancient Warfare* 14, no. 6 (July-August 2021): 42-45.

25. Plutarch, *Aem.,* 20.

26. It would take six minutes straight-line distance, if one assumes Paullus' horse was travelling at 15 mph over a distance of one and a half miles; the additional four minutes take into account Paullus' need to pull back behind the infantry ranks first, travel the distance, and then reenter the main line.

27. Plutarch, *Aem.,* 20.

28. Goldsworthy, 137.

29. Polybius, 15.13-14.

30. Polybius, 3.115.

31. See Goldsworthy, 280.

32. Polybius, 6.39.

33. Pliny, *The Natural Histories,* vol. 6, trans. W.H.S. Jones (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), 22.4-6.

24. Onasander, *Strat.,* 34.2; C.f. Josephus, B.J., 7.11-15.

35. Caesar, *B.G.,* 6.40; B.C., 1.46, 1.57, 3.75.

36. Caesar, *B.G.,* 5.44.

37. Caesar, *B.G.,* 7.47.

38. See Josephus, *B.J.* 6.68-90; Polybius, 15.14.

39. Tacitus, *Ann.,* 1.65.

40. Onasander, *Strat.,* 25.2.

41. Onasander, *Strat.,* 25.2.

42. Plutarch, *Brut.,* 41.

43. Plutarch, *Crass.* 26.2.

44. Plutarch, *Mar.,* 26.

45. See Onasander, *Strat.,* 33.3-6; Arrian, *The Expedition Against the Alans,* trans. James G. DeVoto (Chicago, IL; Ares Publishers, 1993), 10.

46. Onasander, *Strat.*, 25.1.

47. Goldsworthy, 152. See Caesar, *B.G.,* 1.22, 7.50; Onasander, *Strat.,* 6.5-6.

48. Vegetius, *Mil.,* 3.5.

49. Velleius' account of the Pannonian Revolt (6-9 AD) and Tiberius' apprehension of controlling such a massive army is interesting in this context. On the one hand, Tiberius' decision to send a portion of his legions back home

reveals that there may have been limits to at least *his* willingness to delegate command and control authorities down to his lieutenants. On the other hand, Tiberius' actions may reveal a simple tension between Augustus' strategic goals in the area and Tiberius' planned operational approach to the problem. As Burns notes, the Pannonian Revolt occurred not in an official Roman province, but in a client state—and the usual method for control in a client state centered on demonstrating Roman power and, if necessary, the threat of military force. Augustus' diversion of such a large army to Tiberius was likely an initial attempt to demonstrate such power, not necessarily a decision made under pragmatic tactical considerations. Tiberius, who was a notedly cautious commander, and who historically avoided pitched battles, probably viewed this unwieldy army not only as a tactical (and logistical) burden, but of an unnecessary composition for his intended course of action: i.e., avoid pitched battle and stick to a campaign of destroying villages, farms, and slowly starving out the uprising. See Velleius Paterculus, *Roman History,* trans. Frederick W. Shipley (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1923), 2.113; Thomas S. Burns, *Rome and the Barbarians: 100 BC—AD 400* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2003), 206-7; Cassius Dio, *Roman History,* trans. Earnest Cary (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Cassius_Dio/home.html, 55.29.

50. Maurice, 8.2.71.

51. Onasander, *Strat.,* 32.3.

52. See Polybius, 6.24; Vegetius, *Mil.,* 2.14.

53. Southern, 138.

54. Pliny considered the civic crown, or *corona civica,* to be one of the highest awards for valor (exceeded only by the "grass crown"). It denoted a combatant who saved the life of a fellow citizen in combat. Pliny, *The Natural Histories,* vol. 4, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1945), 16.3.

55. Livy, 42.34. Some historians dispute Spurius Ligustinus' existence; for the counter, see Michael J. Taylor, "A Census Record as a Source in Livy? The Life and Career of Spurius Ligustinus," *Mnemosyne* (2019): 16.

56. Southern, 130.

57. Southern, 129.

58. Sallust, *Jug.,* 85.

59. Polybius, 6.24.

  Onasander, *Strat.,* 3.1.

  For example, see Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.76; Plutarch, *Sull.,* 28; Caesar, *B.G.,* 3.5; Josephus, *B.J.,* 3.161.

60. Livy, 26.4.

61. Livy, 24.48.

62. McCall, 213.

63. Livy, 25.19.

64. Caesar, *B.G.,* 7.50.

65. Southern, 232.

66. Roman infantry, fully loaded, were said to travel up to twenty miles through broken, complex terrain in a single day, although that may be an overly optimistic estimate. See Vegetius, *Mil.,* 1.27; John F. Shean, "Hannibal's Mules: The Logistical Limitations of Hannibal's Army and the Battle of Cannae, 216 BC," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 45, h. 2 (2nd Quarter 1996): 166.

67. Caesar claims it took ten days to construct the bridge and that he spent several days pillaging the settlements of the Sugambri. A message from Germania to Rome and back would take approximately twelve days. Caesar, *B.G.,* 4.18-19.

68. Livy, 21.35-37; Polybius, 3.50-56.

69. Kern, 270-1.

70. Caesar, *B.C.,* trans. John Carter, lvii.

71. Tacitus, *Agr.,* 14-16.

72. Tacitus, *Ann.,* 33; Dio, 62.1; John C. Overbeck, "Tacitus and Dio on Boudicca's Rebellion," *The American Journal of Philology* 90, no. 2 (April 1969): 131-132. David Mattingly argues that although we only have two sources detailing the revolt, and that their figures may have been exaggerated, "there is little doubt concerning the scale of the catastrophe that overwhelmed much of Southern England"; see *An Imperial Possession: Britain in the Roman Empire, 54 BC-AD 409* (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 2007), 110-13.

73. Sallust, *Jug.,* 55-57.

74. Caesar, *B.G.,* 5.24; Goldsworthy, 80.

75. Caesar, B.G., 5.52.

76. Caesar, *B.G.,* 5.57-58.

77. For example, Tacitus, *Agr.,* 18, describes how Roman legions "dispersed across the province" to "garrison the suspected districts"—an indication that insurrection in Britannia was a routine occurrence.

78. Tacitus, *Ann.,* 4.5. Regarding the six Danube legions, Tacitus states four were located along the river itself and two were in Dalmatia, able to quickly support the Danube legions if necessary. Likewise, of the six legions located in the east, two were based in Egypt. See also Lawrence Keppie, *The Making of the Roman Army: From Republic to Empire* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 190.

79. Tacitus, *Ann.,* 4.72-73.

80. See Goldsworthy, 165.

81. Polybius, 3.105-106.

82. Livy, 22.61; Rosenstein, 140-1.

83. Moore, 467; Rosenstein, 139.

84. Tacitus, *Agr.,* 16.

85. For information on legal constraints regarding generals' actions, see chapter two "Commander's Intent and Mission Orders."

86. Richard Miles, *Carthage Must Be Destroyed: The Rise and Fall of an Ancient Civilization* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2011), 147.

87. Thucydides, *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War,* ed. Robert B. Strassler, trans. Richard Crawley (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 5.26. See also 4.65. not in bib.

88. Vegetius, *Mil.,* 3.26.

89. Valerius Maximus (2.7.6) is one notable exception to this claim.

90. Polybius, 6.19.

91. Livy, 23.23.

92. See Rosenstein, 135.

93. Caesar, *B.G.,* 1.39.

94. Plutarch, *Ti. Grac.,* 4.5.

95. Sallust, *Jug.,* 64.4.

96. Polybius identifies only three methods by which generals could obtain "an intelligent knowledge of tactics." This was either through the study of history, the study of treatises, or actual experience. Young aristocrats certainly observed the latter while on campaign, and increasingly the first two after the Middle Republic, when treatises and histories became more available. Polybius, 11.8.

97. McCall, 210-211.

98. Goldsworthy, 167-8.

99. Polybius, 6.19.

100. Keppie notes the tribunate held such prestige that even former consuls would occasionally serve in this capacity. Keppie, 39-40.

101. Southern, 127; Goldsworthy, 122.

102. Southern, 125.

Chapter 3
Shared Understanding, Commander's Intent, and Mission Orders

> The general should either choose a staff to participate in all his councils and share in his decisions…or summon as members of his council a selected group of the most respected commanders, since it is not safe that the opinions of one single man, on his sole judgement, should be adopted.
>
> —Onasander, *Strategikos*

> No single person is ever sufficiently informed to make every important decision, nor can a single person keep up with the number of decisions that need to be made during combat.
>
> —HQDA, Army Doctrine Publication 6-0, *Mission Command*

Empowering subordinates with sthe authority to execute in a decentralized manner is inherently risky. Subordinates can take actions that fall short or entirely outside the realm of the leader's intended objectives. Worse, their actions can desynchronize, disrupt, or undermine the leader's overarching plan in its entirety. Brazen subordinates can hurriedly blunder into tactical dilemmas; the cowardly rationalize inaction, the imprudent squander resources, and the unintelligent ones threaten the welfare of all. Fostering subordinate competence is a fundamental step toward mitigating these risks. Equally pressing are the efforts a leader takes to provide the members of his organization with a clear description of his intentions for both the overall operation and each subordinate's contributing parts. He or she must likewise align perspectives and expectations by ensuring all members share a common understanding of the situation. Armed with this knowledge, subordinate leaders are better able to focus their energies in a more synchronized and productive manner.

Roman military leaders were all too familiar with these subtleties of command and control. Commanders at the operational level learned through observation and experience the benefits derived from collecting and sharing pivotal military information. They understood the importance of issuing innately flexible orders, ones that privileged ends over means, particularly in unpredictable environments. They understood they profited most when they were able to detect and operate within that elusive space between complete subordinate independence and domineering microman-

agement. For the principal factors that cultivated this understanding, one need not look much further than the prosaic realities of sluggish communication speeds in the ancient world. Indeed, a general's inability to know everything at once certainly weighed heavy on the minds of military theorists, but so too did more philosophical considerations, like Rome's continual struggle to harmonize the seemingly contradictory cultural values of *virtus* and *disciplina.* Moreover, generations of near-continuous warfare, inundated with countless lessons taught by sharpened iron, simply hammered this method of command and control into its surprisingly elegant shape.

In this chapter, I argue the military *consilium* served as the primary means by which Roman leaders shared amongst themselves their understanding of the operational environment, and where commanders issued both their intent and orders. A survey of who typically attended the event and what issues they discussed reveals the *consilium's* purpose as an intelligence-sharing platform and a forum for planning and deliberation. Moreover, the types of decisions made, and the orders produced therein, were indicative of Rome's reliance on the meeting to both communicate intent and synchronize operations. Copious anecdotal evidence testifies to these facts, as do the words of military thinkers spanning the period under examination.

I further argue Rome's reconnaissance operations and human intelligence activities were taken not just to inform the commander but to elevate the entire army's situational understanding. Ideally, commanders' information-collection expeditions, whether conducted personally or tasked to a subordinate, served as an input to the *consilium,* and their findings— along with the general's intent—were disseminated down to each echelon in an iterative fashion. This process ensured the entire army understood the environment and their part of the plan—a feature particularly critical to those subordinate leaders charged with operating independent from the army's main body.

Lastly, I argue the Roman military establishment encouraged the use of deliberately open-ended mission orders, owing primarily to the difficulties of long-distance messaging and the unpredictable nature of warfare. At the strategic-operational level, the senate or emperor habitually issued simple directives caged in purpose-oriented terms (e.g., conquer a people, restore peace, protect an ally, etc.) to their generals. The *means* by which a general carried out these directives were usually his decision alone, exemplified by his holding of supreme military authority over his assigned theater of war. At the operational-tactical level, slow communication speeds

likewise compelled campaigning generals to issue purpose-oriented directives to their subordinates. The inability of generals to understand or predict the local conditions surrounding their detached formations necessitated inherently flexible orders, steeped with caveats allowing for a degree of autonomy. To bound this freedom of action generals routinely emphasized key aspects of the operation—their intent—which could not be neglected.

The Roman Military *Consilium*

Perhaps the best place to identify evidence of Rome's implementation of shared understanding, commander's intent, and mission orders is in the literary accounts of its military *consilia.* The *consilium,* traditionally translated as "council of war," was a meeting called by the general, usually before battle, where he and various officers and staff members would engage in dialogue regarding the conduct of future operations.[1] Interestingly, there does not seem to be a universally prescribed set of attendees. It seems the commander was generally free to determine his audience, adjusting it as conditions dictated. In almost every surviving record the commander included his most senior subordinate officers—legates and tribunes—particularly those who were commanders of major legionary or auxiliary subunits.[2] Also in attendance were those individuals who were previously tasked with scouting or information collection operations.[3] This was especially true during the Principate, when governors had more permanent staffs manned by officials like the *beneficiarii consularis,* who appear to have been responsible for intelligence-gathering.[4] Commanders also almost certainly included their senior centurions, as Polybius explicitly states.[5] Regardless of whom was in attendance, military thinkers made it clear that the important part of a *consilium* was conducting in-person dialogue with all relevant actors.[6]

A survey of the *consilium's* typical attendees sheds light on the different purposes of the meeting. First, it served as a venue for the general to receive the observations and advice of his staff and subordinate commanders, as well as a place to share his own understanding of the situation. This often took the form of what one would normally expect in a mission briefing: analysis of the enemy, the environment, and the status of friendly forces. Second, it served as a forum for deliberating, planning, and ultimately selecting a course of action.[7] During this phase, attendees would critically and logically analyze the merits of differing courses of action, and the general would either select one, modify one, or create an entirely new one.[8] The *consilium* was also where a commander would issue his orders to each independent unit and offer any final considerations.

Once participants gained a collective understanding of the situation, subordinate commanders could form an ad hoc meeting of their own for the purpose of briefing the operation to their subordinate leaders. Onasander provides an explanation of this procedure:

> The general should communicate his orders to his higher officers and they should repeat them to the officers next below them who in turn pass them to their subordinates, and so on to the lowest, the higher officers in each case telling the orders to those below them.[9]

To ascertain the extent these procedures were followed by every general is impossible, but multiple examples, explored later in this chapter, reveal that it occurred at least relatively frequently. Moreover, even a superficial examination of various battles illuminates the fact that multiple detachments of a single army, widely separated, were indeed capable of coordinating and executing operations simultaneously under the direction of an overarching plan. This would suggest the Roman military establishment had at the very least a method for not only developing plans, but also disseminating them to all parts of its army (and not infrequently, the army's supporting naval detachments).

One should be careful not to interpret the process by which Roman commanders issued purpose-oriented orders as a clear sign that they practiced mission command precisely how modern US Army doctrine suggests. Both narratives and military manuals betray an ever-present fear among generals that deserters or captured soldiers may divulge operational plans to the enemy. This fear drove many commanders to refrain from revealing their overall intentions and encouraged authors like Vegetius, Frontinus, and Maurice to codify this practice into their manuals.[10] Frontinus, for example, devotes the entire first book in *Strategems* to techniques for "concealing one's plans" not only from the enemy, but at times from one's own soldiers.[11] That being said, a number of variables were at play regarding exactly how commanders elected to balance the risk of their plans falling into enemy hands with the risk of hoarding pertinent information. As this manuscript will explore in chapter four, much of this decision deals with the nature of a general's operation and the existing level of trust between himself and his subordinates.

