Methodological Limits and the Mirage of Roman Strategy: Part I

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For Theodore Ropp *octogenarius*	*By no other means, in fact, do we see that the Roman people conquered the world except by the practice of arms, discipline of the camp, and experience of military service.* —Vegetius[1]

S IXTEEN years ago, Edward N. Luttwak sought to bridge the gap between ancient and modern strategy. In a brilliant synthesis applying the techniques of modern systems analysis to *Limesforschung*, he discerned from deployments, types of units, frontier installations, and literary sources that Roman strategic thinking passed through three distinct phases ("systems") between Augustus (31 B.C.-A.D. 14) and the early fourth century: the Julio-Claudian (temporary camps for legions prepared for offensive action within or beyond the borders and reliance on client kings as buffers), the Flavian (from A.D. 69: elimination

1. *Nulla enim alia re videmus populum Romanum orbem subegisse terrarum nisi armorum exercitio, disciplina castrorum usuque militiae: Epitoma rei militaris* 1.1. A new recension of the Latin text with an English translation (including Book IV for the first time) has recently appeared: L. F. Stelten, *Flavius Vegetius Renatus, Epitoma Rei Militaris* (New York, 1990). Throughout this paper all translations are my own. The following abbreviations will be used: *ANRW* = *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* (Berlin, 1972-); *BASOR* = *Bulletin, American School of Oriental Research*; *CAH* = *Cambridge Ancient History*; *GRBS* = *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*; *ILS* = H. Dessau, ed., *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* (Berlin, 1892-16), 3 vols. in 5; *JRS* = *Journal of Roman Studies*; *MEFAR* = *Mélanges de l'Ecole Française de Rome: Antiquité*; *ZPE* = *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*. This paper does not attempt to give an exhaustive bibliography on the Roman army or Roman frontier studies, but I have tried to include work published through spring 1992.

of client kings within Roman borders, permanent legionary camps, and a preclusive, defensive perimeter with continuous barriers in Europe against low-intensity threats), and the Late Roman (from A.D. 284: defense in depth with mobile field armies in reserve).[2] Although Luttwak reasserted some commonly accepted interpretations (e.g., the new departure of Flavian frontier policy and military reorganization under Diocletian and Constantine), he meritoriously integrated both tactical and strategic aspects of the Roman Imperial army into a coherent view of Roman policy—a task Roman historians and frontier archaeologists had generally postponed for want of more complete archaeological evidence.[3] Luttwak's Romans emerged as astute practitioners of power: they combined an economy of force maximizing limited resources with a rational strategy of defense based on deterrence.

Yet Luttwak's extreme schematization of archaeological data and his rationalization of Roman policy over four centuries seemed to presume a general staff for strategic planning and wars aimed at more defensible borders. The book waved a red flag at two distinct, though not mutually exclusive, scholarly schools: first, modern ancient historians, often suspicious of outsiders to the Classical guild and trained in a historiography recognizing only individuals and personal motives; and second, the social archaeologists, their conceptual cousins of the *Annales* school, and Marxist-inspired scholars devoted to socioeconomic interpretations. Thus reviews and reactions, though conceding Luttwak's achievement, roasted more than toasted the work and decried any "master plan" of Roman strategy—a view distorting Luttwak's actual position.[4] In some respects reaction to Luttwak recalls the German

2. *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire* (Baltimore, 1976).

3. Studies of Roman frontier policy are of course not new. For notable examples, see A. R. Birley, "Roman Frontiers and Roman Frontier Policy: Some Reflections on Roman Imperialism," *Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland* N.S. 3 (1974): 13-35; J. C. Mann, "The Frontiers of the Principate," *ANRW* 2 (1974): 508-33; J. W. Eadie, "Peripheral Vision in Roman History: Strengths and Weakness of the Comparative Approach," in J. H. D'Arms and J. W. Eadie, eds., *Ancient and Modern: Essays in Honor of Gerald F. Else* (Ann Arbor, 1977), 215-34; and not least the acta of the International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies (1949-).

4. Reviews: e.g. E. Badian, *New York Review of Books,* 23 June 1977, 34-39; J. C. Mann, "Power, Force and the Frontiers of the Empire," *JRS* 69 (1979): 175-83; reactions: F. Millar, "Emperors, Frontiers and Foreign Relations, 31 B.C.-A.D. 378," *Britannia* 13 (1982): 1-23; G. D. B. Jones, "Concept and Development in Roman Frontiers," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library* 61 (1978-79): 115-44, esp. 115 n. 1 (favorable); cf. A. Ferrill, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: The Military Explanation* (London, 1986), 25-30, 173 n. 40, 174 n. 63; G. Traina, "Aspettando i barbari. Le origini tardoantiche della guerriglia di frontiera," *Romano-barbarica* 9 (1986-87): 270 n. 44, 275-76.

academic establishment's hostility to Hans Delbrück.[5]

Since 1989, the chorus of Luttwak's critics has increased through publication of works by C. R. Whittaker,[6] Benjamin Isaac,[7] and Arther Ferrill.[8] Whereas Ferrill, a traditionalist, asserts the existence of Roman strategy with correctives to Luttwak's views,[9] Whittaker and Isaac present radical revisions of *Limesforschung*. Whittaker, an exponent of what might be called the Cambridge "cutting edge" school of ancient socioeconomic history, and Isaac, an Israeli scholar known for studies of Roman Judea, independently reach similar conclusions through analysis of the Western and Eastern frontiers respectively: a lack of definite Roman borders, an absence of external threats, and the nonexistence of Roman strategy. For Whittaker, strategy obscures the social, cultural, and economic functions of frontiers as zones of interaction between Romans and barbarians, while Isaac seeks to refocus study of the Roman army from an emphasis on defense to its role as an often corrupt occupation force serving only the interests of the governing elite. Both works owe major debts to Luttwak and his earlier critics and, especially for nonspecialists, are seductively argued. Isaac's book also merits attention as the first monograph since 1907 to treat the Roman Empire's entire Eastern frontier from the Caucasus to the Red Sea.[10]

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5. A brief overview in A. Bucholz, *Hans Delbrück and the German Military Establishment* (Iowa City, 1985), 21, 31-33; cf. (too briefly) G. A. Craig, "Delbrück: The Military Historian," in P. Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton, 1986), 329-30; see also K. Christ, *Von Gibbon zu Rostovtzeff: Leben und Werk führender Althistoriker der Neuzeit* (Darmstadt, 1972), 159-200, 367-68. A more complete study of this issue would be worthwhile.

6. *Les frontières de l'empire romain*, trans. C. Goudineau (Paris, 1989; hereafter "Whittaker, *Frontières*"), an elaboration of his "Trade and Frontiers of the Roman Empire," in P. Garnsey and C. R. Whittaker, eds., *Trade and Famine in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1893; hereafter "Whittaker, 'Trade'"), 110-27.

7. *The Limits of Empire: The Roman Army in the East* (Oxford, 1990); a summary of the book's arguments against Roman strategy appeared earlier as "Luttwak's 'Grand Strategy' and the Eastern Frontier of the Roman Empire," in D. H. French and C. S. Lightfoot, eds., *The Eastern Frontier of the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1989). In this paper, citation of "Isaac" alone refers to *Limits of Empire*.

8. *Roman Imperial Grand Strategy* (Lantham, 1991), essentially summarized in "The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire," in P. A. Kennedy, ed., *Grand Strategies in War and Peace* (New Haven, 1991; hereafter "Ferrill, 'Strategy'"), 71-85.

9. *Roman Imperial Grand Strategy*, 40-47; "Strategy," 73-74, 82-83. Ferrill reduces Luttwak's three systems to two: a phase of preclusive defense from Augustus through Diocletian, including a total breakdown of defense 235-284, and a Late Roman phase of mobile reserves and defense in depth beginning with Constantine.

10. See V. Chapot, *La frontière de l'Euphrate de Pompée à la conquête arabe* (Paris, 1907).

Considering the discussions the provocative books of Whittaker and Isaac will undoubtedly raise among both military and ancient historians, my purpose is to expose the scholarly trends these works reflect and to review the broader problem of Roman strategy in recent literature.[11] Whittaker's primary interest, the nature of frontiers, can be treated here as a supplement to Isaac's attempt to eliminate any Roman concept or use of strategy. Yet similar conclusions drawn from study of two contemporary but distant frontiers do not confirm their correctness, as both these scholars base their work (to varying degrees) on similar methodologies and theoretical trends. Especially in Isaac's case, *methodology* (not new evidence) conditions the result.