One simple example of a general leveraging the *consilium* to execute shared understanding, commander's intent, and mission orders is Marcus Otho's council before the First Battle of Bedriacum, 69 AD. Plutarch tells us that several days before the battle, Otho gathered his commanders to

hear their recommendations on what actions he should take regarding the enemy's occupation of a camp near Cremona. Two officers proposed an immediate attack, despite Otho possessing an inferior sized army. They justified their logic by suggesting Otho's recent victories made his soldiers flush with confidence and vigor. Three other commanders dissented, arguing Otho should instead wait until reinforcements have arrived, which would not only add to his overall strength but also compound the legionaries' confidence. Otho eventually chose the formers' recommendation. Otho himself then moved to Brixellum, leaving his commanders to carry out the plan. Plutarch states that as the commanders deliberated on exactly when to attack, given the taxing distance the soldiers had to march, Otho sent orders to "not wait or delay, but to march at once against the enemy."[12]

Though Otho's army suffered a defeat at the battle, his *consilium* sheds important light on how the group shared information and how Otho passed his orders. First, attendees were free to offer their analysis of the situation, taking into consideration such things as force ratios, distances, operational tempo, and morale. Second, after the members attained a common understanding of the situation, Otho issued his intent and orders, emphasizing speed above all other considerations. Third, and importantly, Otho's orders were simple and clear: attack to defeat the enemy. His absence from the battle moreover signals the freedom he granted his subordinates on how exactly they would execute the operation.[13]

On the eve of his invasion of Britannia in 55 BC, Caesar records his use of a *consilium* to orchestrate a much more complex operation. Caesar explicitly states that he called a meeting of his officers to discuss the operation and the intelligence gathered by one of his tribunes (presumably also present at the meeting) regarding the terrain and the enemy. Caesar pays special attention to the suitability of landing sites, obstacles, high ground, and the disposition, strength, and armament of the enemy. He then issued orders to each of his subordinate commanders, stressing that the nature of naval operations demanded close synchronization and required each of them "to carry out all their tasks at a nod and at the right moment."[14] Caesar had previously issued orders to several of his other legates who were responsible for executing shaping operations in concert with the invasion: two were tasked to attack several tribes still in Gaul, so as to preclude the enemy from maneuvering against Caesar's rear; one was to guard the harbor at Gaul, presumably to secure a retrograde site for his fleet; and several others were to command the warships in direct support of the ground invasion force.[15] The latter proved essential during execution. As Caesar's forces conducted the amphibious landing, he ordered his warships to ma-

neuver and set down a base of missile fire against the defending forces, ultimately providing his legionaries enough freedom to secure the landing site.[16]

Caesar's description of his orders process reveals his application of the three principles outlined in this chapter. He ensured reciprocal shared understanding by initially sending a tribune to scout the area and then by discussing his findings at length with his subordinates. He then assigned each of his subordinate commanders clear, purpose-oriented tasks: fix enemy forces in the rear, secure key terrain, provide support-by-fire, and seize the landing site. Finally, Caesar underpinned his assigned mission orders with the importance of executing operations in an orchestrated fashion and made clear the purpose each subcomponent had on the overall operation. Indeed, Caesar's *consilium* does not look too dissimilar to a modern commander's operations order briefing, complete with commander's intent, key organizational tasks, and tasks to subordinate units.

Of course, a general's access to and use of a board of advisors did not necessarily guarantee success. Generals either too obdurate or too impulsive to heed the recommendations of their council could just as easily override that advice and instead direct the army down a disastrous path. This is what occurred under the command of Gaius Flaminius prior to the 217 BC battle at Lake Trasimene. Polybius explains that Hannibal decided on a plan that would exploit Flaminius' recklessness by burning and pillaging the Roman countryside to entice the latter into a battle in which he would be ill-prepared. The tactic worked. Despite his advisors cautioning him to "wait until the other consul arrived, and to fight only with an army consisting of all the legions combined," Flaminius—unwilling to face public repudiation for allowing such activity to continue—elected instead to break camp and take to the field.[17] The battle resulted in one of Rome's most spectacular military disasters, with Polybius reporting around 15,000 Romans killed in the ambush and another 15,000 captured.[18] Though Polybius' estimates could be inflated, Flaminius' failure to heed the advice of his council certainly contributed to Rome's ongoing, abysmal handling of Hannibal's invasion.

Importantly, the *consilium* did not have to be a formal, drawn-out event. Such a requirement would have likely hindered the rapid dissemination of critical information and guidance. Instead, the council could simply be an ad hoc huddle of key leaders, intended to cross-level the observations of the group. Onasander even suggests that plans developed at the very moment of battle were sometimes preferable to those developed before battle, considering how quickly conditions could change from

what was previously anticipated.[19] Vespasian's difficulty seizing the city of Jotapata in 67 AD provides a good example. Josephus tells us that a ring of mountains screened the city, making it screened to approaching armies until they had finally reached the site. Once they observed the city, they saw that it was situated on a mountain with precipices surrounding three sides and a wall protecting the only approachable one. This situation is what probably led Vespasian to call a *consilium* after his legionaries had already engaged with the Jewish defenders. During the meeting, the attendees discussed how best to overcome both the physical obstacles of the terrain and the determination of the defending forces.[20]

Commanders could also call military *consilia* for strategic matters. In 149 BC, at the opening stages of the Third Punic War, Rome deployed a fleet to the citadel of Utica under the command of the two consuls Marcius Censorinus and Manius Manilius. Carthaginian leaders, panic-stricken at the news, sent envoys to inform the consuls of Carthage's willingness to obey orders from Rome. The consuls called a formal *consilium* to greet the Carthaginian delegation and, after an exchange of dialogue, ordered the disarming and complete removal of the Carthaginian people from the city.[21] Though Polybius is rather laconic in his description of the event, it is important to note that, Roman commanders called the *consilium*—with all its trappings and attendees—for the strict purpose of receiving, digesting, and making use of information that should be considered nothing less than national importance.

Evidence of Rome's reliance on military *consilia* to communicate information, make decisions, and issue orders extends well beyond anecdotal references. Sources frequently report on the *consilium's* importance and recommend commanders call the meeting routinely. Onasander, for instance, wrote the epigraph of this chapter in the first century AD, which warns future commanders of the dangers in making decisions without first consulting their staffs. Around three hundred years later, Vegetius writes something similar:

An important art useful to a general is to call in persons from the entire army who are knowledgeable about war and aware of their own and the enemy's forces, and to hold frequent discussions with them…to decide whether he or the enemy has the greater number of fighters, whether his own men or the enemy's are better armed and armored and which side is the more highly trained or the braver in warfare.[22]

Two centuries later, Maurice advised along related lines, directing generals to assemble their officers for the purpose of planning and issuing

orders.[23] These theorists' descriptions reveal the logic behind many of the planning activities carried out by those like Otho, Caesar, Flaminius, and Vespasian. Namely, the calling in of staff and subordinate commanders to share and analyze information, deliberate courses of action, and issue orders.

If not a full-blown institutionally rooted practice, then three compelling patterns emerged suggesting the *consilium* was, at the very least, a prominent and near-ubiquitous military decision-making event. The first deals with their frequent reference in both military manuals and battle narratives. Though no single document reveals a prescriptive format for agenda items or attendees, the two literary source-groups corroborate enough similarities to suggest the meeting was a regularly executed and highly regarded event. Second, the *consilium's* presence throughout the entirety of our period, from the Middle Republic to the Early Principate, indicates the practice was an agreed upon and generationally adopted process for at least three hundred years.[24] Lastly, generals varying in both talent and temperament employed the *consilium,* evinced by the fact that leaders as different as Flaminius, Otho, Fabius Maximus, and Caesar executed the event. The meeting was not just the habit of one leader, or of even one *type* of leader, but of almost all leaders—bold, cautious, intelligent, or inept.[25] Thus, not only was the *consilium* a persistent and widely practiced command and control mechanism, but also one that centered on the sharing of information and the issuing of intent and orders.

Shared Understanding

The efficacy of a pre-battle *consilium* hinges first and foremost on the information inputted into the meeting. This fact demands a closer examination of exactly how commanders went about acquiring and disseminating such information. Unsurprisingly, the preeminent method of acquiring intelligence was reconnaissance. Though Rome suffered from a rather unfortunate reconnaissance record early in her history, by the Middle Republic to Late Republic this trend generally improved, with generals increasingly seeking to achieve victory through strategy and cunning rather than unabashed *virtus* and courage.[26] Secondly, commanders extracted information from deserters, enemy prisoners, locals, and allied forces. Commanders also benefitted from previously recorded itineraries, geographies, and *comentarii,* each of which offered a relatively useful source of topographic, ethnographic, and military information for campaign planning and execution.[27] Commanders ignored none of these methods of in-

formation-collection, as all were instrumental in obtaining and establishing a universal understanding both at the tactical and operational level.

Like modern armies, Roman commanders at all echelons used information gleaned from reconnaissance operations to not only inform the general, but to enhance shared understanding across the entire army. Caesar's dissemination of his tribune's findings before his 55 BC invasion of Britannia, discussed above, is just one example. In the fall of 53 BC, Caesar executed a similar strategy during a punitive campaign against Ambiorix and the Eburones tribe. Caesar writes that he sent a subordinate commander, Lucius Minucius Basilus, ahead of his army to see if the latter could identify an enemy vulnerability upon which he could rapidly exploit.[28] Basilus executed his orders as directed, and his actions resulted in the dispersion of Ambiorix's army. In response, Caesar split his army into three parts, two led by his legates and the third by himself, with the task of hunting down and destroying any pockets of Eburones resistance. Because the tribe scattered across the region, Caesar understood communication and situational awareness was vital. He ordered his subordinate commanders to later meet with him, "so that they could discuss their plans, scrutinize the enemy's strategy, and give a fresh impetus to the campaign."[29] It was through this cyclical and recursive effort to fight for information, share it, and act upon it that Caesar was able to eventually subdue and ultimately eradicate the elusive Gallic tribe.

The primacy Roman commanders placed on careful reconnaissance operations to cross-level pertinent information is evident in the frequency in which the generals themselves would lead such operations. Josephus makes this clear with his references to Titus' habit of personally leading information-gathering expeditions prior to the commencement of hostilities.[30] During one such mission, in 70 AD, Josephus explicitly states Titus rode with members of his staff to identify a suitable point of penetration on the site of Jerusalem. After gaining an initial understanding of the situation, to include the construction of the fortress and the disposition of its defenders, Titus elected to move straight into a siege operation. Using the information he acquired, the Roman commander communicated his findings and issued his guidance to his subordinate commanders and commenced the operation.[31]

Agricola's campaigns as governor of Britannia from 77 to 84 AD likewise demonstrated how generals could translate reconnaissance into shared understanding. Tacitus tells us the Roman commander sent out large groups of scouts "in every direction" to scour the landscape in search of enemy forces, and in turn the scouts reported their findings.[32] More-

over, like Titus in Jerusalem, Agricola frequently led reconnaissance operations himself. Tacitus indicates these efforts enabled Agricola to carry out a comprehensive counter-insurgency operation—the nature of which, history has shown us, so necessarily relies on the rapid, horizontal passing of pertinent information. Tacitus writes: "[Agricola] reconnoitered estuaries and forests personally. And all the while he gave the enemy no rest, by launching sudden plundering raids."[33] If Tacitus is to be believed, Agricola's campaigns were not only an example of Roman tenacity in the face of relentless uprising, but one of effective operational intelligence sharing.

Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo's campaign against the Armenian king Tiridates in 58 AD perhaps best exemplifies a commander's use of reconnaissance efforts to fuel operational understanding. After receiving orders from the emperor Nero to secure Armenia, Corbulo found the kingdom under routine incursion by Tiridates' armies.[34] His initial response was to bring the king to pitched battle, but after several failed efforts to do so, Corbulo decided on a plan to storm three of Tiridates' fortresses. To accomplish this Tacitus explains that the Roman commander personally examined the fortifications, made "appropriate arrangements for the assault," and accordingly task-organized his army into three independent forces.[35] He was to lead one detachment against Volandum, the strongest fortress in the prefecture, and the other two he assigned to his legate and camp prefect. The details of the plan established, Corbulo unleashed his army, and all three forces effectively seized their objectives in a single day.[36] There is little doubt the simultaneity and overwhelming success of the operation rests in large part on the emphasis Corbulo placed on careful reconnaissance and collaborative planning.[37]

Though much more difficult to carry out, given the technological limitations of the era, both military manuals and anecdotal evidence attest to the primacy Roman commanders placed on sharing information *during* battle, as well as before it. Onasander, for instance, insists that it was imperative for generals to remain continuously accessible to "every man who wishes to report anything," for their failure to do so could result in the general missing out on information critical to the moment.[38] Good commanders heeded this advice, and established mechanisms for alerting the unit of significant events or activities while executing operations. During the Siege of Numantia in 134-133 BC, Scipio Aemilianus instructed his subordinates to raise a red flag if they fell under attack during the day, and to light a fire if it was night.[39] Given the length of his lines, Scipio understood that any hope for an effective response by either himself or nearby units required a method for rapidly transmitting such information.

Commanders, especially at the operational level, relied on more than just reconnaissance findings to attain a common understanding. Often, they augmented this with information from a multitude of sources, to include intelligence provided by locals, allies, captives, or deserters.[40] Caesar, for instance, during his second invasion of Britannia in 54 BC, coupled information derived from previous reconnaissance efforts with information he obtained from interrogated prisoners to discern both a suitable landing site and the disposition of enemy forces on the island.[41] Armed with this information, Caesar divided his army into three independent forces and initiated offensive operations. Revealingly, Caesar halted his armies before they advanced too far because he felt he knew too little about the terrain in that region.[42] Such attention to the gathering, interpreting, and weighing of information illuminates the importance Caesar placed on ensuring his forces maintained an accurate, collective grasp of the operational environment.

Campaigns like those above reveal a theme echoed in the military manuals—namely, the folly of attempting to execute operations without first determining the nature of the operational environment. On multiple occasions, Vegetius draws attention to the importance of "knowing the habits of the enemy" and recommends generals should maintain itineraries of all regions "written out in the fullest detail," so that he may know the geography of the landscape.[43] To obtain knowledge about the enemy and the land, Vegetius urges generals to "reconnoiter assiduously," and to corroborate the totality of information derived from "traitors and deserters," and "intelligent men, men of rank, and those who know the localities."[44] Frontinus, likewise, devotes a chapter in his first book on various means by which a general can take to discover the enemy's plans.[45] Caesar's attempt to draw such information from merchants sailing between Gaul and Britannia demonstrate these information-gathering techniques in action.[46]

It is important to note that this information was not just for the commander to consume. The essence of shared understanding is the *conveyance* of this information across all echelons, so that subordinate commanders and generals alike can exploit its value. Maurice captures this sentiment, writing "whatever terrain the general chooses, he should make his troops familiar with it. They will then be able to avoid rough spots and because of their knowledge of the area will fight the enemy with confidence."[47] Vegetius emphasizes a similar point, arguing that generals should take measures to ensure their soldiers are familiar with the enemy as much as possible.[48] In practice, this looks an awful lot like Scipio Africanus' 209 BC seizure of New Carthage.

Polybius explains that Scipio took great lengths to acquire information on the disposition of Carthaginian forces, the topography of the town, its defenses, and the surrounding lagoon from a combination of local fisherman and others "who were well informed."[49] After careful analysis and planning, Scipio determined he could assault the town, so he summoned a *consilium* and presented the details of his findings, pointing out to his men the practicability of the plan and the logic he used to construct it.[50] His soldiers thereafter seized the town, executing an elaborate, four-pronged assault, complete with naval support, ground assault forces, and an escalade team that was able to exploit the adjacent lagoon's shallow depth at low-tide to surreptitiously gain access to the wall.

It was through these efforts—the continuous acquiring of intelligence and sharing of information—commanders could realistically expect their armies be capable of executing complex, comprehensive battles and campaigns. If the system malfunctioned, and the requisite level of information failed to flow both vertically and horizontally, generals had few options other than to imprudently advance into the unknown or to halt operations altogether. Tiberius' anxiety-ladened two-year campaign in the dark recesses of Germania, only a year after the 9 AD Varian disaster, illustrates this point. Suetonius writes: "[Tiberius] took no actions without the backing of his council; though in all other situations he had been content to rely on the judgment of himself alone, now, against his habit, he consulted with numerous men as to how the war should be conducted."[51] In other words, the need for collaborative planning and an agreed-upon approach (i.e., shared understanding of both the operation and the environment) was greatest when the situation was either unpredictable, serious, or both.

Commander's Intent and Mission Orders

Understanding the flow of military orders from senate or emperor through general to subordinate commander(s) requires first making sense of the oftentimes convoluted command relationships inherent in the Roman political-military establishment. During the Republic, the senate and assembly fought its wars by assigning a magistrate to a theater of war (*provincia*) and investing him with supreme military and judicial authority (*imperium*) over that location and its forces.[52] This office, usually held by a consul or *praetor,* expired after a single year and gave its holder immense authority to not only prosecute the war as he saw fit but to also engage in diplomatic efforts on behalf of the state. Under certain circumstances, the senate would extend the one-year limit by one or two more, appointing these magistrates as proconsuls or *propraetors.*[53] The habit of extending

command authorities increased throughout the Late Republic, as political competition and changes in aristocratic culture saw a break with tradition, resulting in the near-unrestrained powers of disruptive generals like Marius, Sulla, Pompey, and Caesar. As Rome transitioned from Republic to Empire, authorities changed slightly, with emperors now possessing uninterrupted *imperium,* among other powers, over virtually the entire empire. This authority extended to Rome's imperial provincial governors (usually *legati pro praetore*), as well, whom the emperor invested with the power to likewise prosecute Rome's wars, of course, under his guidance.[54]

As noted earlier, the gradual expansion of the Roman Republic's borders increasingly precluded the senate from exercising any realistic, direct oversight over its generals abroad. Sluggish communication speeds and the unpredictable nature of war joined to make any message sent from the senate perhaps entirely moot by the time it reached a general's ears. The practice of investing campaigning generals with *imperium* in their *provinciae* partially offset this problem, by allowing commanders to make decisions, administer justice, and conduct diplomatic affairs of moment with little fear of legal prosecution or public repudiation, so long as their actions were in keeping with the interest of the state. Generals situated along Rome's peripheries enjoyed great legal latitude in making war and peace, supporting allies, and conducting military operations.[55]

Roman leaders additionally offset this long-distance communication issue by providing their campaigning generals with clear, purpose-oriented orders. These orders often took the form of simple directives, tasking a commander to punish a particular enemy, subdue a territory, protect an ally, or maintain peace.[56] Livy's description of how Rome handled the encroachment of Philip V of Macedon during the First Macedonian War, 214-205 BC, provides a good example. The senate, determined to deter Philip from further belligerence, passed a motion appointing Marcus Valerius Laevinus the rank of *propraetor* with *imperium* and subsequently sent him to Macedonia with a fleet of ships. There, Laevinus met with a Roman ambassador who informed him of Philip's recent nefarious activities, and "the two agreed that the Romans must undertake the war with greater vigour."[57] The mission the senate assigned to Laevinus was simple: prevent Philips' movements into Roman allied territory. Laevinus' decisions on whether, where, when, and how he should undertake offensive military operations to achieve this end were his alone.

Scipio Africanus' appointment as proconsul of Rome's army in Spain in 211 BC sheds light on the Republic's process of assigning a commander *imperium* over a *provincia* with orders to carry out a task. Livy

writes that the senate, fearing revolts in Spain could lead to Rome's loss of the peninsula in its entirety, "favored an increase of the army and the sending of a commander-in-chief" to contest Carthaginian presence there. Unable to decide on a name, they put the question to vote in the assembly, with Scipio receiving unanimous approval.[58] Scipio, now armed with the senate's orders and intent, set out to conduct an aggressive offensive campaign against the Carthaginians and their allies. According to Polybius, it was Scipio himself who decided on the details of the campaign—specifically the decision to concentrate his forces and execute a bold and rapid seizure of New Carthage.[59] Scipio Africanus' operational plans contrasted significantly with those of his father, Publius Cornelius Scipio, who had died while commanding Rome's armies in Spain the previous year. The elder Scipio had dispersed his forces into independent detachments and relied heavily on Rome's Celtiberian allies—a fatal mistake, in Scipio Africanus' estimation.[60] The operational and tactical latitude the Scipiones enjoyed while planning and executing their campaigns reflect Roman high command's disinclination to dictate anything more than the strategic-level effect they desired to see. The rest was up to the commander.

The operational latitude generals enjoyed was not absolute, and tended to reflect a combination of contributing factors including the complexity of the task, the nature of the adversary, and the political climate of the era. If the senate assigned a particularly difficult mission with no obvious solution, then generals were often left quite alone to their devices. Quintus Fabius' freedom to pursue an entirely counterculture strategy of avoiding pitched battle with Hannibal, despite much denigration from both hawkish senators and his own army, demonstrates this fact.[61]

So too does Pompey's 67-66 BC campaign against the Cilician pirates. Because the piratic problem was of national consequence, and because no previous commanders had been able to solve it, the senate allocated Pompey not only five hundred ships and near-unlimited money, but also granted him *imperium* over nearly the entire state. He used these resources to plan and execute a comprehensive campaign, involving the splitting up of the Mediterranean into thirteen parts, each resourced with ships, legionaries, and an able commander.[62]

Caesar's Gallic campaigns, on the other hand, reveal the ostensible limits set by the senate regarding a general's freedom of action. As three ancient texts make clear, Caesar's assignment as governor of Cisalpine and Transalpine Gaul carried with it no specific task of conducting offensive operations into independent Gaul.[63] Yet, Caesar launched Rome into a deep, eight-year operation, marching his armies well outside his nominal

provincia, with almost no senatorial impetus behind the decision to do so. Caesar's own writings betray his understanding that he was operating in a legal gray zone, saturated as they are with self-justifications for continued aggression against the Helvetii and Suebi.[64] This is not to suggest that the Roman elite were intolerant of imperial land-grabbing or saber-rattling, as certainly they were not.[65] Such divergence from the senate's initial intent needed to at least align with the *state's* interests (rather than just the individual's interests) and maintain some semblance of legal legitimacy. It was at these crucial junctures, the senate claimed, that Caesar's rivals demanded his recall from Gaul and immediate placement on trial. Political infighting between Cato's and Caesar's respective parties doubtless contributed to the animosity towards the latter. But Caesar's case reveals the types of civil-military mechanisms and juris prudence at the senate's disposal to ostensibly reign in a general's actions and bound them within senatorial intent.

Marcus Tullius Cicero's attack against Aulus Gabinius likewise reveals the legal framework constraining governors' actions. In 55 BC, Gabinius, then governor of Syria, unilaterally marched his armies into Egypt to forcibly restore Ptolemy XII to the throne. Cicero writes:

> I say nothing of his leaving his province, of his taking his army out of it, of his declaring and carrying on war of his own accord, of his entering a foreign kingdom *without any command from the people or from the senate to do so;* conduct of which many of the ancient laws, and especially the Cornelian law concerning treason, and the Julian law concerning extortion, forbid in the plainest manner.[66]

Cicero summarizes his argument rhetorically quipping: "When was it that either this senatorial body or the Roman people undertook this war?" Cicero was quite cognizant of and willing to cite extant black-and-white legal precedent restricting a governor's actions.

During the Principate it was primarily the emperor, and not the senate, who provided over-arching foreign policy guidance, orders, and intent to *imperium*-wielding magistrates. These orders, though usually more prescriptive than during the Republic, still necessarily allowed for a great deal of latitude.[67] The directions Nero gave to two of Rome's allied kings in the war against Parthia for control of Armenia demonstrates this point. Tacitus writes that Nero instructed the two kings to take their directions from either Corbulo, whom had Armenia as his *provincia*, or Quadratus Ummidius, then governor of Syria. Nero specifies their support should

go to whomever needed it most, "depending on the requirements of the war."[68] Nero held little desire to formally task-organize the kings' armies under a single commander, as he understood his commanders would know their own circumstances and needs better.

Accounts of generals controlling their subordinate officers in the field likewise illustrate Rome's reliance on commander's intent and mission orders. As noted, this process usually started at the general's *consilium* and filtered its way down through consecutive meetings held by subordinate echelons.[69] Critically, all were to understand their part of the plan and any major themes the general wanted to stress—for instance, speed, simultaneity, stealth, fervor, or something else. Before the Battle of Gergovia, 52 BC, Caesar, noting his army's disadvantageous position in the low ground, called a meeting of his subordinate officers to emphasize the need for rapidity in their planned raid against a vacant enemy camp. He also reminded his officers of the limited nature of the raid—the legions must not advance too far and become decisively engaged.[70] Separately, Cassius Dio describes an event whereby Caesar explicitly ordered his lieutenants and subaltern officers to communicate down to each soldier his emphasis on zeal before they were to conduct battle against Ariovistus. Dio has Caesar declare: "My purpose is that you yourselves…may also teach the others their whole duty. For they will be benefited more by hearing it from you individually and repeatedly than they would from learning it but once from my lips."[71]

The practice of communicating intent and clear, purpose-oriented directives was particularly important if the conditions of the environment were unknown, volatile, or especially hostile. Rome's frontiers along the Rhine and Danube, in the minds of most Romans, were regions riddled with these ominous qualities, thus compelling commanders to act accordingly. Tiberius, while on campaign in Germania, wrote out and disseminated to his subordinate officers all of his orders for the next day, "adding the warning that if anyone was uncertain of anything, he was to apply to him personally and no other, no matter what hour of the night."[72] Six years later, Germanicus, treading in the footsteps of his uncle before him, made a habit of calling *consilia* before battle in order to communicate both his understanding of the situation and his guidance for the operation.[73]

We can presume this filtering down of intent and orders enabled each echelon's leaders to tweak their portion of the plan to maximize its efficiency and efficacy. In particularly unpredictable situations, good generals deliberately built this feature into their plans while doling out orders. During the Battle of Alesia, 52 BC, Caesar gave his legate Titus Labienus

open-ended orders to either defend the camp walls or withdraw and conduct a sortie, depending on the latter's judgement.[74] Similarly, during his second invasion of Britannia, Caesar ordered Labienus to "watch over the harbors…find out what was happening in Gaul, and [to] *make his plans according to circumstances and events.*"[75] Caesar's orders here align almost exactly with the modern US understanding of what mission orders should entail—namely, ones that "enable subordinates to understand the situation," and allow them "to exercise initiative in planning, preparing, and executing their operations." [76] Here, Caesar not only provides his intent but encourages his subordinate to modify his plans as needed to meet the operation's overall purpose.[77]

Perhaps the best testament to Caesar's use of mission orders appears in the winter of 54 BC, when he directs Labienus to evacuate his winter quarters and join Caesar in a planned attack against the Nervii. Importantly, Caesar adds the caveat that Labienus should only join him "if he could do so without harm to the overall campaign." The legate responded that he could not support the attack, owing to the concentration of hostile Treverian forces outside his camp. Labienus believed that if he were to depart in haste, the Treveri would overwhelm his legion, especially because they were flush with confidence from their recent annihilation of Sabinus' and Cotta's legions. Caesar notes that he "approved of Labienus' assessment of the situation," despite his frustration at losing a legion's worth of combat power.[78]

Ascertaining the extent generals issued open-ended mission orders during the Principate is more difficult than during the Republic, owing primarily to the limited evidence. What evidence we do have—primarily Josephus—suggests this trend continued well after Caesar. A close examination of Vespasian's opening moves during his Galilean campaign in the summer of 67 AD, for instance, reveals the operational flexibility likely built into his orders. Vespasian orchestrated three near-simultaneous assaults against enemy strongholds using his Fifth, Tenth, and Fifteenth Legions. After first laying siege to the town of Jotapata, Vespasian ordered Trajan, commander of Tenth Legion, to suppress the revolting nearby town of Japha.[79] Josephus writes that as Trajan's army approached Japha, he fell immediately upon the assembled defenders and pursued them into the city. Titus, at the request of Trajan, eventually took over command and completed the town's seizure.[80] Simultaneously, Vespasian sent Sextus Cerealius Vettulanus, commander of Fifth Legion, against a Samaritan force that had assembled atop Mount Gerizim. Unlike Trajan, Cerealius chose not to conduct an immediate assault, observing the enemy's advantageous

position on the high ground, and instead chose to surround their position until the summer's heat reduced their numbers. Only after several perished and many deserted did Cerealius advance to finish the Samaritans off.[81] Several days later, Vespasian's siege against Jotapata succeeded, with a detachment of his men surreptitiously gaining access to the walls, allowing his army to pour in.[82] Overall, in the span of a week, three separate Jewish strongholds fell to three different commanders using three different techniques. The conduct of the campaign, and the various means by which his commanders accomplished their orders, suggests Vespasian's orders were like those of their Republican ancestors. Namely, they lacked rigidity in how commanders were to overcome local conditions in pursuit of their ends.

Figure 3.1. Initial Stages of Vespasian's Galilean Campaign, 67 AD.

Source: Created by author using map from Martin Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 13.

Of course, not all orders were open for interpretation or modification. Commanders cognizant of conditions necessitating a stricter level of control were more than willing to issue highly prescriptive orders and could dispense equally draconian punishments if those orders went unfollowed.