Given the absence of adequate definitions of strategy in Whittaker and Isaac,[12] Paul Kennedy's view of grand strategy will suffice: the integration of a state's overall political, economic, and military aims, both in peace and war, to preserve long-term interests, including the management of ends and means, diplomacy, and national morale and political culture in both the military and civilian spheres.[13] Did Romans fail to meet these criteria, or can Roman strategy (not necessarily identical with Luttwak's views) be saved after the assaults of Whittaker, Isaac, and other critics?

Methodologies

Before addressing specific arguments, brief outlines of the respective theses of Isaac and Whittaker would be instructive. Although the peacetime functions of the Roman army and abuses of both administrators and soldiers against the provincial populations are hardly new topics,[14] Isaac presents his new perspective on domestic policy (internal strategy?) as if a rational frontier policy concerned with defense against outsiders is incompatible with domestic control. Supposedly, an army in conquered territory cannot have two purposes, if the ruling elite seeks only to exploit its subjects, and if the only organized state bordering

11. Ferrill's discussions ignore Whittaker's book and his cursory rejection of Isaac's views (*Roman Imperial Grand Strategy,* 13 n. 35, 39 with n. 100) do not refute the many detailed arguments. Isaac's book appeared too late for a full consideration.

12. Whittaker does not define strategy and Isaac, 419, makes only a vague attempt at the end of his book: "'Strategy' is the term applied nowadays when political and military planning as well as action at the highest level are discussed."

13. P. Kennedy, "Grand Strategy in War and Peace: Toward a Broader Definiton," in Kennedy, *Grand Strategies in War and Peace,,* ix, 4–5; cf. Y. Dror's review in *Journal of Strategic Studies* 15 (1992): 31–33.

14. E.g. R. MacMullen, *Soldier and Civilian in the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), and *Corruption and the Decline of Rome* (New Haven, 1988; hereafter "MacMullen, *Corruption*"); P. A. Brunt, "Charges of Provincial Maladministration under the Early Principate," *Historia* 10 (1961): 189–223.

Roman territory (first Parthia, later Sassanid Persia) frequently wars with Rome but somehow poses no threat. Thus, the dismantling of Roman strategy begins. If the Parthian-Persian threat is illusory and Romans generally initiated Eastern wars only for the emperor's glory or to satisfy booty-hungry troops, any defensive function of troop deployments and forts can be discredited. The Romans did not demarcate their Eastern border and they allegedly thought geographically in terms of peoples rather than territory, so no "line in the sand" denoted by troop deployments and forts existed. Further, neither deployments nor forts (in Isaac's view) offer any key to their actual use. Eastern legions tended to be based in cities rather than directly on a supposed frontier, and "border" forts, never impregnable tactical structures, merely protected lines of communication, housed soldiers assigned to internal security, or were not forts at all but road stations for travelers. In sum, Isaac can find no evidence of a centralized "grand strategy," a consistent strategy in any sense, or even defensive thinking. Geographical ignorance, absence of a general staff, and the lack of a professional officer class eliminate use of strategy in practice, as the omission of strategy in ancient military manuals does in theory. All depends on the whims of individual emperors.

In contrast to Isaac's emphasis on domestic control in the East, Whittaker attempts to establish a model for interpreting frontiers and their development by explaining the collapse of the Western Empire through the socioeconomic structure of the Rhine frontier, which also allegedly resembles situations in Britain, the middle Danube, and North Africa. The Rhine and the Danube were not frontiers, since linear and natural frontiers are modern scholarly myths and Roman economic, diplomatic, and military power extended far beyond these rivers into Central Europe. Nor do political and strategic concerns determine frontiers, although lines of demarcation can have an ideological function in defining the space they enclose. Rather, frontiers are broad zones of mixed populations. They derive from a state's exercise of power through social and economic controls, when administrative lines split socially, economically, and culturally homogeneous groups. Barriers, such as Hadrian's Wall or the palisade with ditch in southwest Germany, far from being defensive, aimed to control movement and facilitate collection of import duties in this zone of interaction between artificially segregated peoples. Strategy has no place here, since the peaceful barbarians posed no threat apart from occasional raids. Indeed, trade promoted an economic and cultural symbiosis of Romans and barbarians, as the accumulation of wealth fostered social differentiation in barbarian groups and local chieftains, acculturated to Roman ways, emerged as a barbarian elite corresponding to that of the Roman ruling class. By the fourth and fifth centuries, a Roman-barbarian cultural blur on the

frontier obliterated any border lines. Hence the fall of the Western Empire was a contraction, as the frontier peoples reversed the outward Roman thrust of four centuries earlier and the frontier moved inward.

Whittaker's thesis on the fate of the Western Empire—exploiting a selective use of archaeological data and exaggerating the lack of Roman-barbarian distinctions in the Late Empire—cannot be discussed here.[15] His denial of Roman strategy translates into an attack on Luttwak rather than on strategy per se, and is based chiefly on arguments of Luttwak's earlier critics (Millar, Mann [supra n.4]) and historical analogies (especially the late nineteenth-century northwest frontier of British India).[16] Contrary to Isaac, Whittaker concedes the existence of a fortified military border (*limes*), but does not discuss it, particularly since his idea of a "Vorlimes," an area of Roman economic influence and political-military control beyond the formal *limes*, destroys the Rhine-Danube model of border defense (a concept found in ancient sources but falsely attributed to Luttwak).[17] Instead of Luttwak's three phases of Roman strategy or Ferrill's two, Whittaker sees only one simplistic, unchanging policy over four centuries—conquer enemy territory and exert control beyond the *limes*. In sum, Roman strategy for Whittaker is only what Romans sometimes actually did, and *Limesforschung* becomes a matter of what frontiers are economically

15. Selective use of data: e.g. *Frontières*, 76-77; exaggeration: cf. *Frontières*, 108-9 (material remains do not distinguish Roman and German burials) and 138 (German burials can be distinguished). Also see *Frontières*, 65-68; "Trade," 114-15; cf. J. H. F. Bloemers, "Relations between Romans and Natives: Concepts of Comparative Studies," in V. A. Maxfield and M. Dobson, eds., *Roman Frontier Studies 1989: Proceedings of the XVth International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies* (Exeter, 1991), 451-53: views similar to Whittaker's on a Roman-barbarian symbiosis on the lower Rhine, but Bloemers confesses speculation.

16. Whittaker, *Frontières*, 11-50; "Trade," 110-14. His attempts (*Frontières*, 16-18) to tie Luttwak to the American frontier theories of Frederick Jackson Turner and Walter Prescott Webb, as well as the German geographical theorist Friedrich Ratzel are ludicrous, as he finally admits (18 n. 26) a lack of proof that Luttwak read any of these authors. But of course Whittaker believes in unconscious influences (17, 43). Ratzel (1844-1901), a founder of the study of human (or political) geography, advocated geographical determinism and became both an indirect theorist of late nineteenth-century German imperialism and a forerunner of the concept of *Lebensraum*. See D. Whittlesey, "Haushofer: The Geopoliticians," in E. M. Earle, *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton, 1941), 388-89; L. Febvre, *A Geographical Introduction to History*, tr. E. G. Mountford and J. H. Paxton (New York, 1925), 18, 41, 60-61, 295: a post-World War I Frenchman's nationalistic attack.

17. Whittaker, *Frontières*, 42-43, 71; "Trade," 113-14, 124 n. 23. The idea of a Vorlimes is derived from Henry Lattimore's distinction of inner and outer frontiers in his *Inner Asian Frontiers* (London, 1940) and *Studies in Frontier History* (London, 1962).

and culturally, if military and political considerations are disregarded.[18] Thus, Whittaker's interpretation, even if accepted, can only yield a partial view of Roman frontiers, but his emphasis on the Roman state's economic activity on the Empire's periphery can lend support, as we shall see below, for the Roman practice of strategy.