Corbulo's senior centurion, Paccius Orfitus, for instance, asked permission to lead an immediate attack against Tiridates' temporarily disorganized forces. Corbulo denied his request, instructing Orfitus to wait until additional forces arrived. The centurion broke these orders and assaulted anyway, resulting in his formation's defeat and subsequent rout. Worse, news of this event unnerved the enroute reinforcements to such a degree that they instead turned back to their respective camps. Incensed, Corbulo punished Orfitus by forcing him and his men to ignominiously sleep outside the camp's walls.[83]

Anecdotes like these invoke fantastical images of incontrovertible Roman *disciplina,* where strict observance of highly prescriptive orders served as perhaps *the* principal component of hierarchical command and control. Indeed, the Romans perpetuated such an impression amongst themselves, by the retelling of their own mythological past where prominent figures like Titus Manlius Torquatus, the Roman consul who slew his own son for disobeying military orders, dominated military and social culture.[84] Taken at face value these traditions may seem to contradict any notion of "mission command"—particularly those aspects like mission orders and disciplined initiative—but should instead be viewed as only one side of a two-sided coin. Evidence exists to suggest Roman military culture valued discipline and obedience to orders. The Romans also consciously discouraged the use of *such* prescriptive orders that subordinates could find themselves hamstrung when conditions altered. Moreover, there was a difference between acting in the absence of orders (or within the bounds of loose orders) and deliberately disobeying explicit orders. It is these last two points that are most frequently ignored in one-dimensional caricatures of a hyper-disciplinarian Roman army. After all, the Romans also cheerfully retold the myth of the young legionary Marcus Curtius who, without orders, jumped into a fiery crack in the earth's surface to save the city.[85]

Conclusion

Roman commanders, struck a balance by issuing orders with as much innate flexibility as the situation allowed. Even appropriately scaled mission orders retained residual risk, so commanders offset this risk by emphasizing key tasks and major themes that they saw as too pivotal for subordinates to neglect—i.e., their intent. Likewise, decentralized execution required subordinates to have a handle on both the operating environment and the purpose of the overall operation, as both things informed and guided their local decision-making. The commander created and used his *consilium,* and those of his subordinate echelons, to disseminate such

information—i.e., shared understanding. At the same time, the *consilium* was a means to inform the general himself serving as a venue for his staff to receive, digest, deliberate on, and interpret intelligence and advice. This enabled him to better refine the outputs of his meeting—i.e., his mission orders. Thus, the entire command and control process was designed around striking the most effective balance between hierarchical and decentralized control. As the Romans discovered, and the Prussians later codified, neither style was ideal in its absolute form. Leaders under a strict, hierarchical system are either too slow or too constrained to adapt to changing circumstance. Conversely, leaders under a fully decentralized system fail to work in unison.

Interestingly, this balance parallels and in part reflects Rome's struggle to harmonize the cultural forces of *virtus* and *disciplina.*[86] Where *virtus* calls for martial aggression and unilateral action, *disciplina* calls for "holding the line," temperance, and obedience. The army required and valued both traits, as reflected in the legendary stories of Marcus Curtius and Titus Manlius Torquatus. But one side could not dominate the other, lest the army devolve into either an unresponsive, rigid mass or haphazard chaos. The principles explored in this chapter can be seen as a means Rome took to bound the countless independent actions of its *virtus*-driven leaders under the auspices of *disciplina,* intended to orchestrate an army that is objective-focused yet adaptable. Ideally, when leaders struck the right balance, senators, emperors, and generals could simply point their armies at a problem and unleash them.

Notes

1. Unlike modern armies, Republican and Early Imperial Roman general "staffs" were not fixed institutions. There existed no bureaucratic policy governing exactly which (or how many) functionaries should comprise it. Instead, generals considered historic precedent, the exigencies of the moment, and their own preferences when forming them; see Lukas de Blois, "Army and General in the Late Roman Republic," in *A Companion to the Roman Army,* ed. Paul Erdkamp (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2011), 168-9; Goldsworthy, 123-125. Interestingly, Bernard S. Bachrach notes Charlemagne's Carolingian "general staff" was, to some degree, influenced by their knowledge of Roman staff-work dating back to the first century, particularly the practice of strategic and tactical military intelligence collection, operational planning (i.e., *consilia*), road mapping (e.g., *itineraria*), cartography, and logistical planning; see "Charlemagne and the Carolingian General Staff," *The Journal of Military History* 66 (2002): 313-357.

2. McCall, 219; Goldsworthy, 132; Southern, 199. For a good example, see Plutarch, *Pom.,* 68.

3. See, for example, Caesar, *B.G.,* 1.21, 4.23, 5.27-28, 6.33; Livy, 30.5.

4. Southern, 227.

5. Polybius, 6.24.

6. See Maurice, 8.1.3; Vegetius, *Mil.,* 3.9; Onasander, *Strat.,* 11.5.

7. Southern and Goldsworthy posit the military *consilium* was more akin to an operations briefing rather than a forum for deliberation or planning. Southern, 199; Goldsworthy, 132. More recently, McCall describes the *consilium* as an advisory board in addition to a briefing venue. McCall, 219.

8. For examples of deliberation in a *consilium,* see Appendix A. Revealingly, before the Battle of Pydna (168 BC), Aemilius Paullus chastises his council for failing to adequately communicate their advice to him. Livy, 44.37.

9. Onasander, *Strat.,* 25.2; See also, Goldsworthy, 133.

10. See Vegetius, *Mil.* 3.6, 3.9, 3.26; Maurice, 8.1.8.

11. Frontinus, *Strat.,* 1.2.

12. Plutarch, *Otho,* 8-11.

13. As Morgan suggests, Otho likely returned to Brixellum because this town was Otho's main operating base, it was the meeting location for the anticipated arrival of the reinforcing army, and its defense would have otherwise been left only to the now-injured Annius Gallus. Gwyn Morgan, *69 A.D.: The Year of the Four Emperors* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006), 133.

14. Caesar, *B.G.,* 4.23.

15. Caesar, *B.G.,* 4.22.

16. Caesar, *B.G.,* 4.25.

17. Polybius, 3.82; Livy, 22.3.

18. Polybius, 3.85-6.

19. Onasander, *Strat.,* 32.9.

20. Josephus, *B.G.,* 3.158-164.

21. Polybius, 36.6; Livy, Ep., 49.

22. Vegetius, *Mil.,* 3.9.

23. Maurice, *Strat.,* 7.8, 8.1.3.

24. Likely much longer, as the Byzantine Emperor Maurice in the late sixth century AD advises generals to call meetings with their subordinate commanders to plan and share information. See Maurice, *Strat.,* 3.11, 4.3, 7.4, 7.8.

25. Rosenstein argues one of the reasons Rome could place inexperienced commanders at the head of her armies was due to the advice of military tribunes and centurions. Rosenstein, 141. See also McCall, 219.

26. For an explanation on the cultural shift from Rome's early, *virtus*-minded generals to its more stratagem-minded generals during the Middle and Late Republic, see Lendon, 205-208.

27. N.J E. Austin and N. B. Rankov, *Exploratio: Military and Political Intelligence in the Roman World from the Second Punic War to the Battle of Adrianople* (Routledge: New York, 2002), 87-89, 118. On geographical excursus in Roman operational planning, see Everett L. Wheeler, "Methodological Limits and the Mirage of Roman Strategy: Part II," *Journal of Military History* 57, no. 2 (April 1993): 239.

28. Caesar, *B.G.,* 6.29.

29. Caesar, *B.G.,* 6.33.

30. See Josephus, *B.J.,* 4.92, 5.52, 7.190.

31. Josephus, *B.J.,* 5.261-263.

32. Tacitus, *Agr.,* 38.

33. Tacitus, *Agr.,* 20.

34. Tacitus, *Ann.,* 13.8.

35. Tacitus, *Ann.,* 13.39.

36. Tacitus, *Ann.,* 13.39.

37. Austin and Rankov, 62.

38. Onasander, *Strat.,* 11.5.

39. Appian, *The Spanish Wars,* trans. Horace White (New York, NY: Mac-Millan, 1899), 15.90-92.

40. C.f., Josephus, *B.J.,* 4.410; Caesar, *B.G.,* 7.44-45.

41. Caesar, *B.G.,* 5.8-9.

42. Caesar, *B.G.,* 5.9.

43. On itineraries, see Austin and Rankov, 116-7.

44. Vegetius, *Mil.,* 3.6; 4.27.

45. Frontinus, *Strat.,* 1.2.

46. Caesar, *B.G.,* 4.20.

47. Maurice, *Strat.,* 8.2.89. C.f. Caesar, *B.G.,* 8.8.3.

48. Vegetius, *Mil.,* 3.12. C.f. Caesar, *B. Afr.,* 73.

49. Polybius, 10.8.

50. Polybius, 10.11.

51. Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars,* trans. Catharine Edwards (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000), *Tib.,* 18.

52. The term *provincia had an original meaning of 'appointment' or 'task'—only sometimes described i*n terms of geography (e.g., direct administration over Sicily or Corsica and Sardinia). Other times, the term could be strictly administrative in nature (e.g., Italian quaestors having the treasury as their *provincia*). Lintott notes Roman legislation dating to 101 BC uses the term in three ways: (1) as a "sphere of operations assigned to a magistrate," (2) as an existing territorial division of Roman administration, and (3) as a recently acquired territory. Lintott, 22-23; 55.

53. Referred to as prorogation. See Lintott, 46; Rosenstein, 142; Erdkamp, 97.

54. Lintott, 121-122; Keppie, 189-90.

55. Rosenstein, 141-2.

56. See, for example, Polybius, 35.3; Rankov, 134.

57. Livy, 31.3.

58. Livy, 26.18. Given Scipio's relative inexperience at this point, Livy's account of the vote has been challenged; see Goldsworthy, *In the Name of Rome,* 55-56.

59. Polybius, 10.6-7. Polybius had access to a letter written by Scipio to Philip V outlining the details of his operation and the calculations he took in formulating his plan. This fact may lend greater credibility to Polybius' account, though Scipio could have also written it enjoying the certainty of hindsight. See Goldsworthy, *In the Name of Rome,* 57.

60. Polybius, 10.7.

61. Polybius, 3.89; Plutarch, *Fab.,* 5.

62. Plutarch, *Pomp.,* 25.

63. Cassius Dio (38.31), Suetonius (*Caes.,* 24), and Plutarch (*Caes.,* 24) all comment on the legality of Caesar's conquest of Gaul. While they disagree on whether Caesar's enemies presented a credible threat to the state, they all generally agree his deep expeditions were almost entirely of his own making.

64. Caesar, *B.G.,* 1.2, 1.7, 1.11, 1.35; Robin Seager, "Caesar and Gaul: Some Perspectives on the Bellum Gallicum," in *Caesar Against Liberty? Perspectives on his Autocracy,* vol. 11, *Papers of the Langord Latin Seminar* (Cambridge, UK: Francis Cairns Publications Ltd., 2003), 22.

65. Lintott notes Roman military strategy often required magistrates' willingness to conduct operations into uncontrolled territories in order to impress barbarian neighbors with Roman power. Moreover, he suggests cultural forces (including the desire for military glory and the axiom that troops should remain busy) would have enticed governors into "picking quarrels" with border peoples. Lintott, 26, 53.

66. Cicero, *Pis.,* 48-50. Emphasis mine.

67. Lintott argues that opportunities for initiatives beyond the frontiers became more restricted during this time, through closer supervision of magistrates by the emperor. Lintott, 27.

68. Tacitus, *Ann.,* 13.8. The kings were Herod Agrippa II of Judaea and Antiochus IV of Commagene.

69. Onasander, *Strat.,* 25.2.

70. Caesar, *B.G.,* 7.45. While this may have been Caesar covering for himself for the eventual defeat, it nonetheless reveals the *types* of concerns likely discussed in pre-battle *consilia,* and those concerns generally match what the military manuals lay out for generals and their staffs to consider.

71. Cassius Dio, 38.37.

72. Suetonius, *Tib.*, 18.

73. Tac. *Ann.* 2.14; 2.20. These were the 16 AD Battles of Idistaviso and the Angrivarian Wall.

74. Caesar, *B.G.,* 7.86.2; C.f. 1.21-22.

75. Caesar, *B.G.,* 5.8. Emphasis mine.

76. HQDA, Army Doctrine Publication 6-0, 1-11.

77. Caesar's orders here to Labienus also directly mirror an example presented by Colonel Clinton J. Ancker regarding General Grant's use of mission orders to General Sherman during the US Civil War. Clinton J. Ancker, III, "The Evolution of Mission Command in US Army Doctrine, 1905 to the Present," *Military Review* (March-April 2013): 43.

78. Caesar, *B.G.,* 5.46-8.

79. Marcus Ulpius Traianus; future consul, governor of Syria, and father of the emperor Trajan.

80. Josephus, *B.J.,* 3.289-306.

81. Josephus, *B.J.,* 3.307-315.

82. Josephus, *B.J.,* 3.323-328.

83. Tacitus, *Ann.,* 13.36.

84. Livy, 8.7. Polyaenus describes a similar situation, when Gaius executed his own son for disobeying military orders. Polyaenus, *Strategems,* trans. R. Shepherde (Attulus, 1793), http://www.attalus.org/info/polyaenus.html, 8.13.

85. Livy, 7.5.

86. For an exhaustive examination of Rome's balancing of martial *virtus* and *disciplina,* see Lendon, 163-315.

Chapter 4
Mutual Trust

You forget that it is success that earns generals the goodwill of their armies, and failure their loathing. Good soldiers should not suspect they are distrusted, nor bad soldiers know they are feared, because the fear we feel provokes greater insubordination among the latter and erodes the loyalty of the former.
—Caesar, *The Civil War*

Trust is based on personal qualities, such as professional competence, character, and commitment. Soldiers must see values in action before such actions become a basis for trust.
—HQDA, Army Doctrine Publication 6-0, *Mission Command*

As we have seen, the armies of Rome routinely struggled with issues of trust. Commanders were concerned with deserters betraying their operational plans to the enemy, disruptive pay and logistics issues fomented mutinous sentiments within armies, power politics sowed the seeds for inter- and intra-army divisions, and mercenary armies turned their weapons in support of whomever paid most. In this chapter, I argue Rome took active steps to curb the negative effects of such trust issues, through the employment of oaths, religious customs, and deliberative rhetoric.

Modern US doctrine describes mutual trust as the "shared confidence" between commanders and subordinates that each can and will reliably carry out their assigned responsibilities. Trust, doctrine writers argue, flows throughout the chain of command, both vertically and horizontally, and serves as the bedrock upon which effective mission command rests.[1] Generally speaking, trust is highly personal in nature, contingent on a virtually limitless number of influencing factors, both internal and external to those giving or receiving it. Professionalism, character, training, morale, ideology, and perceived levels of competence are just a few of these factors. Such a wide net of considerations—nearly all of which are impossible to measure in any quantitative way—makes any attempt to study the existence of mutual trust in the armies of ancient Rome difficult. Here, instead of arguing how *individual* leaders or armies cultivated mutual trust, this chapter will explore what *institutional* mechanisms Rome habitually employed to create an environment conducive to intra-army trust, and

whether these mechanisms favorably set conditions for a greater level of decentralized command and control within the army.

Narrowing our focus to just institutional trust mechanisms still presents an utterly complex subject involving numerous possible solutions. Only three trust-building mechanisms are herein examined: military oaths; religion (*auspicia* and pre-battle rituals); and deliberative rhetoric (battlefield orations, harangues, and exhortations). I have selected these three mechanisms for two primary reasons. First, all three were nearly ubiquitous throughout the entirety of our period. From Rome's earliest recorded histories up through the Late Empire its leaders relied on oaths, religion, and speeches to bind armies to leaders, and leaders to the state. Second, the form of these mechanisms changed only little throughout our period, as opposed to others, like the centuries-long evolution of unit homage or the professionalization of the army.

Throughout this chapter, I argue Roman military leaders' efforts to nurture and institutionalize these three trust-building mechanisms indicate that their military establishment required, and took serious efforts to foster, a considerable degree of trust necessary to carry out its relatively decentralized way of war. These mechanisms were, in part, how Roman commanders sought to deliberately win over the minds—not just the bodies—of those they led.

Oaths

Evidence suggests military oaths in ancient Rome served as a relatively powerful binding agent commanders could leverage to not only maintain soldiers' allegiance to the state and themselves, but also to ensure legionaries would obey orders despite hardship and imminent danger. Both the prevalence of *pietas*—the strict observance of laws, religious practices, and obligations to one's family and state —in Roman culture and the legal connotations connected to oaths themselves ensured these pledges of fidelity carried significant weight in the minds of soldiers, commanders, and the body politic.[2]

Like most modern armies, mutual trust in the Roman army often began with new enlistees taking a customary oath of allegiance, the *sacramentum*.[3] During the Early and Middle Republic, enlistees took this oath before a senior magistrate during the lengthy, annual process of enrolling a new legion. The *sacramentum* was, in fact, the legal enrollment of the soldier into military service. While we no longer know the exact words, Polybius' commentary suggests that each legionary swore at a minimum to "obey his officers and execute their orders as far as in his power."[4]

Under the direction of the consuls, the conduct of this compulsory oath likewise extended to the soldiers of other allied cities in Italy, binding both consular armies and any attached auxiliaries to the Roman state.

Cicero's anecdote of Cato the Elder's son, Marcus, reveals the legalities surrounding the *sacramentum* and its symbolic significance. Cicero explains that Marcus was once part of a legion serving under the governor Popilius, but when Popilius disbanded the legion, Marcus was disbanded with it. Consequently, Marcus, desiring to stay in the army, requested to join a new legion. Cato mandated that if his son was to rejoin, he must first take an entirely new oath of allegiance. Cicero explains Cato's concern was one "rooted in the scrupulous observance of laws"—that Marcus' original oath was now void, and that his legal status as soldier could only be reinstated by taking another *sacramentum.*[5]

Modern observers may be skeptical of just how much institutional trust Roman leaders could extract from something as nebulous as oath-taking, but they should consider both the deeply symbolic and the more pragmatic legal connotations inherent in the practice. Symbolically, oaths occurred in a society ostensibly steeped in *pietas.* In the Roman world, perceptions of impiety—of oath-breaking in particular—could fundamentally damage one's status as citizen, family member, soldier, or politician. Though exceptions certainly existed, numerous ancient authors echo this theme, perhaps epitomized best by Publius Scipio's disparagement of his mutinying troops in 206 BC: "Can I call you soldiers when you have… broken the solemn obligations of your military oath? Your appearance…I recognize as those of my fellow-countrymen, but I see that your actions… are those of your country's foes."[6]

The pervasiveness of *pietas* in Roman military culture is likewise evident in some peculiar stories. Polybius, for instance, provides an anecdote regarding a detained soldier after the battle of Cannae who took creative license to both honor and circumvent the requirements of his oath:

> Upon [the Roman prisoners'] naming ten of their most distinguished members, [Hannibal] sent them off after making them swear that they would return to him. One of those nominated just as he was going out of the camp said he had forgotten something and went back, and after recovering the thing he had left behind again took his departure, *thinking that by his return he had kept his faith and absolved himself of his oath.*[7]

Though this story ended poorly for the Roman, who was later detained by his own kinsmen for seeking personal safety at the expense of

his fellow countrymen, the anecdote nevertheless reveals how personally binding oaths could be to certain individuals. Appian sheds additional light in a description of Flavius Fimbria's defeat by Sulla in 85 BC. Seeing their position as tenuous, and unwilling to fight Sulla's army, several officers serving under Fimbria refused to swear an oath of loyalty to him despite the latter threatening them at sword-point to do so.[8]

Perhaps more important to genuine trust-building was a separate, originally voluntary oath taken by legionaries not to the state or consul, but to each other.[9] This oath, mentioned in chapter two and recorded by Livy, expressed the oath-taker's pledge to neither desert the formation nor break ranks unless it was to retrieve a weapon, strike an enemy, or save a comrade. It is important to note the voluntary nature of this oath and its existence despite any (pre-216 BC) legal requirement to do so. As Rawlings observes, such an oath not only likely promoted unit cohesion, but also sustained "resilience in relatively amorphous swarms of men" during the chaos of combat.[10] In other words, the Roman method of warfare—characterized by the relatively decentralized employment of semi-autonomous formations—hinged upon and benefitted from an exchange of oaths between the legionaries themselves.

It appears Roman military leaders identified the significance of this oath and combined it with the *sacramentum* on the eve of Cannae, 216 BC, to form a single, compulsory oath termed the *ius iurandum.*[11] Rome's decision to institutionalize the *ius iurandum* in the midst of contending with one of its greatest existential threats—Hannibal Barca—certainly indicates Roman leaders desired to capitalize on this preexisting comradery concept and saw value in its permanent application.

Beyond their symbolic connotations, oaths carried more pragmatic legal considerations—particularly, the unique penalties assigned to the crime of oath-breaking. Dionysius of Halicarnassus indicates oaths, coupled with a commander's *imperium,* gave "commanders the authority to put to death without a trial all who are disobedient or desert their standards."[12] Likewise, Polybius explicitly states those who lied under oath suffered the penalty of the fustuarium, whereby fellow campmates would beat the condemned man to death. Moreover, those who stole from camp—a violation of a separate oath taken by soldiers once encamped —suffered a similar fate.[13] While the use of oaths to further legitimize martial authority, in this respect, may not have fostered a particularly positive environment, it almost certainly enhanced a commander's belief that his soldiers would obey his orders and would act in accordance with military law.

From around the time of the second-century Marian reforms on-wards, oaths took on a more personal tone, with soldiers swearing allegiance principally to their general and only secondarily, if at all, to the state. Sulla, for instance, witnessed his troops take a voluntary oath to him, swearing they would remain with him during his civil war against Marius, shortly before offering him a proportion of their own money so that he could sustain his war effort.[14] Similarly, before the battle of Dyrrachium in 48 BC, Pompey's officers and soldiers took an oath to not desert him and to "submit to whatever outcome Fortune granted [their] commander"—effectively binding the fate of the entire army directly to Pompey's.[15] This tradition of personalized oath-taking continued throughout the Principate (particularly during the Year of the Four Emperors) and well into the Late Empire, with soldiers required to pledge their allegiance directly to the emperor on an annual basis.[16]

While it may be impossible to judge the exact extent soldiers and leaders relied on oaths to cement a level of mutual trust, it is difficult to believe that the practice was altogether an ineffectual one. Both the longevity of the practice and a corpus of anecdotal evidence tend to demonstrate the binding effect oathtaking had on the military institution. An illustrative example of the latter occurs during Caesar's siege of Pompey's Spanish army in 49 BC, at the Battle of Ilerda. Caesar explains Pompey's legate, Petreius, fearful that his soldiers would soon defect to Caesar's side, "went around to all the maniples in his camp," tearfully pleading for their continued loyalty. For himself, Petreius took an oath not to desert the army nor commit treason. The tribunes and centurions immediately followed suit, and eventually the soldiers themselves, century by century, repeated the oath. This dramatic process, Caesar explains, led Petreius' camp to undergo "a complete change of mood," and that "the business at hand became again the waging of war."[17] In other words, productive military activity could only occur once mutual trust was reestablished through a public exchange of vows.

Petreius' frantic attempt to cement the loyalty of his troops before Ilerda, support the notion that Roman military leaders indeed sought to capitalize on the legal and moral properties of oaths and their use in fostering group unity and trust—particularly when the situation was unstable, like Varro's and Paulus' institutionalization of the *ius iurandum* before Cannae. This theme is echoed in anecdotes peppered throughout the entirety of our period. After executing the ringleaders of a mutiny at Sucro, Scipio reinstated order by forcing his remaining legionaries to swear an oath of allegiance; Caesar, Domitius, Quinctilius Varus, and Pompey routinely

mandated oaths of allegiance during the ups and downs of their civil war; Germanicus measured the significance of a mutiny along the Rhine by the willingness of his soldiers to take an oath of allegiance; during the chaotic year of 69 AD, various armies, citizens, and supporters of Otho, Galba, Vitellius, and Vespasian each publicized their support for their respective would-be emperor by taking oaths.[18] The authors here repeat an important theme: when conditions strain the sinews of intra-army trust, whether they be from extreme hardship, mutiny, or civil war, commanders' first order of business was to refortify this trust through the public act of oath-taking.

Of course, even with the combination of cultural *pietas* and oathtaking, mutual trust between soldier, commander, and Roman elite was not a certainty. This was particularly true during times of tumultuous civil war, where entire armies could defect, revolt, or refuse to fight. Nevertheless, it was exactly during these times where we see oaths play the biggest role, with commanders and soldiers continuously groping for some tangible indication that those around them could be counted on to perform their duty.

Religion, *Auspicia,* and Pre-Battle Rituals

Like oaths, Rome leveraged religion to cement trust between legionary and general. A general's power of *auspicia* gave him an opportunity to demonstrate the divine backing he enjoyed, which enhanced both his credibility and favor with the gods in the eyes of his soldiers. This had the subsequent effect of ostensibly limiting the level of skepticism soldiers had regarding their general's plans, or, possibly, his overall level of competence. Moreover, a general's ability to leverage favorable omens, portents, and dreams—or skillfully negotiate unfavorable ones—could likewise enhance the level of trust soldiers enjoyed in their commander.

Much has been written about religion in the Roman armies and the positive effects it had on fostering martial corporate identity.[19] This scholarship has primarily centered on the cultic traditions of the legions, the synchronization of the imperial calendar and religious festivals with military ones, and the public worshipping of iconography, ranging from abstract deities to the emperor himself. These studies amount to a clear depiction of the Roman army as an institution deliberately saturated with daily reminders of the divine backing of the Republic's (and, later, the emperor's) authority and purpose. Oliver Stoll suggests, quite simply, that religious ritual "served to strengthen and to display [Roman] power."[20] It is quite clear religious ceremony was ubiquitous in the army—Polybius argues that in Rome, "nothing plays a more elaborate or extensive role in people's private lives and in the political sphere than superstition."[21]

What is harder to discern is exactly how influential religious ceremony was in cultivating trust within the army, thus the employment of mission command.

Alongside their power of *imperium,* commanders enjoyed the power of *auspicia*—the right to consult the gods.[22] Before battle, commanders were obligated to conduct the auspices, a ritual intended to determine whether the army enjoyed divine backing. Goldsworthy, citing a study conducted by Helgeland, argues these pre-battle rites "were familiar and reassuring to men anxious about what was to come."[23] Indeed, Polybius argues this very point when crediting both the semi-mythical Spartan regent Lycurgus and Scipio Africanus for using religion to gain the trust of their subordinates:

> For we must not suppose that it was from superstition that Lycurgus continually consulted the Pythian priestess in the establishment of the Lacedaemonian constitution; nor that Publius [Scipio] depended on dreams and ominous words for his success in securing empire for his country. But…both saw that the majority of mankind cannot be got to accept contentedly what is new and strange, nor to face dangers with courage, without some hope of divine favor.[24]

Scipio, before his joint land and maritime seizure of New Carthage, inspired his men by relating to them not only the minute details of his plan, but a dream he had had whereby Neptune offered to provide his support. Polybius writes: "The skillful mixture in this speech of accurate calculation…and a reference to Divine Providence, created a great impression and enthusiasm in the minds of the young solders."[25]

Despite Polybius' skepticism, other ancient sources took commanders' beliefs in portents, omens, dreams, and pre-battle auspices at face value. Plutarch tells us that Paullus, before the Battle of Pydna, sacrificed eleven cows and twenty-one oxen to Hercules before receiving favorable omens. Interestingly, he made these sacrifices in response to a lunar eclipse, despite having an ostensible scientific understanding of that phenomenon.[26] Both Livy and Frontinus state that Gaius Sulpicius Gallus, one of Paullus' tribunes, had predicted the lunar eclipse and explained the phenomenon to the men beforehand, so they would not perceive it as a bad omen.[27] Likewise, Marius calmed the restlessness of his soldiers by telling them it was not his lack of faith in their abilities that forced him to delay battle with the Teutones, but his desire to wait for the manifestation of a favorable prophecy.[28] In 16 AD, both a dream and favorable auspices en-

couraged Germanicus to conduct battle against Arminius. Tacitus signals Germanicus used these portents in a speech to gain commitment from his officers and men.[29]

Whether commanders themselves were true believers is almost irrelevant in this context. Enough evidence exists to suggest that many soldiers themselves indeed took rites and portents very seriously, and commanders generally understood that any action they took contrary to religious ritual risked losing the faith of their army.[30] As John Najemy notes, this notion finds its roots in a story recounted by Livy regarding the Roman consul Lucius Papirius during a campaign against the Samnites. Papirius, with his army well positioned and eager for battle, ordered his augury-taker to divine the will of the gods, but the auspices continued to return unfavorable. The augur, knowing Papirius' army was clamoring for battle, lied about the outcome of the auspices, claiming they were indeed favorable—a fact coming to Papirius' attention only shortly after. Papirius decided to go ahead with the battle anyway, but quickly discovered that rumors of the scandal had circulated throughout his army, threatening to undermine his own credibility as commander. Papirius solved the issue by sending the augurs to the front, where a Roman javelin "accidently" struck and killed their chief. To Paprius' benefit, this had the effect of cleansing the army and reinstating divine goodwill, allowing the army to function properly and achieve victory.[31]

Papirius' story illuminates how command leadership, religion, and the soldiery intersect—a topic covered by the authors of the extant military texts. Frontinus devotes an entire chapter on how commanders could "dispel the fears inspired in soldiers by adverse omens."[32] Onasander informs his readers that generals should take the auspices before every battle, and that a general should "summon all his officers to inspect the offerings, that, after seeing, they may tell the soldiers to be of good courage." Perhaps more importantly, and as evidenced by excerpts in the sources, Onasander argues favorable auspices were important because the soldiers themselves were "on alert, every man, [watching] closely for omens of sight and sound."[33] Thus, we have two important principles at play for the Roman commander. First, he should publicize favorable omens and indications of divine backing to the largest extent possible, by inviting witnesses and soldiers to observe and disseminate positive interpretations. Second, he should be weary of and take steps to mitigate instances of unfavorable omens. Failure to do either could result in the deployment of a less confident—therefore, less capable—army.