The radical revisionism of Isaac and Whittaker, however, belongs to current scholarly trends and should be placed within a broader context—the demilitarization of frontier studies under the influence of the "new archaeology" and the *Annales* school, the hypercritical literalism of reductionism, and a general rejection of specialization in ancient governmental operations.

The "new archaeology" (or social archaeology), closely tied to social (or cultural) anthropology, attempts to turn this discipline away from its humanistic roots in history and art history into a theoretical social science. Like the "new history" associated with the *Annales* school and some postmodern literary theory, the new archaeology reveals its debts to Marxism and Durkheimian sociology in rejecting positivist certainty of knowledge, traditional historicism, and scholarly objectivity (free from class prejudice) in posing or answering questions, while espousing that societies must be viewed as "systems" under economic, social, and technological domination and examined "from the bottom up." Indeed, archaeology as the study of material culture offers a unique scholarly opportunity—data free from distortions imposed by either the people creating the culture or the archaeologists studying it.[19] Although social archaeologists advocate study of *all* aspects of cultural systems, they concentrate on subsistence patterns, trade, and social organization. Betraying the leftist traditions of their approach, they tend to ignore, argue away, or characterize as ideology literary evidence for political and military factors, while dogmatically asserting with a true-believer's zeal the superiority of their theories and new methodologies to traditional approaches.[20] Despite probing questions about why or how change occurs and societies function, they tend to accept only explanations derived from additional theorizing and work done in the context of this new discipline.[21] As J. G. D. Clark, a non-

18. Whittaker, *Frontières*, 48, 85–90; "Trade," 110.

19. M. L. Okun, *The Early Roman Frontier in the Upper Rhine Area: Assimilation and Acculturation on a Roman Frontier* (Oxford, 1989), 1; for an historical perspective on the new archaeology, see B. G. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought* (Cambridge, 1989), 1–24, 148–411.

20. See Trigger's criticisms (supra n. 19), 22–23, 327, 346–47; cf. C. S. Peebles, "*Annalistes*, Hermeneutics and Positivists: Squaring Circles or Dissolving Problems," in J. Bintliff, ed., *The* Annales *School and Archaeology* (New York, 1991), 108, 122 n. 1.

21. Cf. G. Woolf, "World-Systems Analysis and the Roman Empire," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 3 (1990): 44–58.

Marxist archaeologist, pointed out long ago, archaeological data in the absence of literary sources is more likely to yield economic information than any other kind, but such data does not prove an economic determination of social organization or other aspects of culture.[22]

This new social science perspective encourages interpretation through theoretical models, and a host of frontier models has emerged, the most influential being those of the neo-Marxist Immanuel Wallerstein and the *Annales* school.[23] Wallerstein's world-systems model posits a politically and economically complex center that exploits a periphery of simple and often less populated societies for raw materials, whereby a division of labor between center and periphery can develop and the subsequent social and economic development of both is conditioned by their changing roles within the system. From one tempting viewpoint Wallerstein's new model seems only an updated version of Hobson's and Lenin's theories of economic imperialism. In contrast, the *Annales* school offers not a specific model but a general approach, emphasizing socioeconomic structures and long-term cycles, disdaining military factors and the role of individuals, and displaying a fascination with the abstractions of time, space, and *mentalité*.[24] Fernand Braudel's concept of the *longue durée*, developed in his masterpiece *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (Paris, 1972), seems tailor-made for archaeology, although Braudel largely ignored the Roman Empire, which "forms the exception to almost every rule laid down about the *longue durée* in the Mediterranean."[25]

For study of Roman strategy and frontiers, these new approaches influence language as well as interpretation. Thus the Romans exemplify an "Imperial system," a conquering elite exploiting barbarians beyond their borders and provincials within them; and Roman frontiers now become zones of interaction between the complex Romans and provincials of limited Roman acculturation on the one hand, and simple

22. Cited in Trigger (supra n. 19), 264-65.

23. I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York, 1974); cf. M. Rowlands, M. T. Lawsen, and K. Kristiansen, eds., *Centre and Periphery in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, 1987); Trigger (supra n. 19), 332-33; Woolf (supra n. 21); a convenient summary of Roman frontiers and the new archaeology, including a survey of the new models, in Okun (supra n. 19), 1-27. She, not surprisingly, rejects (6-7) Luttwak in favor of Mann's views (supra n.3).

24. On the development of the *Annales* school see J. Bintliff, "The Contribution of an *Annaliste*/Structural History Approach to Archaeology," in Bintliff (supra n. 20), 1-33; other essays in this volume present a favorable analysis of the influence of the *Annales* school on archaeology.

25. A. Snodgrass, "Structural History and Classical Archaeology," in Bintliff (supra n. 20), 70.

societies of barbarians, perhaps partially assimilated to Roman culture (largely acculturated pace Whittaker), on the other.[26] In Whittaker's case some conceptual connections to the center-periphery model of Wallerstein are evident, although his real debt is to the *Annales* school, as the frequent citation of Lucien Febvre, a founder of this school, makes clear. Febvre, however, believed that frontiers were *politically* fixed, and his article treating frontiers is as much a study of French terminology as an historical evaluation of the concept.[27] More generally, now under attack is the principle of using archaeological material to supply specific dates for frontier installations (in the absence of literary references), while chronological precision with literary evidence seems too much to expect.[28]

Further, excessive reliance on models can lead to bizarre conclusions, as in Linder's *Annaliste* attempt "to unhorse most of the Huns" in the fourth and fifth centuries: as Western and Central Europe (the Great Hungarian Plain in particular) could not support the Huns' Asian nomadic lifestyle and need for remounts, they became semisedentary and, for the most part, infantry. Besides an *assumption* that Mongol practices of the Middle Ages apply equally to Huns, numerous arguments from silence supposedly support this case, when ancient sources speak of Huns without reference to horses.[29] Yet Linder dates Vegetius to the mid-fifth century and Vegetius, if this date is correct, still cites the Huns

26. "Assimilation" and "acculturation" are now distinct technical terms. See Okun (supra n. 19), 12-13, 23.

27. Febvre (supra n. 16), 308-9, and "Frontières," *Revue de synthèse historique* 48 Suppl. (1928): 31-48. Febvre's monograph, a 368-page polemic against Ratzel's geographical determinism, favors Vidal de la Blache's "geographical possibilism." Febvre's idea of frontiers as zones is exclusively geographical. Only by analogy does his study of French concepts of and vocabulary for frontiers from the thirteenth century on have a bearing on Roman borders. Cf. Whittaker, *Frontières*, 32-33, 41-42. For some correctives to the *Annalistes'* view of frontiers, see P. Sahlins, "Natural Frontiers Revisited: France's Boundaries since the Seventeenth Century," *American Historical Review* 95 (1990): 1423-51, although sympathetic to *Annaliste* perspectives.

28. Specific dates: R. Jones, "Archaeology, the *longue durée* and the Limits of the Roman Empire," in Bintliff (supra n. 20), 97-99; chronological inaccuracy: Woolf (supra n. 21), 48: Augustus's creation of an infrastructure for exacting tribute and the cessation of Roman expansion are made to appear contemporary events. The first is much earlier than the second.