Several examples reveal the extent soldiers were "on alert" for omens. In 46 BC, during the battle of Thapsus, Caesar found himself unable to check a formation of his men from acting on what they perceived as a sign from the gods that victory was assured.[34] Prior, when Caesar slipped and fell to the earth after disembarking at Africa, Caesar quickly contorted the event into a positive one by exclaiming before his men: "I've got you, Africa."[35] Scipio, according to Frontinus, did something similar upon reaching Africa. When he fell, Scipio noticed his soldiers were aghast by the omen, so he sought to turn the moment into one of encouragement by stating: "Congratulate me, my men! I have hit Africa hard."[36] When a Gallic charge frightened Marcellus' horse, causing it to wheel about, the general pretended the move was a deliberate one and feigned prayer to the sun, preventing his men from perceiving the event as inauspicious.[37] Crassus, too, attempted to turn fell omens, but with less success. Plutarch has Crassus accidently drop the viscera—the animal's entrails—after a sacrificial ritual. Knowing the sign was a bad one, Crassus meekly responded to his distressed soldiers: "Such is old age; but no weapon, you may be sure, shall fall from its hands."[38] Like Papirius' army after discovering the fraudulence behind their own auspices, the reactions of Caesar's, Scipio's, and Crassus' men illustrate the reality behind Onasander's words: that a typical legionary not only maintained awareness of auspices, omens and portents, but his battlefield faith could be genuinely shaken by their outcome.[39]

Beyond augury rituals and interpreting omens, commanders wielding *auspicia* could perform a *lustratio* ceremony on their armies. The *lustratio* was a purifying ritual, usually involving animal sacrifice, intended to cleanse an individual, army, or city of spiritual malice. Onasander insists generals should conduct the ceremony before leading their armies out to battle.[40] It is difficult to determine exactly how much the *lustratio* cultivated intra-army trust, but some evidence indicates it was important.[41] Caesar, for instance, records his conduct of the *lustratio* on two occasions. The first occurs in 50 B.C., upon the conclusion of his pacification of Gaul, when rumors increasingly indicated Caesar's political enemies were maneuvering against him and attempting to turn his chief lieutenant, Labienus, to their side. Caesar writes that he gathered his legions, conducted the ritual, and appointed Labienus in charge of Cisalpine Gaul.[42] Strauss and Raaflaub argue, compellingly, that Caesar used the ceremony to tie his soldiers (and likely, Labienus) even more closely to himself, knowing he would soon "need them for a very different purpose,"—that is, to march across the Rubicon and initiate civil war.[43] The second occasion involves

Caesar's use of the ceremony before seeking decisive battle against Metellus Scipio in 46 BC. The author emphasizes Caesar's anxiety regarding his soldiers' inexperience fighting against non-Gallic armies, and the efforts he took to familiarize his soldiers with their current enemy.[44] His use of the ceremony may have been an additional effort to further enhance his soldiers fighting spirit and their faith in his and their own abilities.

The fact that some of the brightest minds of the time repeatedly commented on how influential religious rites were to soldiers and officers indicates there was a large degree of truth to this idea. Goldsworthy does point out that legionaries seemingly fought just as well in instances where a lack of time—caused by a surprise attack or ambush—precluded the opportunity for proper rites.[45] But these instances should be viewed in context, where legionaries and officers were motivated by a sense of shock and communal fear to work together to survive. These instances differ drastically from the alternative, relatively formal process of slowly drawing up the lines and facing the opposing force for pitched battle.

Though it may be impossible to determine the exact extent religious ritual fostered trust, it appears most commanders indeed viewed it as a critical component to battlefield performance. Like oaths, favorable omens and the notion of divine backing likely had the effect of inflating legionary confidence and subordinate initiative—two factors paramount to Rome's way of war. Even if a commander himself did not believe in the gods or divine intervention, it was beneficial for him to *appear* like he did.

Deliberative Rhetoric

The use of deliberative rhetoric, primarily in the form of battlefield orations, offered generals an additional opportunity to strengthen mutual trust.[46] Traditionally, pre-battle speeches are depicted as little more than tools generals used to excite their men to battle and to steel their nerves before imminent danger.[47] This characterization is reflected in the work of Onasander, who suggests a general's words can "awake in the soul" men's readiness for conflict.[48] It overlooks an important subtlety that goes beyond the mere stimulation of pugnacious spirit: battlefield speeches were a tool uniquely designed to foster a level of confidence between legionary and general. They were an act of oratory, intended to convince an army of the general's tactical competence, his generosity, the affection he had for his soldiers, and his role as administrator of rewards, pay, and promotions. As such, effective speech could bind an army closer to a general and could help to reduce an army's collective sense of self-doubt, uncertainty, or skepticism before, during, or after battle.

As an act of oratory, battlefield speeches were subject to the principles of classical rhetoric—a massive topic with much outside the scope of this manuscript. Greco-Roman thought divided rhetorical oratory into three primary categories: demonstrative (epideictic), judicial, and deliberative. Where demonstrative primarily deals with commemorating an individual, and where judicial deals with courtroom accusations or defenses, deliberative deals with matters of policy—that is, arguing before an assembly the merits of adopting a certain course of action.[49] It is under the deliberative category that a general's battlefield speech falls.[50] To fully extract the collective fighting power from his army, to establish an environment conducive to subordinate initiative and maneuver, a general must convince his legionaries and subordinate officers of their own superior abilities, the soundness of the overall plan, and the high likelihood of victory. Quintilian notes how an effective use of eloquent oratory can help remove historic barriers to soldierly performance:

> Again, will not this same man…if in time of war he be called upon to inspire his soldiers with courage for the fray, draw for his eloquence on the innermost precepts of philosophy? For how can men who stand upon the verge of battle banish all the crowding fears of hardship, pain and death from their minds, unless those fears be replaced by the sense of the duty that they owe their country, by courage and the lively image of a soldier's honor?[51]

Much like convincing an assembly to adopt a political plan, Quintilian describes here a general's use of deliberative oratory to unify his soldiers' sense of collective purpose—by appealing to the cultural precepts of soldierly *virtus,* honor, and duty.

It would be difficult to overstate the significance of oratory and rhetoric in Roman political life. By the Late Republic, an education in Rome meant an education centered almost entirely on Greek and Latin grammar and rhetoric with the principal output of establishing a foundation of knowledge conducive for future careers in legal, administrative, or military capacities.[52] While the technical details of these fields could vary significantly, they all had in common the requirement of public leadership. And leadership, in the minds of most Romans, was inseparable from rhetoric and the ability to persuade others to action.[53]

Importantly, a firm training in rhetorical principles served the dual purpose of not only boosting the confidence of those whom a leader wished to influence, but also the confidence of the orator himself. Antho-

ny Zupancic argues the educational regimen Roman students underwent, constructed and reinforced through the continuous practice of rhetorical exercises, directly translated to a student's eventual "unquestioning belief in the self,"—and, accordingly, the confidence he would need to command in battle.[54] An ability to successfully analyze a cause, formulate a coherent argumentative plan, arrange pertinent evidence, anticipate an opponent's countermoves, and deliver a speech with clarity and eloquence strikes some formulaic resemblance to organizing for and conducting battle. Zupancic notes that even the common name for "school" had both military and educational connotations: where combatants trained for combat in a *ludus,* students studied rhetoric at a *ludus dicendi.*[55]

A student's routine success at rhetorical exercises would have undoubtedly inflated his sense of cognitive ability, thus his confidence—a fact to which both Aristotle and Quintilian point.[56] Indeed, Cicero suggests such a connection between rhetoric and faculty of mind, stating the former "gives verbal expression to the thoughts and purposes of the mind in such a manner as to have the power of driving hearers forward in any direction in which it has applied its weight."[57]

Perhaps the most important subcomponent of a general's battlefield speech was his *exordium,* or exhortation. The *exordium* was the introductory statements an orator made to first earn the goodwill of his listeners—to render them "well disposed towards the speaker, attentive, and willing to receive information."[58] In order to achieve goodwill, Cicero tells us an effective *exordium* should dwell on: (1) the speaker's own honorable character and his previous services to the state, (2) the opponent's faults or malignant activities, and (3) the gravity of the cause at stake.[59] Beyond grabbing the attention of the listeners, these three topics would also enhance the speaker's perceived credibility (i.e., his ethos) and therefore the merits of his opinion (i.e., logos). Quintilian suggests this credibility carried enormous weight in deliberative speeches, "For he, who would have all men trust his judgement as to what is expedient and honorable, should both possess and be regarded as possessing genuine wisdom and excellence of character."[60] In other words, an *exordium* was a deliberate rhetorical device employed to reinforce trust between listener and speaker.

To foster trust through deliberative oratory, generals routinely employed some combination of the three rhetorical proofs outlined by Aristotle centuries earlier: (1) *ethos,* an appeal to the credibility and character of the speaker, (2) *pathos,* to the emotions of the audience, and (3) *logos,* to the logic of the argument itself.[61] Using these three proofs, a general's

exhortation could incite martial courage, dissuade dissent, and gain commitment from his men.

Regarding *ethos,* a general could establish his credibility by pointing out to his men his own tactical genius. This could have the effect of making soldiers more willing to obey their commander's orders, believing his decisions and directives to be wise ones. Recall that, doctrinally, mutual trust develops best when soldiers have faith in their commander's competence, much like commanders are more willing to assume risk if they have faith in their soldiers' abilities. A Roman general's primary contribution to the battle was his advantageous setting of conditions leading up to the fight—afterwards, it was principally up to his men. If a general could display that he adequately upheld (or historically upholds) his end of the deal, his soldiers might be more willing to uphold theirs. Before attacking the Treveri, Labienus told his men that the enemy had been outmaneuvered onto unfavorable terrain.[62] Caesar, after his defeat at Gergovia, harangued his subordinate officers and men for maneuvering onto unfavorable ground, and noted his own refusal to do so, even if victory was virtually certain.[63] Curio, in a speech to his near-treacherous soldiers in Utica, turned their spirits by noting both his own and Caesar's historic battlefield achievements.[64] Likewise, Pompey, on the eve of civil war, earned the trust of his nervous army by pointing out the fact that he had never been vanquished in battle.[65]

Beyond tactical brilliance, a general could establish his *ethos* by eluding to his own *virtus* and his willingness to endure danger and hardship alongside his men.[66] This method harkens back to Alexander the Great, who employed this rhetorical device in a speech given to his mutinous troops at Opis. After stating that he ate the same food as his soldiers (and slept even less than them), Alexander purportedly declared: "Does any man among you honestly feel that he has suffered more for me than I have suffered for him? Come now—if you are wounded, strip and show your wounds, and I will show mine. There is no part of my body but my back which has not a scar."[67] Perhaps no other general established his *ethos* in this way better than the soldier-general Marius. Before an assembly of prospective enlistees, Marius contrasted how he earned the consulship with those undeserving, nepotistic aristocrats before him:

> I cannot justify your confidence by bringing forth the portraits or triumphs or consulships of my ancestors; but, if circumstances demand, I can bring forth spears, a banner, medallions, other military honors, and in addition the scars on the front of my body. These are my family portraits, my nobility, not an inheri-

tance bequeathed to me, as theirs is, but won by my own many labors and dangers.[68]

Keeping in line with the elements of a proper *exordium,* after cementing his own *ethos,* Marius concluded his speech by condemning the corruption and greed of his opponents and emphasizing the seriousness of the cause.

A general's use of *pathos* could likewise earn the trust of his subordinates. A theme routinely communicated in battlefield orations is the idea that the general's hand had been forced, and that he had little recourse but to subject his soldiers to battle. A policy of displacing blame for his soldiers' forthcoming hardship allowed the commander to present himself not only as a common victim alongside his men, but as a concerned guardian—one who reluctantly shouldered the unfortunate task of exposing his men to inevitable pain and suffering. Caesar did this well during the 52 BC siege of Avaricum. Caesar wrote that he approached his legions one at a time and told them that "he would abandon the siege if it was too painful for them to endure the shortage of food." Unwilling to suffer the disgrace of abandoning the effort, his men begged him not to end it.[69] Likewise, Plutarch has Antony dramatically pray to the gods before an assembly of his men, "that if any retribution were to follow his former successes, it should fall on him alone, and that [the gods] should grant the rest of the army safety and victory."[70] These interactions ring of almost parental obligation, where legionaries are encouraged to trust that their general cared deeply for them, and that any trouble that should befall them was either outside of their commander's control or borne from dire necessity.[71]

Onasander, in fact, explicitly advises commanders to approach their pre-battle orations in such fashion. He writes that a general should vocally communicate the idea that he was going to battle "not by his own preference," but out of necessity, and that "he has not failed to consider the dangers that fall to the lot of combatants."[72] Again, Caesar provides an almost exact replication of Onasander's model. On the eve of the battle of Pharsalus, 48 BC, Caesar spoke at length before his assembled army regarding the steps he fruitlessly took to secure peace with Pompey to avoid war. "He had never wished to waste soldiers' blood," Caesar declared, "or deprive the state of the army fighting on either side."[73] He did this again later in the civil war, preaching before his assembled soldiers that, "he ought to be considered guilty of the utmost injustice if he did not hold their life dearer than his personal safety."[74]

If emotional displays of affection failed to move some particularly skeptical soldiers, as must have occurred in many cases, then a more concrete, transactional approach—invoking the *logos* of the speech—could be used to garner trust. Generals habitually interwove the possibilities of rewards, in the form of spoils, glory, and promotion, before their men.[75] Importantly, a general made certain their soldiers understood these gifts were from, above all, himself—this was a quid pro quo relationship, contingent on a reciprocation of trust that the soldiers would fight, and the general would reward them for it. Again, we see Alexander employ this at Opis, where he chastises his men for refusing to fight, despite his making them rich: "You are masters of the gold of Lydia, the treasures of Persia, the wealth of India. From all this which I have labored to win for you, what is left for myself except the purple and this crown?"[76]

Caesar, a supposed reader of Alexander's exploits, demonstrates a similar willingness to exhort the promises of rewards in return for their loyalty.[77] While embarked at Brundisium, Caesar told his men to think nothing of leaving their possessions and slaves behind so that more men could fit on the ships. Instead of concerning themselves with their abandoned goods, he suggested, "They should place all their hopes in victory and in Caesar's generosity."[78] Similarly, Domitius Ahenobarbus, preparing to defend against Caesar's armies at Cornifium, promised his soldiers parcels of land taken from his own personal estates to cement their loyalty.[79]

Titus, upon conclusion of the Jewish wars, illuminates an example of such an arrangement. Josephus relates that Titus had a large platform built in the center of the camp, and in a grandiose display before his entire army he presented the men "who had distinguished themselves in the fight with more than usual vigor" with silver spears, gold crowns, spoils of war, and promotions.[80] In this case, not only does Titus uphold his end of the transaction, but he further solidifies his *ethos* by serving as an exemplar of the upright Roman commander who heaps praise, glory, and promotions on his particularly courageous soldiers.

An appeal to *logos* during battlefield orations also included a general's ability to articulate exactly why victory was certain. This often included an exhortation of the various resources, stratagems, or virtues his side possessed over the enemy's. Before an assembly of his officers, Caesar argued why his men should stop fretting about going to war with the Germans: "These Germans were the same soldiers that the Helvetii had often met in battle and usually defeated…yet these Helvetii themselves had not proved a match for our army." He continued, stating that not only had

previous Roman generals defeated German threats, but the Romans themselves had recently defeated a slave rebellion comprised of men trained and equipped in the superior Roman fashion.[81] Scipio, too, leveraged *logos* in a speech to his men before assaulting New Carthage, pointing out the details of his plan and its feasibility.[82] An appeal to *logos* could also include highlighting the weaknesses of the enemy—ones the general intends to exploit. For instance, Vegetius tells future generals to increase the confidence of the soldiers by pointing out to them "the cowardice and mistakes of their opponents, and [to] remind them of any occasion on which they have been beaten by [the Romans] in the past."[83]

Regardless of exactly how a general employed *logos* in his speech, the point of appealing to logic was to cognitively free his soldiers' minds from either the anxiety or the doubt they may have had about the outcome of the battle. This mental unshackling allowed soldiers and subordinate officers to instinctively trust in the higher plan and execute their assigned tasks with unobstructed determination. Indeed, Pompey, promising an easy victory to his officers before the battle of Pharsalus, explicitly stated: "I know that I promise a thing almost incredible; but hear the logic of my plan, so that you may march to battle with more confidence and resolution." After explaining his plan, Pompey's officers extolled his genius and a round of oaths followed to solidify the group.[84]

Overall, the development of mutual trust, as modern doctrine points out, is a personal affair requiring a significant degree of interaction between the leader and the led, an indication that the leader cares about the led, and a level of shared experience between the two. Roman generals understood that these instances of public speech were an important way to capitalize on an opportunity to further cement their bond with their men.

Conclusion

Roman military leaders took relatively significant steps to foster trust within their armies. It seems disingenuous to presume these efforts were merely an attempt to counter the natural forces breaking armies apart—for instance, the threat of mass desertion, mutiny, or defection. While oaths, religion, and rhetoric were indeed tools used to prevent disintegration of the army at critical moments, they were paramount for the army to operate as it was designed to function: as an army heavily reliant on subordinate disciplined initiative, risk acceptance, and open-ended mission orders. The institutionalization of these trust mechanisms helped achieve this end, by supplying soldiers with the faith and clear-headedness they needed to operate semi-autonomously, and generals with the trust they needed to

loosen their grip on hierarchical control. Rome's habitual willingness to delegate operational and tactical level decision-making down to the lowest echelons, as demonstrated throughout this thesis, must have rested upon some foundation of trust.

Notes

1. HQDA, Army Doctrine Publication 6-0, 1-7.

2. Cicero explains: "religion is the term applied to the fear and worship of the gods. Pietas warns us to keep our obligations to our country or parents or other kin." Cicero, *De Inventiones,* trans. H. M. Hubbell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949), 2.66; C.f. Polybius, 6.56.

3. Dionysius of Halicarnassus posits the military *sacramentum,* of all oaths, is the one that the Romans observed most strictly. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities,* trans. Earnest Cary (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), 11.43.

4. Polybius, 6.21. For military oaths, see also Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.,* 10.18; Vegetius, *Mil.,* 2.5; Frontinus, *Strat.,* 1.4.1.

5. Cicero, *De Officiis,* trans. Walter Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913), 1.36.

6. Livy, 28.27.

7. Polybius, 6.58. Emphasis mine.

8. Appian, *The Mithridatic Wars,* trans. Horace White (New York, NY: MacMillan, 1899), 9.59.

9. Livy, 22.38. See Louis Rawlings, "Army and Battle During the Conquest of Italy," in *A Companion to the Roman Army,* Paul Erdkamp, ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2011), 51.

10. Rawlings, 57-8.

11. Livy, 22.38; Frontinus, *Strat.,* 1.4.1.

12. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.,* 11.43.

13 Polybius, 6.33, 6.37.

14. Plutarch, *Sull.,* 27.

15. Caesar, *B.C.,* 3.13.

16. Southern, 134.

17. Caesar, *B.C.,* 1.76.

18. Polybius, 11.30; Caesar, B.C., 1.23, 2.18, 2.28, 3.102; Tacitus, *Ann.,* 1.37; Plutarch, *Otho,* 13; *Galba,* 10, 22, 28; Josephus, *B.J.,* 4.617-621.

19. See Oliver Stoll, "The Religions of the Armies," in *A Companion to the Roman Army,* Paul Erdkamp, ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2011), 451-475; Goldsworthy, *The Complete Roman Army,* 108-113. For information on the imperial cult see Lintott, 175-194.

20. Stoll, 451.

21. Polybius, 6.56. Though Polybius uses the word "superstition" in this passage, the context of his message here indicates that he is referring to the concept of religion in its entirety. Plutarch corroborates such a level of cultural piety: "To such a degree did the Romans make everything depend upon the will of the gods, and so intolerant were they of any neglect of omens and ancestral rites, even when attended by the greatest successes, considering it of more importance

for the safety of the city that their magistrates should reverence religion than that they should overcome their enemies." Plutarch, *Marc.,* 4.

22. Rosenstein, 142.

23. Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War,* 149.

24. Polybius, 10.2.

25. Polybius, 10.11.

26. Plutarch, *Aem.,* 17.

27. Livy, 44.37; Frontinus, *Strat.,* 1.12.

28. Plutarch, *Mar.,* 17.

29. Tacitus, *Ann.,* 2.14.

30. See John M. Najemy, "Papirius and the Chickens, or Machiavelli on the Necessity of Interpreting Religion," *Journal of the History of Ideas 60,* no. 4 (October 1999): 659-681.

31. Najemy, 675-6; Livy, 10.40.

32. Frontinus, *Strat.,* 1.12.

33. Onasander, *Strat.,* 10.10. C.f. 4.5.

34. Caesar, *African War,* 82.

35. Sallust, *Caes.,* 59. Frontinus claims Caesar exclaimed: "I hold thee fast, Mother Earth." Frontinus, *Strat.,* 1.12.

36. Frontinus, *Strat.,* 1.12

37. Plutarch, *Marc.,* 6.

38. Plutarch, *Crass.,* 19.6.

39. In a recent study on courage in the Roman army, Coulston notes that modern scholars generally agree religious practices in the imperial army were not directed by the emperor or high command in an overtly centralized manner but were instead developed "from the bottom up." He bases this argument on the prevalence of evidence revealing soldiers' personal ritual practices and votive offerings. It would make sense this "bottom up" martial religiosity had antecedents during the Republic, as evinced by evidence found in both anecdotal and theoretical military manuals. Jon Coulston, "Courage and Cowardice in the Roman Imperial Army," *War in History* 20, no. 1 (January 2013): 14-5.

40. Onasander, *Strat.,* 5.1.

41. At least three scenes on Trajan's Column (8, 53, 103) depict the *suovetaurilia*—the sacrifice often associated with the *lustratio*—indicating the importance of the practice survived at least through the second century A.D.

42. Caesar, *B.G.,* 8.52.

43. Kurt A. Raaflaub and Robert B. Strassler, eds., *The Landmark Julius Caesar* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 2017), 304.

44. Caesar, *B. Afr.,* 72-75.

45. Goldsworthy, 149.

46. Pre-battle orations have fallen under scrutiny over the last century. Were they conducted the way the ancient sources describe? Are records of them for the most part fictional literary devices? Was it even physically possible to address an entire assembled army without modern sound-amplification devices? For this thesis, I subscribe to the arguments posited by Anson, who suggests that

while some speeches may have been expanded or invented, these adjustments were based on the reality of pre-battle speeches or exhortations, and that generals had options available to them to personally address even particularly large armies. Edward Anson, "The General's Pre-Battle Exhortation in Graeco-Roman Warfare," *Greece and Rome* 57, no 2. (October 2010): 318.

47. C.f. Goldsworthy, 146.

48. Onasander, *Strat.,* 1.13.

49. Cicero, *De Inventione,* 1.5.

50. George Alexander Kennedy, *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World: 300 BC-AD 300* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1972), 18.

51. Quintilian, *De Institutione Oratoria,* H. E. Butler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1922), https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/
Quintilian/Institutio_Oratoria/home.html, 12.1.28.

52. Anthony Edward Zupancic, "Military Virtue in Roman Rhetorical Education," (Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, 2015), 76. https://trace.tennessee.edu/cgi/
viewcontent.cgi?article=4827&context=utk_graddiss.

53. Zupancic, 178.

54. Zupancic, 190.

55. Zupancic, 74-5.

56. Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse,* trans. George A. Kennedy (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991), 2.16-20; Quintilian, *De Institutione Oratoria,* 12.5.2.

57. Cicero, *De Oratore,* trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942), 3.14.55.

58. Cicero, *De Inventione,* 1.15.

59. Cicero, *De Inventione,* 1.16.

60. Quintilian, *De Institutione Oratoria,* 3.8.13.

61. Aristotle, *On Rhetoric,* 1.2-6.

62. Caesar, *B.G.,* 6.8.

63. Caesar, *B.G.,* 7.52.

64. Caesar, *B.C.,* 2.32. C.f., *B.C.,* 3.73, 3.80.

65. Appian, *The Civil Wars,* trans. Horace White (New York, NY: MacMillan, 1899), 2.50-51.

66. C.f. Livy, 45.39.

67. Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander,* trans. Aubrey de Sélincourt (New York, NY: Dorset Press, 1958), 7.10; C.f. Maurice, *Strat.,* preface. Maurice recommends a general's "food and clothing should be plain and simple."

68. Sallust, *Jug.,* 85.29-30. Goldsworthy notes Marius' words here are the words of Sallust, and could have been invention of the latter, but they "may well be a genuine reflection of Marius' tone and attitude in 107." Goldsworthy, *In the Name of Rome,* 135.

69. Caesar, *B.G.,* 7.17.

70. Plutarch, *Ant.,* 44.

71. C.f., Maurice advises generals to "display fatherly affection" towards their soldiers. Maurice, *Strat.* 8.3.

72. Onasander, *Strat.,* 4.3.

73. Caesar, *B.C.,* 3.90.

74. Caesar, *B.C.,* 7.17.

75. For example, see Caesar, *BC,* 1.7, 3.6. C.f., Maurice, *Strat.,* 7.4.

76. Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander,* 7.9.

77. Plutarch, *Caes.,* 11.

78. Caesar, *B.C.,* 3.6.

79. Caesar, *B.C.,* 1.17.

80. Josephus, *B.J.,* 7.6-15.

81. Caesar, *B.G.,* 1.40.

82. Polybius, 10.11.

83. Vegetius, *Mil.,* 3.12.

84. Caesar, *B.C.,* 3.86-87.

Chapter 5
Conclusion

> There is no better corrective of human behavior than knowledge of past events.
>
> —Polybius, *The Histories*

It is fashionable among officers and students of military history to portray modern Western armies as predominantly the descendants of nineteenth century Prusso-German military thought. The theories and principles trumpeted by Carl von Clausewitz, Gerhard von Scarnhorst, August Neidhardt von Gneisenau, and Helmuth von Moltke fill the bookshelves and curricula of modern service academies and war colleges. Scholars credit these thinkers with developing the general staff system, professional military education, and a meritocratic officer promotion system. They are exalted for envisioning concepts like centers of gravity, decisive points, operational force concentration, and strategic envelopment. Perhaps no concept receives more attention and attribution to Prusso-German thought than the idea of mission command.[1]

Whether by mission command we mean the more precise term of *'Auftragstaktik'* or its anglicized cousins 'mission orders,' 'mission-type tactics,' or 'command by directive' matters little. What does matter is the fact that many modern scholars see mission command as a distinctly Prusso-German intellectual development. Isabel Hull calls *Auftragstaktik* a "unique hallmark of the German army," and one that contributed substantially to the German army's singular effectiveness.[2] Daniel J. Hughes claims "there is no doubt that much of modern military theory bears the mark of the Prusso-German [command] system."[3] Geoffrey Megargee refers to mission command as a "uniquely German principle of command."[4] And, more recently, Donald E. Vandergriff simply refers to mission command as a "Prussian/German concept."[5] All of these authors agree that nineteenth through early-twentieth century Germany, with its offensive-mindedness and its perceived need to remain highly adaptable during the exigencies of war, developed a command system that empowered the lowest echelon leaders with the widest possible latitude to act under the confines of a broader mission.

Throughout this manuscript, I have attempted to counter this narrative by drawing on primary source military treatises and campaign narratives to illustrate how Republican and early Imperial Rome exercised a command system positively similar to the one developed by the German

Army (and later adopted by the US Army). Like Germany, Rome's way of war rested on the fundamental belief of seizing the initiative at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of war. This belief, coupled with the twin obstacles of expansive distances and the limitations of pre-radio communications, contributed to Rome's willingness to execute operations in a uniquely decentralized manner. It organized its legions into numerous, semi-autonomous and therefore highly responsive subunit formations, dispersed with the physical space they needed to maneuver freely. Leading these formations was an officer corps comprised of centurions and tribunes promoted primarily on account of their demonstrated history of making unilateral, calculated, and bold combat decisions. Campaigning generals enjoyed a similar level of operational latitude, empowered by the senate or emperor with the authority they required to execute operations in a rapid manner. Rome's way of war called for disciplined initiative from the lowest legionary to the highest general. It offset the risks associated with such subordinate autonomy by promoting the most competent of its officers.

Also like the Germans, Rome placed a premium on shared understanding and the issuing of broad, purpose-oriented mission orders. It achieved this primarily through its use of the military *consilium,* where commanders and staffs discussed pertinent intelligence reports, deliberated on courses of action, and finalized plans. The limitations of long-distance communications ensured commanders' orders were inherently flexible, allowing subordinate commanders to react to unforeseen friction without first seeking approval. Moreover, subordinate commanders communicated these orders down to the lowest ranks through an iterative process at each echelon, so that each subsection of the army understood its piece of the larger operation. Bounding the entire process was a commander's communicated intent—those facets of the operation he deemed most important for all members to understand. While certain highly synchronized operations called for more prescriptive orders, the Romans tended to favor a loosening of the reigns as often as often as possible.

Lastly, the Romans understood the crux of their decentralized command system centered on a significant degree of two-way trust. Generals could capitalize on decentralized operations only if they had confidence in their soldiers' capabilities, competence, and loyalty. Likewise, legionaries were only willing to take risky, bold actions if they felt their general was intelligent, tactically-savvy, and would reward them for their efforts. The Romans institutionalized this two-way trust through various means, but perhaps the most visible ones involved their use of oaths, religion, and pre-battle exhortations. Public displays of pledges, rituals, and delibera-

tive rhetoric ensured both legionary and general understood the other was committed and willing to execute his share of the task. Without first establishing this level of trust, the organization could not function properly, and time and time again military activities came to a grinding halt.

Determining whether it was the Romans or the Prussians who first developed the root principles underpinning mission command is more than just pedantic historical banter. I would argue it is in fact as significant to the US Army as any ongoing debate orbiting military circles today. On the one hand, if the Prussian army genuinely invented something like *Auftragstaktik,* then this illustrates little more than an example of an institution adapting to its current environment. Clausewitz, Scarnhorst, and Moltke lived in the wake of when Napoleonic revolutionary warfare clashed with nineteenth century industrialism. Prussia's command innovation would indicate only that large, European conscript armies outfitted with late-nineteenth century firearms moving upon rail networks required a shift from existing models of command and control. It would suggest modern military leaders could and should replace mission command once it inevitably falls into irrelevancy. On the other hand, if the Romans indeed operated using a mission command construct, then this reveals an approach to command and control as timeless as other principles of war. It suggests the foundational ideas behind mission command are, and probably always have been, an integral part of the nature of wartime leadership—not just a command expedient applicable only to certain environmental conditions. The longevity of the practice, surviving at least two thousand years of evolving warfare, would testify to its fundamental nature. It would be a positive indication that any modern military that continues to apply mission command is acting in accordance with nature and is on the correct path.