29. R. P. Linder, "Nomadism, Horses and Huns," *Past and Present* 92 (1981): 3-19, accepted by Ferrill (supra n. 4), 8, 141-42; *Roman Imperial Grand Strategy*, 67; Whittaker, *Frontières*, 91. An absence of horse bones in the Hungarian Plain, seen as confirmation by Whittaker, is played down by Linder, since other material evidence demonstrates that Huns kept some horses and the argument concerns the extent, not the absence of Hunnic cavalry.

as paradigms of cavalry—an embarrassment, if not a refutation, of the argument.[30]

Certainly the social archaeologists and *Annalistes* concede that a frontier can have a military function, even if the military dimension is either seen as only one aspect of many or totally discounted in favor of socioeconomic factors.[31] For example, a recent paper argues that frontier forts inhabited by soldiers were artificial cities;[32] geographical circumstances and an area's degree of urbanization are better keys to interpretation of Roman intentions on a particular frontier than wars or foreign policy, since soldiers were primarily present, it is assumed, for local control.[33] Like Isaac, this author views local control and border defense as mutually exclusive. But also like Isaac, the social archaeologists can see a calculating central government taking deliberate measures for domestic control and improved exploitation.[34] Apparently planning must be absent only in war and foreign policy. The demilitarizing influence of social archaeology and the *Annales* school even affects the work of the International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies, long the principal showcase of Roman military history and archaeology, where recent congresses have featured sessions on the social, economic, and cultural aspects of Roman frontiers with varying degrees of devotion or mere genuflection to Wallerstein and social archaeology.[35] Arguments that scholars have excessively covered the military side of Roman frontiers to the detriment of other factors have some validity, although, apart

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30. Vegetius 1.20 (p. 39 Stelten), 3.26 (p. 270 Stelten); Linder (supra n. 29: 12 with n. 38) cites Vegetius's veterinary treatise on Hunnic horses, but ignores these passages from the *Epitoma de re militari*. A date for Vegetius in the reign of Valentinian III (425–455), rather than of Theodosius I (379–395), is advocated by W. Goffart, "The Date and Purpose of Vegetius' *De re militari*," *Traditio* 33 (1977): 65–100; E. Birley, "The Dating of Vegetius and the *Historia Augusta*," in *Historia-Augusta Colloquium 1982/83* (Bonn, 1985), 57–67.

31. Whittaker, "Trade," 110; *Frontières*, 42–43, 48; Jones (supra n. 28), 97–103; M. Fulford, "Territorial Expansion and the Roman Empire," *World Archaeology* 23 (1992): 302.

32. An argument for the obvious? Cf. Livy, 44.39.6: the army camp as a soldier's second fatherland (*altera patria*).

33. N. Hodgson, "The East as Part of the Wider Roman Imperial Frontier Policy," in French and Lightfoot, *Eastern Frontier*, 1: 177–89.

34. E.g. S. E. Alcock, "Archaeology and Imperialism: Roman Expansion and the Greek City," *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 2 (1989): 87–135. Isaac (333–71), however, debunks any role of emperors in provincial building projects and urbanization given the lack of a "State Ministry for Urban Development."

35. See "Der Einfluss des römischen Militärs auf die einheimische Bevölkerung," in H. Vetters and M. Kandler, eds., *Akten des 14. Internationalen Limeskongresses 1986 in Carnuntum*, 2 vols. (= *Der römischen Limes in Österreich* 26 [Vienna, 1990]), 1: 83–160; "Roman and Native," in Maxfield and Dobson, *Roman Frontier Studies 1989*, 411–54.

from archaeology, the sociology of the Roman army (not its operational history) has dominated scholarly research in the present century (Ferrill, "Strategy," 75), and no doubt there is much to be gained from an anthropological approach to "barbarians" as pre-state peoples. Yet denying or ignoring the military aspects of Roman frontiers can only lead to the proverbial presentation of *Hamlet* "without the prince."

If Isaac shares some attitudes with the social archaeologists and the *Annalistes*, his real debt is to the methodology of reductionism. The currency of this approach in ancient history began in 1973, when M. I. Finley sought to liberate study of ancient economic history from capitalist concepts. Fergus Millar adapted the technique in his massive study of the Roman emperor, which his student J. B. Campbell supplemented with dubious success in a dissertation on the emperor and the army.[36] Reductionism represents a "back to the sources" movement aimed at freeing the evidence from any taint of modern concepts on an ancient reality. In a spirit of literalism, both literary and documentary sources must be read with a critical eye for only what they explicitly say, and ancient attitudes should be assessed accordingly. Extensive use of secondary literature and modern analytical works should be avoided through threat of contamination from modern concepts.[37]

Certainly a fine line separates legitimate criticism from hypercriticism, but reductionist interpretations can stand the evidence on its head and be so minimal that a coherent understanding of the sources is lost. Reductionists take the high road in interpretation: what they say is what the sources explicitly indicate. But this method often implicitly assumes that extant sources are somewhat complete—a dangerous assumption, given the fragmentary and accidentally preserved sources for ancient history. Hence, nevertheless, frequent arguments from silence, alleging no evidence for this or proof for that. Furthermore, by taking statements of sources at face value reductionism often ignores the conceptual limits of ancient historiography: e.g. a tendency to see only individuals and personal motives, thereby omitting larger historical

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36. M. I. Finley, *The Ancient Economy* (Berkeley, 1973); F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (Ithaca, 1977; hereafter "Millar, Emperor"), cf. his "Emperors at Work," *JRS* 57 (1967): 9-19; J. B. Campbell, *The Emperor and the Roman Army, 31 B.C.-A.D. 235* (Oxford, 1984), with the reviews of P. Le Roux, *Revue des Etudes Latines* 63 (1985): 42-49 and (especially devastating) G. Alföldy, *Gnomon* 57 (1985): 440-46. Millar's view of workaholic Roman emperors is not universally accepted: e.g. N. Lewis, "Notationes Legentis," *Bulletin, American Society of Papyrologists* 13 (1976): 161-63.

37. See e.g. Millar's definition of his method: *Emperor*, xi-xii; cf. Campbell, *Emperor and the Roman Army*, vii-x. Finley, however, rejects Millar's claim of liberation from the *Zeitgeist* and his own assumptions: M. I. Finley, *Ancient History: Evidence and Models* (New York, 1985), 6.

factors and use of critical acumen to discern the truth behind or despite what the ancient source says; similarly, it ignores personal biases of individual sources and the literary-dramatic context of statements—not an insignificant consideration, since history in the ancient world was a form of rhetoric.

Isaac (5-6) openly acknowledges his reductionist approach, alluding to the work of Finley and his disciples on the ancient economy, seeking a pristine ancient reality untainted by anachronistic modern concepts (identified as rationality, complexity, and sophistication), and taking the high road in use of evidence (Luttwak's systematization of modern scholarship contrasted with his own return to the original sources). But are rationality and sophistication exclusively modern?

Isaac's often tendentious use of the sources, however, undercuts his reductionist high road and becomes one of the most objectionable aspects of the book. A few examples must suffice. In arguing that Rome's Eastern wars arose mainly from an emperor's desire for profit or glory,[38] Isaac places great weight on two statements by the early third-century historian Cassius Dio (68.17.1, 75.1.1), who attributes the glory motive to Trajan's Parthian War (A.D. 114-117, not 112-117 as Isaac, 20) and Septimius Severus's first Mesopotamian campaign (195). Dio even criticizes Severus's own explanation for the annexation of northern Mesopotamia: creation of a *probolos* (a defensive bulwark) for Syria.[39] Here, as in other sources attesting strategic motives for Roman wars, the military case is argued down.[40] Isaac presents Dio as an unbiased source and states that Severus made no claim to his war's defensive purpose, although *probolos* is clearly a defensive term.

Dio's criticism of Severus here and elsewhere is enigmatic, since Dio had panegyricized Severus in two earlier works (probably published before 202) on Severus's rise to power and his wars, and served on Severus's advisory council (*consilium*). If Dio's magnum opus, the *Roman History*, was written under Severus Alexander (222- 235) and published ca. 231, then Dio's negative assessment of Eastern wars and attempts at Roman expansion in general probably has a specific context in the unsuccessful Roman campaigns in the East under Caracalla (211-217), with whom Dio had far from friendly relations, and Macrinus (217-218).[41] Thus Dio cannot be considered an impartial source, and

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38. Isaac, 27-28, 31, 51, 380-83, 387; a view already in Campbell (supra n. 36), 390-93.

39. Dio, 75.3.2-3; Campbell (supra n. 36), 396-97.

40. Julian, *Orations*, 1.27A-B; Ammianus Marcellinus, 17.5.5-6; Isaac, 23, 26, 393-94, cf. 169 with nn. 33-34.

41. See T. D. Barnes, "The Composition of Cassius Dio's Roman History," *Phoenix* 38 (1984): 240-55. Dio's account of the Severan siege of Byzantium in

Severus's actual motives for the annexation of northern Mesopotamia were undoubtedly more complex than either Dio or Severus implies.[42] But even accepting Isaac's presentation of Dio, by the rules of reductionist methodology, an objective view of the sources permits arguing a strong case against Isaac.

The late first-century Jewish historian Josephus provides another example of Isaac's method. Josephus supposedly (Isaac, 22) offers no evidence that the Parthians constituted a threat to Rome, but Isaac ignores Josephus's close connection with the Flavian emperors (a volte face to Rome during the Jewish War).[43] More significantly, Josephus wrote during the most tensionless period of Roman-Parthian relations after Nero's great compromise over Armenia. Why should a pro-Flavian historian rock the boat of détente?[44] Furthermore, Isaac (277) employs Agrippa II's famous speech set in 66 (*Jewish War*, 2.345-401), surveying Rome's military dispositions throughout the Empire, as proof that Rome's provincial armies functioned exclusively for control of locals, since only a vague allusion to Germans indicates frontier defense. Yet the argument fails to consider the dramatic context of the speech, which like most speeches in the works of ancient historians is an invention of the author, not the speaker's own words. Josephus puts in Agrippa's mouth what anyone persuading a people not to revolt would emphasize—the superiority of an empire's forces to local rebels.[45] Book 2 of the *Jewish War*, probably published in 75 to coincide with Vespasian's dedication at Rome of the temple of Peace, featured Agrippa's speech as

194-195 curiously omits reference to the Severan commander Marius Maximus, a rival historian who probably criticized Dio's account of Severus's wars in his own series of imperial biographies: A. R. Birley, "Caecilius Capella: Persecutor of Christians, Defender of Byzantium," *GRBS* 32 (1991): 95-96, 98.

42. A balanced assessment of Severus's motives and of his Parthian wars in A. R. Birley, *Septimius Severus: The African Emperor*, rev. ed. (New Haven, 1989), 115-17, 129-35.

43. The Emperor Titus ordered publication of *The Jewish War* as an official history: Josephus, *Life*, 363.

44. For evidence that Palestinian Jews looked to the Parthians and Mesopotamian Jews for liberation from Rome, see N. C. Debevoise, *A Political History of Parthia* (Chicago, 1938), 93-95, 111-13, 236, 242. Josephus probably had access to a Parthian source: E. Täubler, *Die Parthernachrichten bei Josephus* (diss. Berlin, 1904) 24, 60-61, cf. 62-65. Such evidence contradicts Isaac's contention (*Limits of Empire*, 33-34) that the annexation of Judea had no connection with Roman-Parthian conflict.

45. Likewise Isaac, 393-94: face value acceptance of references to the servitude of provincials in Tacitus, Josephus, and Florus to show a relative lack of concern for defending provincials. Especially in Tacitus's *Annals* and *Germania*, words for servitude are pregnant with disdain for the government of the Principate.

a testament to Roman military might against all opponents, whether inside or outside the Empire.[46]

Third, Appian (*Celtic Wars*,13) is cited (379) to show a Roman disregard for the defensive value of natural obstacles, in this case, the Alps. For Isaac, Rome's first contact with the Germans, a defeat in 113 B.C., should not have happened, for the consul Papirius Carbo launched an "unprovoked" attack north of the mountains and ignored the defensive use of mountains. To call Carbo's action "unprovoked" when the Germans had attacked the people of Noricum, a Roman friend (*amicus*), can be debated, although this conduct exemplifies the unrestricted imperialism of the Late Republic when provincial commanders often launched unauthorized offensives under the pretext of defending Roman interests (cf. Julius Caesar, *Gallic War*, 1). But Isaac omits that Carbo initially occupied an Alpine pass, before impatiently taking the offensive when the Cimbri bypassed the expected line of advance. Carbo did attempt to exploit a natural defensive position, and from at least the time of Cato the Elder (234-149 B.C.) Romans had regarded the Alps as a wall protecting Italy and Rome.[47]

Related to reductionism is Isaac's denial (following Campbell and Millar) of any Roman professional officer class or centralized mechanism for strategic planning and decision making (esp. 376-87, 404-408, 416). Isaac accepts Campbell's arguments against the existence of *viri militares,* men of the senatorial class marked for military careers with swift advancement to the most important provincial commands/governorships. In this view Roman generals were amateurs, not professionals. Further, neither the emperor's *consilium* nor senatorial nor military interest groups can be shown to have influenced strategy, so the inevitable conclusion is that no strategy existed beyond the particular decisions of individual emperors.[48] Rejection of Roman "experts" and specialization in the practice of Roman foreign policy also extends to the Republic,

46. See C. Saulnier, "Flavius Josephus et la propagande flavienne," *Revue biblique* 98 (1991): 199-221. Although the dramatic date of the speech is 66, Saulnier shows that the troop dispositions reflect the situation of the mid-70s.

47. Cato fr. 85, in H. Peter, *Historicorum Romanorum Reliquiae,* I^2 (repr. Stuttgart, 1967), 81; Polybius, 3.54.2; Livy, 21.35.8; Herodian, 2.11.8; Isidorus, *Origines,* 14.8.18.

48. J. B. Campbell, "Who Were the 'Viri militares'?" *JRS* 65 (1975): 11-31 and (supra n. 36) 114, 325-47, 356-57; Millar (supra n. 4) 3-16, cf. *Emperor,* 269 n. 4, where it is conceded that the *consilium* discussed military affairs and foreign policy. Varying degrees of agreement with these views on the lack of *viri militares* and/or a general staff in Ferrill, *Roman Imperial Grand Strategy,* 40, "Strategy," 73; C. G. Starr, *The Roman Empire, 27 B.C.-A.D. 476: A Study in Survival* (New York, 1982; hereafter "Starr"), 74. The existence of specialization in equestrian careers has also been questioned: R. Saller, "Promotion and Patronage in Equestrian Careers," *JRS* 70 (1980): 44-63, cf. his *Personal Patronage under the Early*

where the existence of "Eastern experts" in the second century B.C. also is under fire.[49]

This case, however, rests on very shaky foundations: reductionists can create a modern anachronism as a straw man for refutation. Scholars generally have *not* viewed the *viri militares* as a class, and the rapid promotion of *some* men during the first and second centuries into military commands is clear from their career inscriptions. Patronage (in light of Saller's work) should receive its due, but some standardized form of career ladder had to be in use: an emperor could not personally screen the entire pool of men beginning or continuing public careers every year, although in the Augustan system the most important frontier commands with multiple legions could only go to those of certain loyalty to the emperor.[50] The attack on military careers is also somewhat misguided: the distinction of professionals from amateurs is largely a modern concept and thus anachronistic for analysis of Roman patterns of command; so-called amateur commanders were not necessarily inexperienced, unread, or lacking in ability—some have a natural talent for command. Even in modern military careers, purely administrative assignments can be alternated with field commands. Furthermore, Millar now concedes the paper trail of an archive system for diplomacy and foreign relations, thus yielding the possibility of more centralized control than reductionists previously argued.[51]

Strategy and *Limes*

If the scholarly context of recent attacks on Roman strategy has been clarified, two concepts remain problematic—strategy and *limes.* Strictly speaking (in good reductionist fashion), "strategy" in its modern sense as military planning and/or the conduct of operations is an eighteenth-century word, coined (according to a recent study) in Paul

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Empire (Cambridge, 1982)—both seek to modify the magisterial work of H. G. Pflaum, *Les procurateurs équestres sous le Haut-Empire romain* (Paris, 1950) and *Les carrières procuratoriennes équestres sous le Haut-Empire romain,* 2 vols. (Paris, 1960).

49. E. S. Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome* (Berkeley, 1984), 1:203-49.

50. Campbell (supra n. 48) essentially tried to reject the views of E. Birley, "Senators in the Emperor's Service," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 39 (1953): 197-214. For refutations of Campbell, see Alföldy (supra n. 36) and *Konsulat und Senatorenstand unter den Antoninen* (Bonn, 1977), esp. 375-76; cf. his "Consuls and Consulares under the Antonines: Prosopography and History," *Ancient Society* 7 (1976): 263-99. A fair account of senatorial careers is A. R. Birley, *The Fasti of Roman Britain* (Oxford, 1981), 1-35.

51. F. Millar, "Government and Diplomacy in the Roman Empire during the First Three Centuries," *International History Review* 10 (1988): 361.