The implications of this discussion are especially important considering how powerful a force the information age has been on morphing the character of modern war. The advent of long-range precision fires, real-time intelligence sharing, cyber effects, and truly joint, multi-domain operations has many observers raising red flags about the wisdom of defaulting to a method of command that favors decentralized operations. In an environment where one wrong move could undo a highly synchronized operation (and subsequently result in the rapid annihilation of an entire combat formation), one wonders whether mission command has a place in modern combat. Conrad Crane argues "the concept of mission command…appears to be impractical for the synchronization required against a competent and capable near-peer."[6] Likewise, Amos Fox argues that the

conditions allowing for the concept of *Auftragstaktik* to "develop organically" in the German army are different from both the globe's current operational environment and America's tech-centric way of war.[7] Fox is correct in asserting the technological and cultural differences between twenty-first century America and twentieth-century Germany, but these differences also certainly existed between twentieth-century Germany and first-century Rome. Yet, both Germany and Rome identified the need for and capitalized on a similar method of decentralized command and control.

As different as modern combat may appear to be from that of our ancestors, we should remember that there will always exist principles that transcend time. Despite living two thousand years apart, both Caesar and Moltke would appreciate the inherent power behind concepts like mass, surprise, simplicity, and economy of force. Mission command would appear to be a similarly timeless principle. Victorious armies will almost always be the ones that can exploit opportunities and react to threats faster than their opponents. And the surest way to attain this quality is to empower subordinate formations with as much flexibility and decision-making authority as possible. If the US Army succumbs to the false perception that times now are so radically different from the past two millennia, and subsequently chooses to curtail its privileging of decentralized operations, it will likely suffer early disasters in its next big war as a result.

To my knowledge, no other scholarship exists examining the degree to which other premodern armies employed a command system akin to mission command. Research on this topic may shed additional light on the longevity and potentially widespread use of practice. In the West, an examination of the military command philosophies of the Late Roman and Holy Roman Empires could reveal continuities bridging the time between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Of particular interest may be how the Late Roman Empire evolved its command systems in response to an increasing reliance on foreign armies, most notably the self-led *foederati*.[8] Control of these formations likely strained perceptions of mutual trust, competence, and the willingness of the Romans to permit an appreciable degree of disciplined initiative. Perhaps just as insightful may be an examination of how command and control within 'barbarian' armies themselves evolved after centuries of contact with the Roman Empire—for instance, the Goths, Vandals, or Huns. In the Near East, the Byzantine and Sassanid Empires, along with their string of descendant empires and kingdoms, could serve a similar purpose but with the added benefit of offering a less Eurocentric perspective.

In either case, it is my belief that modern scholars and military practitioners benefit from a comprehensive understanding of the ancient roots of mission command. To place its development only in the nineteenth century is to overlook its legitimate historical legacy; to disguise its fundamental nature, therefore making it susceptible to ousting at the first sign of difficulty in its application. Like the United States, the Romans operated in a world where complexity, friction, and chaos dominated the battlefield. In response, the Romans adopted an approach to command and control that enabled their armies to seize the initiative at the earliest possible moments and maintain that initiative until their enemies were sufficiently subdued. As insulting as it may be to modern sensibilities, the US Army's way of war is not too dissimilar to that of the Romans. It is highly offensive, initiative-oriented, and focused on the annihilation of its adversaries. It calls for the projection of a significant level combat power to faraway places against differing enemies under varying conditions. In short, it calls for a command model that privileges subordinate initiative, flexibility, and adaptability.

Notes

1. For example, see Robert M. Citino, *The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years' War to the Third Reich* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2003); Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); Daniel J. Hughes, ed., *Moltke on the Art of War: Selected Writings* (New York, NY: Random House, 1993); Geoffrey P. Megargee, *Inside Hitler's High Command* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000); Donald E. Vandergriff, *Adopting Mission Command: Developing Leaders for a Superior Command Culture* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2019).

2. Hull, 116.

3. Hughes, 19.

4. Megargee, 8-9.

5. Vandergriff, 18.

6. Conrad Crane, "Mission Command and Multi-Domain Battle Don't Mix," *War on the Rocks,* 23 August 2017, https://warontherocks.com/2017/08/mission-command-and-multi-domain-battle-dont-mix/.

7. Amos C. Fox, "Cutting Our Feet to Fit the Shoes: An Analysis of Mission Command in the U.S. Army," *Military Review* 97 (January-February 2017): 52.

8. A foedus was a treaty between Rome and another state. The foederati were those peoples bound by this treaty and who were often compelled under its terms to provide military forces for Rome's use. Hornblower, et al., 582.

Appendix A
Occurances of Staff and Subordinate Commander Deliberations in Military *Consilia,* 218 B.C.-A.D. 70

Author, Work	Ref.	Conflict	Consilium Description	Explicit evidence of sub. input or debate?	If not implied?	Consilium explicitly referenced?
Polybius, *Hist.*	3.41	Scipio's expedition to Iberia, 218 B.C.	P. Cornelius Scipio calls in tribunes to discuss with them which sites have the best potential for engaging the enemy.	Yes		No
	3.82	Battle of Trasimene, 217 B.C.	Advisors implore Gaius Flaminius to not attack Hannibal until the reinforcing army arrives. Flaminius disregards the advice and attacks anyway.	Yes		No
	8.9	Siege of Syracuse, 213 B.C.	Appius Claudius Pulcher summons his council to discuss how they should seize Syracuse. He decides to try every means possible aside from a direct assault.	No	Yes	Yes
	14.2	Second Punic War, Utica, 203 B.C.	Scipio Africanus sends envoys to inform Syphax that he desired peace, but that his own council disagreed with the idea. (This is a ruse.)	Yes		Yes
	14.9	Battle of Great Plains 203 B.C.	After his victory on the Great Plains, Scipio Africanus summons a council of war to consult as to what to do next.	Yes		Yes
	21.14	Roman-Seleucid War, 190 B.C.	Scipio Asiaticus' council hears out Antiochus' envoy who calls for peace. The council discusses what the peace terms should be.	No	Yes	Yes
	21.16	Roman-Seleucid War, Battle of Magnesia, 190 B.C.	Antiochus' envoy asks Scipio's council what peace terms they demand. Council had previously "discussed and agreed upon this point."	Yes		Yes
	27.8	Third Macedonian War, Battle of Callinicus, 171 B.C	Perseus extends peace terms. Licinius Crassus and his council "deliberated on the proposition" and decide on their response.	Yes		Yes
Livy, *Hist.*	22.3	Second Punic War, Battle of Trasimene, 217 B.C.	Gaius Flaminius' council advises for him to wait for the reinforcing army to arrive before attacking Hannibal. (C.f., Polyb., 3.82)	Yes		Yes
	24.45	Second Punic War, Capture of Arpi, 213 B.C.	Q. Fabius' council debates on how they should respond to Dasius Altinius' (leader of the city of Arpi) offer to come back to Rome's side, after having previously switched to Hannibal's side.	Yes		Yes

Appendix A
Occurrences of Staff and Subordinate Commander Deliberations in Military *Consilia*, 218 B.C.–A.D. 70, cont.

Author, Work	Ref.	Conflict	Consilium Description	Explicit evidence of sub. input or debate?	If not implied?	Consilium explicitly referenced?
	27.20	Second Punic War, Battle of Baecula, 208 B.C.	After Scipio's victory at Baecula, some within Scipio's council advise him to pursue Hasdrubal. Scipio declines.	Yes		Yes
	27.46	Second Punic War, Battle of the Metaurus, 206 B.C.	Fearing Hannibal and Hasdrubal are soon to join armies, G. Claudius Nero rapidly marches his army to join with M. Livius' army. In council, they debate whether to delay or attack.	Yes		Yes
	30.5	Second Punic War, Battle of Utica, 203 B.C.	Scipio calls a council, asks his spies to convey information regarding Syphax's and Hasdrubal's camps, and issues orders to his subordinate commanders.	No	No	Yes
	30.36	Second Punic War, aftermath of Battle of Zama, 202 B.C.	Scipio's council debates whether they should completely destroy Carthage. Knowing how long this could take, Scipio instead sues for peace to speedily conclude the war.	Yes		Yes
	32.6	Second Macedonian War, 199 B.C.	Publius Villius Tappulus calls a council to debate whether he should force a pass through Philip's entrenched army in the mountains, or bypass and take the path Sulpicius took the year prior.	Yes		Yes
	37.5	Aetolian War, Siege of Amphissa, 190 B.C.	After seizing Lamia, M. Acilius Glabrio calls a council to decide whether the army should march on Naupactus or Amphissa. The council agrees an attack on Naupactus is not feasible.	Yes		Yes
	37.14-16	Roman-Seleucid War, before the Battle of Myonessus, 190 B.C.	L. Aemilius calls a council to determine how he should proceed against Polyxenidas. G. Livius Salinator recommends sailing to Ephesus. Epicrates argues instead for sailing to Lycia.	Yes		Yes
	37.39	Roman-Seleucid War, Battle of Magnesia, 190 B.C.	Knowing winter is approaching, Scipio Asiaticus summons a council to decide what to do if Antiochus continues to decline battle. His council recommends an attack on Antiochus' camp.	Yes		Yes
	42.57	Third Macedonian War, Battle of Callinicus, 171 B.C.	Licinius Crassus holds a council to deliberate on where to attack Perseus' army.	Yes		Yes

Appendix A
Occurrences of Staff and Subordinate Commander Deliberations in Military *Consilia*, 218 B.C.–A.D. 70, cont.

Author, Work	Ref.	Conflict	Consilium Description	Explicit evidence of sub. input or debate?	If not implied?	Consilium explicitly referenced?
	44.35	Third Macedonian War, before the Battle of Pydna, 168 B.C.	L. Aemilius Paullus holds a council to discuss how he should attack Perseus' army positioned on the river Elpeus. Some call for an immediate attack over the riverbank. Others suggest he sail his fleet to Thessalonica to compel Perseus to divide his army.	Yes		Yes
	44.37	Third Macedonian War, Battle of Pydna, 168 B.C.	Paullus scolds members of his council for failing to offer their advice to his face, instead expressing their disapproval behind his back.	No	No	Yes
Caesar, B.G.	1.40	Gallic War, near-mutiny at Vesontio, 58 B.C.	Caesar summons every officer to quell his army's growing fears about the prospect of fighting Ariovistus and the Germans.	No	No	Yes
	3.3	Gallic War, Octodurus, 57 B.C.	Galba calls a council to solicit opinions on how they should contend with the enemy suddenly occupying the high ground around his camp.	Yes		Yes
	3.23	Gallic War, Aquitania, 56 B.C.	P. Crassus, seeing his army would soon be cut off from supplies, calls a council to ascertain whether his officers agreed with an attack.	Yes		Yes
	4.23	Gallic War, First invasion of Britannia, 55 B.C.	Caesar calls in officers, tells them recent reconnaissance findings, and implores them to react to orders quickly.	No	No	No
	5.28	Gallic War, Sabinus' and Cotta's Ambush, 54 B.C.	Sabinus and Cotta call a council in response to false intelligence fed by Ambiorix forecasting an attack on the Roman camp. The officers debate whether to remain in place or evacuate the camp.	Yes		Yes
	7.45	Gallic War, Battle of Gergovia, 52 B.C.	Caesar summons his officers to give them orders regarding his planned, limited raid on an enemy camp near Gergovia.	No	No	No
	7.60	Gallic War, 52 B.C.	T. Labienus calls a council to give orders to each of his subordinate commanders for a planned withdrawal.	No	No	Yes
	8.8	Gallic War, 51 B.C.	Caesar gathers intelligence on the Bellovaci and communicates it and his orders to his council.	No	No	Yes

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Appendix A
Occurrences of Staff and Subordinate Commander Deliberations in Military *Consilia*, 218 B.C.–A.D. 70, cont.

Author, Work	Ref.	Conflict	Consilium Description	Explicit evidence of sub. input or debate?	If not implied?	Consilium explicitly referenced?
♦	1.19-20	Siege of Corfinium, 49 B.C.	Domitius, knowing Pompey was not going to relieve his besieged army, makes secret arrangements for his escape. Aware of his scheme, his officers hold a council of their own to debate options.	Yes		Yes
	1.64	Battle of Ilerda, 49 B.C.	Caesar's soldiers pressure their centurions and tribunes to convince Caesar to allow them to cross a river and attack the Pompeians. Caesar allows it and gives the appropriate orders.	Yes		No
	1.87	Battle of Ilerda, 49 B.C.	M. Petreius and L. Afranius call a council to deliberate on whether they should withdraw during daylight hours or at night.	Yes		Yes
	1.71	Battle of Ilerda, 49 B.C.	Caesar's legates, centurions, and tribunes urge him to fight a decisive battle, but Caesar decides to maintain his encirclement and starve the Pompeians into capitulation.	Yes		No
	1.73	Battle of Ilerda, 49 B.C.	Petreius, Afranius, and other officers discuss their options for how to handle Caesar's encirclement.	Yes		No
	2.30	Utica, 49 B.C.	G. Curio calls a council to debate two proposals: whether to attack Varus' camp or retire to the Cornelian camp. Curio dismisses both proposals, electing to remain in place.	Yes		Yes
	2.37	Utica, 49 B.C.	After deliberation, Curio gains the approval of his council to prepare for a long campaign against Juba.	Yes		Yes
	3.86-87	Battle of Pharsalus, 48 B.C.	Under pressure by his army to attack Caesar, Pompey calls a war council to convince his officers of the soundness of his plan.	No	Yes	Yes
Josephus, B.J.	3.161-162	Siege of Jotapata, 67 A.D.	Vespasian calls a council to discuss the means of an assault on Jotapata. They decided to build a ramp.	Yes		Yes
	4.366-377	Vespasian in Judaea, post-Galilean Campaign, 68 A.D.	Vespasian's officers press him to assault Jerusalem. Vespasian dismisses the proposal, saying it would be better to wait and let the Jews' internal dissension weaken them.	Yes		No
	6.491-501	Siege of Jerusalem, 70 A.D.	Titus' officers debate whether to assault, increase siege earthworks, or simply blockade Jerusalem. Titus elects to build a wall around the entire site.	Yes		Yes

Appendix A
Occurrences of Staff and Subordinate Commander Deliberations in Military *Consilia*, 218 B.C.–A.D. 70, cont.

Author, Work	Ref.	Conflict	Consilium Description	Explicit evidence of sub. input or debate?	If not implied?	Consilium explicitly referenced?
	6.236-243	Siege of Jerusalem, 70 A.D.	Titus calls a council to debate what should be done about the Temple. Some officers say it should be razed, others that it should be spared. Titus elects to spare it. (Josephus likely invented this story.)	Yes		Yes
Plutarch, Otho	8-9	First Battle of Bedriacum, 69 A.D.	Otho holds a council to hear recommendations on how he should proceed against the Vitellian forces near Cremona. Some officers advise an immediate attack. Others advise him to wait for reinforcements. Otho elects on an immediate attack.	Yes		Yes

Figure A.1. Occurances of Staff and Subordinate Commander Deliberations in Military Consilia, 218 BC-AD 70.
Source: Created by author.

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