Gédéon Joly de Maizeroy's *Théorie de la guerre* (1777) and inspired by the title of the late sixth-century treatise of Ps.-Maurice, *The Strategikon.* German military literature of the 1780s popularized the word, while both the French and the British were slow to adopt it.[52] Thus from one perspective no "strategy" existed before the eighteenth century. Or to take another viewpoint, strategy originated with Machiavelli.[53] Similarly, the institution of general staffs began in the nineteenth century.[54] Thus the Romans would appear to be safely protected from the anachronistic imposition of a modern concept like strategy (cf. Isaac, 375-76), were it not for the implication of denying use of strategy and knowledge of the principles of war to Pericles, Brasidas, Alexander the Great, Hannibal, Scipio Africanus, and Julius Caesar; and Machiavelli, if he begins strategy, wrote in the tradition of reviving antiquity and plagiarizing its authors.[55]

Yet the ancient military handbooks also fail to discuss strategy, if we expect to find a Jominian recipe book for victory, a Clausewitzian treatise on the nature of war, or geopolitical analyses for planning scenarios.[56] The ancient handbooks, usually composed according to the conventions of a specific literary genre, the technical manual,[57] did not go beyond training, drill, battle tactics, and campaign operations. But except for the various Greek manuals on siegecraft and siege engines (some from the Roman period e.g. Athenaeus Mechanicus, Apollodorus of Damascus) and possibly two Latin works, Ps.-Hyginus Gromaticus, *De munitionibus castrorum,* and the anonymous *De rebus bellicis,*[58] no *technical* military literature from the Roman period

52. See A. Gat, *The Origins of Military Thought from the Enlightenment to Clausewitz* (Oxford, 1989), 41-42. About the same time (1779) Guibert used "la Stratégique" in his *Défense du système de guerre moderne* to denote the art of generalship: R. R. Palmer, "Frederick the Great, Guibert, Bülow: From Dynastic to National War," in Paret (supra n. 5), 107 with n. 27. A more comprehensive study of the history of the word "strategy" would be welcome.

53. Neither Earle's *Makers of Modern Strategy* (supra n. 16) nor Paret's new edition of this work (supra n. 5), both beginning with Machiavelli, takes the word "strategy" as a point of departure. Theodore Ropp has often quipped that these works do not define "Makers," "Modern," or "Strategy."

54. D. D. Irvine, "The Origin of Capital Staffs," *Journal of Modern History* 10 (1938): 161-79.

55. See the analysis of Machiavelli's unnamed borrowings from inter alios Frontinus and Vegetius in his *Art of War* in L. A. Burd, "Le fonti letterarie di Machiavelli nell' 'Arte della guerra'," *Atti, Reale Accademia dei Lincei, Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche,* Ser. 5 4 (1896): 187-261.

56. Cf. Millar (supra n. 4) 21; Isaac, 374-77, 407-8 and (supra n. 7), 231.

57. On the genre see M. Fuhrmann, *Das systematische Lehrbuch* (Göttingen, 1960).

58. A civilian memorandum dating to 368/369 on military and administrative reforms and not publicly circulated in antiquity: see E. A. Thompson, *A Roman Reformer and Inventor* (Oxford, 1952), esp. 1-6, and A. Cameron, "The Date of the

survives. Extant works (e.g. Onasander, Frontinus's *Stratagems*, Polyaenus, and Vegetius) all have literary pretensions and Romans certainly thought such works worthwhile.[59] A geopolitical approach to military policy (what the reductionists apparently wish to identify as strategy) first begins to be formalized in Byzantine treatises,[60] which chiefly codified and consolidated Graeco-Roman military thought. This formalization is directly related to specification of different types of enemies, as opposed to the customary, abstract "enemy" of extant Graeco-Roman treatises.[61]

If Graeco-Roman military treatises fail to discuss strategy (in its modern sense), this omission is a red herring. Antiquity would not be the last period of history in which written military theory lagged behind or did not reflect all aspects of current practice. Warfare among pre-state peoples can be quite sophisticated, and civilized states long waged war before the Greeks and the Chinese in the fourth century B.C. began to commit its principles to written theory.[62] Greeks and Romans were not ignorant of the principles of war and could think strategically—

Anonymous *De Rebus Bellicis*," in M. W. C. Hassell and R. I. Ireland, eds., *De Rebus Bellicis* (Oxford, 1979), 1: 1–10; cf. H. Brandt, *Zeitkritik in der Spätantike. Untersuchungen zu den Reformvorschlägen des Anonymus De Rebus Bellicis* (Munich, 1988), suggesting a date in the mid-fifth century; also see H. Jouffroy, "La défense des frontières: le point de vue du *De Rebus Bellicis*," in Maxfield and Dobson, *Roman Frontier Studies 1989*, 373–75.

59. This is one of the few valid conclusions in Campbell's superficial discussion of Roman military handbooks: "Teach Yourself to Be a General," *JRS* 77 (1987): 13–29. For Frontinus's pretensions to discovery of a true science of war, see E. L. Wheeler, *Stratagem and the Vocabulary of Military Trickery* (Leiden, 1988), 17–21.

60. E.g. anonymous, *De re strategika,* 6.4; Ps.-Maurice, *Strategikon,* 11; Leo the Wise, *Tactica,* 18; Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio.* The *De re strategika* has now been attributed to Syrianus Magister and dated to ca 600, thus contemporary with Ps.-Maurice: see C. Zuckermann, "The Military Compendium of Syrianus Magister," *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 40 (1990): 209–24.

61. See G. Dagron, ed., *Le traité sur le guérrilla (De velitatione) de l'Empereur Nicéphore Phocas (963–969)* (Paris, 1986), 142; cf. Traina, "Aspettando i barbari," 250–51, 255–59, 261–76. I hope to discuss this important development in military thought more fully elsewhere. For a survey of Byzantine military literature, see A. Dain, "Les stratégistes byzantins," *Travaux et Mémoires* 2 (1967): 317–92; a valuable brief survey of Byzantine strategy is W. E. Kaegi, *Some Thoughts on Byzantine Strategy* (Brookline, 1983).

62. For pre-state warfare (e.g. the Zulu), see E. V. Walter, *Terror and Resistance: A Study of Political Violence* (New York, 1969), 123–43; cf. H. H. Turney-High, *The Military: The Theory of Land Warfare as Behavioral Science* (West Hanover, 1981), 35: "warfare is man's oldest social science." Also see E. L. Wheeler, "The Origins of Military Theory in Ancient Greece and China," *International Commission of Military History, Acta 5, Bucarest 1980* (Bucharest, 1981), 74–79.

even in geopolitical terms—a point to which I shall return below. The logic of an argument for a lack of strategy in practice from its supposed absence in contemporary military treatises would also demand the nonexistence of international relations and diplomacy in the absence of any certain technical treatises on this subject—a blatant absurdity.[63]

In comparison to formal strategic theory, the problem of Roman borders and frontiers seems more complex, for evaluation of Roman strategy in practice unavoidably becomes an assessment of frontiers where the vast bulk of the army was stationed. At issue is whether borders were marked and defended or unmarked with the army functioning as a local police force and as customs agents. For Cicero, speaking in 55 B.C. when Augustus's halt to Roman expansion (Tacitus, Annals, 1.11.8; cf. Agricola, 13.2) lay far in the future, the borders (fines) of a province neighboring barbarians could be equated with the sword tips of a governor's legionaries (Against Piso, 38). Thus the problem belongs to the Imperial era and is to some extent semantic—the distinction of border, frontier, and limes.

Recognition of differences between political, ethnic, geographical, and military borders is hardly new and has faced many imperial powers.[64] Politicians favor rivers and mountains as borders for their apparent ease of demarcation, despite the geographical and ethnic divisions that such lines may cause.[65] Julius Caesar in his Gallic War, for example, created the fiction of the Rhine as a border between Germans and Gauls, and the upper Euphrates, by no means a traditional border, had Armenian speakers as well as Roman troops on both its banks.[66] Regardless of whether rivers, mountains, and deserts constitute "natural frontiers,"

63. Demetrius of Phalerum (ca 350–ca 282 B.C.), a Peripatetic and ruler of Athens (317–307 B.C.), may have written a handbook on diplomacy, if the placement of his Presbeutikos (scil. logos, i.e., Treatise on Diplomacy) in a catalogue of his works (Diogenes Laertius, 5.81) provides a clue to its contents. This treatise in one book immediately precedes Peri pisteos (On Good Faith). Demetrius also wrote on generalship (Strategika: Diogenes Laertius, 5.80). No definite fragments of the work survive and the editor of Demetrius's fragments interprets the title as a rhetorical manual for ambassadors: see F. Wehrli, Die Schule des Aristoteles, IV²: Demetrios von Phaleron (Stuttgart, 1968), 37, 39 fr. 189, 84.

64. See Chapot (supra n. 10), 247, cf. 254; for British India, see C. C. Davies, The Problem of the North-West Frontier 1890–1908 (Cambridge, 1932), 3, 16.

65. Lord Curzon, Frontiers (Oxford, 1907; hereafter "Curzon"), 19–20.

66. Rhine: S. L. Dyson, The Creation of the Roman Frontier (Princeton, 1985: hereafter "Dyson"), 173, 276–77; Whittaker, Frontières, 34–38; "Trade," 111–12; Euphrates: E. L. Wheeler, "Rethinking the Upper Euphrates Frontier: Where Was the Western Border of Armenia?" in Maxfield and Dobson, Roman Frontier Studies 1989, 505–11. Isaac (15, 28) errs in regarding the upper Euphrates as a traditional border and accepting the validity of Sulla's, Lucullus's, and Pompey's Parthian treaties, none of which the Senate ratified.

such obstacles have strategic value in delaying or channeling hostile movements. The ability of Germans, Sarmatians, Dacians, and Persians to cross major rivers does not refute the Roman advantage (even if sometimes slight) of compelling invaders to expend extra effort.[67] Nor does definition of a frontier as a zone (as opposed to a line or natural boundary) to facilitate study of cultural and economic aspects of borderlands deny the strategic purpose of military installations and troops in such areas. Romans did not have a "Maginot Line mentality" and, if possible, preferred to advance into enemy territory against major threats.[68] Further, neither acculturation of some barbarians to Roman ways, nor Roman manipulation of barbarian client kings whose territories could be buffer zones alters where the administrative lines of Roman territory stood. Whittaker would deny any sense of ethnocentrism to Roman expansion,[69] and his concept of Vorlimes bespeaks Roman strategy—an area under Roman influence but not directly under Roman protection.[70] So far as strategy is concerned, the distinction per se of a border (a line of political administration or military defense) from a frontier (a marginal area on the outskirts of a political entity where

67. Curzon, 19, 21; cf. Isaac, 411-13, on barbarians' ability to cross rivers; against the idea of natural frontiers: Whittaker, *Frontières,* 13-14, 32, 41-42, following Febvre (supra n. 16), 301-9, and (supra n. 27) 40-42; cf. Sahlins (supra n. 27).

68. See Luttwak, 60-61, 66, 74-75, 78-80; cf. Ferrill, "Strategy," 72; 196 n. 6; G. Forni, "'Limes': nozioni e nomenclature," in M. Sordi, ed., *Il confine nel mondo classico* (Milan, 1987; hereafter "Forni"), 293. Whittaker concedes (*Frontières,* 42) that walls, palisades, and towers can form a line of demarcation and have the military purpose of stopping raids. On the role of Vauban (1633-1707) in formation of the French concept of linear frontiers, see Febvre (supra n. 27), 34; Sahlins (supra n. 27), 1434. The influence of Roman frontiers on Vauban remains (to my knowledge) an unexplored topic, although it has been conjectured: J. B. Wolf, *Science, Technology and War: Proceedings of the Third Military History Symposium, U.S.A.F. Academy* (Washington, 1970), 40.

69. Whittaker's rejection (*Frontières,* 16, 42) of A. Alföldi, "Die ethische Grenzscheide am römischen Limes," *Schweizer Beiträge zur allgemeinen Geschichte* 8 (1950): 37-50, and "The Moral Frontier on Rhine and Danube," in *Congress of Roman Frontier Studies, 1949* (Durham, 1952), 1-16, is hardly convincing, although Dyson (278) also rejects the idea that Romans viewed barbarians simply as "material for conquest." Whittaker seems overly influenced by Febvre's view (supra n. 27: 31-32) that a frontier must face an enemy, because *frontière* in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries denoted a battleline. Germans were officially recognized as public enemies (*hostes*), as opposed to brigands (*latrones*), in Roman law from at least the early third century: Ulpian, in *Justinian's Digest,* 49.15.24.

70. Cf. supra n. 17 and Luttwak's own center-periphery model: 22-23. The series of low earthen walls running north of the Danube from Hungary to Moldavia, parts of which are now dated to the first century, are not Roman constructions and seem to lack any defensive value. They may be political demarcations. See Forni, 284-86.

people of different political and cultural identities mingle) is of little significance, and the study of Romanization of native populations within the Empire and beyond its borders has a long scholarly history. Indeed the text of a decree of the Senate (recently discovered), dated to A.D. 19, refutes arguments against Roman use of rivers as borders, since here the Rhine is clearly shown to be a border (see Part II at n. 165).

Nevertheless, two terms suffering scholarly abuse demand comment—scientific frontier and *limes*. The former originated in public debate during and after the Second Afghan War (1878-80) over where the western border of India should be. The line Kabul-Ghazni-Kandahar, judged shorter and combining both natural and strategic strengths, if it could be connected with the main Indian railroad system, seemed the best line of defense against the possibility of Russian hordes sweeping down from Central Asia. This "scientific frontier" was never established. In 1893 the Durand Agreement drew the Durand Line extending a British protectorate over some tribes behind the Kabul-Ghazni-Kandahar line but beyond the administrative boundary of India, before the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907 recognized a British protectorate over all of Afghanistan and ended the Russian threat. Thus for nearly three decades the Kabul-Ghazani-Kandahar line represented the proposal of the "Forward School"—a scientific, i.e., the militarily ideal, frontier.[71]

Unfortunately, this "buzzword" of late Victorian imperialism was canonized in the *Cambridge Ancient History* regarding Vespasian's creation of a "scientific frontier" in the East in the 70s, whence Luttwak (apparently) acquired it to characterize both Sir Ronald Syme's suggestion that Augustus's German policy aimed at a new frontier on the Elbe and Danube ("the line Hamburg-Leipzig-Prague-Vienna") and Trajan's supposed new frontier in Mesopotamia.[72] Subsequently the term has become an easy target for Whittaker and Isaac as a symbol of a rational frontier policy and strategy.[73] But as we have already argued regarding the word "strategy," Roman use of strategy should not be made contingent on a semantic argument, especially a late Victorian buzzword. No frontier is perfect and only the hindsight of historians

71. See Curzon, 19-21, 39-41; Davies (supra n. 64), 1-17; Whittaker, *Frontières*, 23-24. Curzon was Viceroy of India, 1898-1905. The origins of this term escaped Isaac, 394 n. 106.

72. J. G. C. Anderson, "The Eastern Frontier from Tiberius to Nero," *CAH* 10 (1934): 780; Luttwak, 50, 108; cf. R. Syme, "The Northern Frontiers under Augustus," *CAH* 10: 353, who did not use the term. Syme modifies his earlier view in "Military Geography at Rome," *Classical Antiquity* 7 (1988; hereafter "Syme"): 250. On Trajan's supposed Mesopotamian frontier, see n. 118 infra. Cf. Ferrill, *Roman Imperial Grand Strategy*, 35: "preclusive security was a 'natural' or 'scientific' grand strategy."

73. Whittaker, *Frontières*, 26, 41; Isaac, *Limits of Empire*, 394.

permits criticism of specific positions. In fact, one new archaeologist concedes that in Britain the Tyne-Solway line, Hadrian's Wall, was the only practical choice topographically, while the Clyde-Forth line, the later Antonine Wall, was the only other possibility.[74]

The Latin term *limes* poses a more serious threat. Originally meaning a transverse line, *limes* became a surveyor's term for the delimitation of territory, i.e., boundary/border, and since Theodor Mommsen modern scholarly literature has used it for the fortified borders of the Roman Empire. But Giovanni Forni (1987) and Isaac (1988) independently reached similar conclusions on Roman usage of this term in the Imperial era: *limes* continued to denote a border, acquired in the first century a new meaning as "road" (especially a military road perpendicular to the border and penetrating enemy territory), and designated from the fourth century on a frontier district under the command of a *dux* (general).[75] Here the two part company. For Forni, a *limes* can be associated with fortifications, although in a strict sense it denotes no more than a combination of roads, networks of roads, and troops; a *limes* does not require fortifications.[76] Isaac, however, wishes to divorce this term from any connection with defense, since *limes* is not directly equated with military structures in ancient sources. Hence political borders are irrelevant: boundary stones marked provincial borders, but none showed where the Empire ended; Romans thought in terms of peoples rather than territory; and even geographical works, such as the Late Roman road map, the Peutinger Table, and the fourth-century *Expositio totius mundi,* leave the imperial borders vague. Furthermore, as Roman military presence often extended far beyond supposed borders, no definite lines of defense existed, and the so-called *limes* would be only a line of communications, not defense.[77]

Isaac scores a technical debater's point—the same made less polemically by Forni on the exclusion of fortifications from the most literal meaning of *limes*—but conceptually this bizarre thesis contradicts

74. Jones (supra n. 28), 102; cf. Davies (supra n. 64), 16, on the impossibility of a scientific frontier.

75. Forni, 272-94, a revision of his encyclopedic article, "Limes," in E. De Ruggerio, ed., *Dizionario Epigrafico* (Rome, 1959-62), 4: 1074-1281; Isaac, *Limits of Empire,* 408-9 and passim, summarizing his "The Meaning of the Terms *Limes* and *Limitanei,*" *JRS* 78 (1988; hereafter "Isaac, *Limes*"): 125-38, 146.

76. Forni, 282-84, citing Tacitus, *Agricola,* 41.2, *Germania,* 29.3; *Historia Augusta, Hadrian,* 12.6; cf. Forni, 286.

77. Isaac, 3, 103, 159, 171, 395-98; similarly Millar (supra n. 51), 351-52; R. Moynihan, "Geographical Mythology and Roman Imperial Ideology," in R. Winkes, ed., *The Age of Augustus* (Providence/Louvain, 1985), 153. Contrast Ferrill, *Roman Imperial Grand Strategy,* 20: except for the additions of Britain and Dacia, Roman frontiers were "territorially definable and geographically logical."

frequent use of *limes* in the same sentence with the construction of forts or towers and placement of garrisons.[78] The fourth-century epitomator Festus (*Breviarium*, 8) may certainly reflect the later sense of *limes* as a "military district" when he writes that Augustus created a *limes* between Romans and barbarians through Noricum, the Pannonias, and Moesia, but this account corresponds to archaeological evidence: a trans-Balkan road running from Aquileia to Byzantium and a chain of forts in the Iron Gates area of the Danube—a project begun late under Augustus or during Tiberius's reign (14–37).[79]

Isaac must also discount any connection of *limes* in literary sources with its technical use in ancient works on surveying, besides references to Rome's fortified borders in Greek sources, where the Latin *limes* is not used.[80] One passage (*Historia Augusta, Thirty Tyrants*, 26.6)[81] cited to prove the equation of *limes* with a border district (here *regio*:

78. Besides sources in supra n. 76, see, e.g., *Latin Panegyrics*, 6(7).11.5; ILS 724; Ammianus Marcellinus, 23.5.2, all cited in Isaac, *"Limes,"* 127–28, 133–34. *Limes* began to appear in inscriptions by the end of the first or the beginning of the second century. See *ILS* 8855 (overlooked by Isaac), a Greek inscription referring to an area of the Agri Decumates (east of the Rhine) as *chōras [hyp]erlimitanēs* (land beyond the *limes*). The restoration of *-erlimitanēs* has not been disputed: Pflaum (1950 [supra n. 48]) 50, (1960) 182–83 no. 85; Whittaker, *Frontières*, 66. Occurrence of a form of the term in a Greek inscription of this date is significant, since Greek *limiton*, derived from Latin *limes*, does not become common in Greek until the Late Empire.

79. See M. R. Werner, "Tiberius and the Continuation of Augustan Policy on the Moesian Limes," in Winkes (supra n. 77), 163–68.

80. Isaac, *"Limes,"* 131 and 127 n. 13, where A. Piganiol, "La notion de limes," in *Scripta Varia* (Brussels, 1973), 3: 131–34, is too hastily dismissed; cf. Forni 282; Greek sources: Aristides, *To Rome*, 80–84; Herodian 2.11.5; cf. Appian, *Roman History*, preface 7 at end (not discussed in this context by Isaac); anon. *De rebus bellicis*, 6.1–3. Whittaker (*Frontières*, 27–28) discounts Appian and Aristides, claiming these references to border fortifications are only the idealized view of the sacred space of a Greek city and without relation to Roman strategic needs. This view, especially for Appian, is incredible, since this historian held the post of *procurator Augusti* and had access to high circles during the reign of Antoninus Pius (138–161) through his friend Fronto, suffect consul in 143 and tutor to Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, the future emperors. His *Roman History* stressed Roman wars of expansion and extended to Trajan's Dacian Wars (101–103, 105–106). Appian would not be ignorant of frontier realities and strategic needs. For the Greek concept of frontier, see G. D. Rocchi, "Il concetto di frontiera nella Grecia antica," in Sordi (supra n. 68), 21–42. Views of Greek frontiers can also go to the opposite extreme, as in J. Ober, *Fortress Attica: Defense of the Athenian Land Frontier, 404–322 B.C.* (Leiden, 1985): the Attic frontier made to resemble a Roman fortified borderland.

81. "For indeed their area [Isauria] in the middle of Roman territory is enclosed by *a new type of defense as if a limes*, defended by the terrain not by men" (*etenim in medio Romani nominis solo regio eorum novo genere custodiarum quasi limes includitur, locis defensa non hominibus*).

"area, region") seems to refute Isaac's divorce of *limes* from defense.[82] If geographical treatises only vaguely mark the Empire's borders, two reasons can be cited: first, surviving texts are not official or technical publications; and second, Augustan propaganda equated the Roman Empire with the entire inhabited world, the *oecumene*.[83] Later geographical works probably continued to observe this fiction (cf. Appian, *Roman History*, preface 9).

Moreover, Romans did mark some limits of the Empire.[84] Isaac (397) rejects Augustus's dictum to keep the Empire within its present borders (Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.11.8), but he is unaware of Pliny's comment (*Natural History*, 6.120) that Pompey set the eastern border of the Empire at Oruros east of the Euphrates. Whatever the purpose of Hadrian's Wall in Britain and the Hadrianic desert ditch (*fossatum Africae*) in Numidia, both marked Roman borders and, like the Great Wall of China, had symbolic value as a line of trespass.[85] The only explicit ancient reference to the motive for Hadrian's Wall stipulates the separation of Romans from barbarians.[86]

Client kingdoms, considered part of the Empire but not integrated into its provincial system, blur the concept of definite borders, as does use of Arab tribes as allies by both Romans and Persians in the Late Empire.[87] Certainly the Romans never had qualms about attacking,

82. Contrary to Isaac's equation of *regio* and *limes* (although both are in the nominative case), placement of *quasi limes* after *novo genere custodiarum* indicates the author's intention to emphasize the relationship of *limes* with defense.

83. A major theme of C. Nicolet, *L'inventaire du monde: géographie et politique aux origines de l'Empire romain* (Paris, 1988), now translated as *Space, Geography, and Politics in the Early Roman Empire* (Ann Arbor, 1990).

84. A collection of references in D. S. Potter, "The Tabula Siacensis, Tiberius, the Senate, and the Eastern Boundary of the Roman Empire," *ZPE* 69 (1987): 274-75 with n. 19. Potter exaggerates, however, the significance of a new inscription honoring Germanicus and placing the Empire's eastern border on Mt. Amanus in Syria west of the Euphrates. The reading of the pertinent lines is uncertain.

85. Line of trespass: Curzon, 25; cf. Isaac, 414; Whittaker, *Frontières*, 38-40, 47-48; on Hadrian's Wall as an outgrowth of earlier developments, see D. J. Breeze and B. Dobson, *Hadrian's Wall*[3] (London, 1987), 5-26. Whittaker (47-48) misrepresents the view of Breeze and Dobson in alleging that the purpose of Hadrian's Wall was solely to control movement and omitting their equal emphasis on defense: see Breeze and Dobson, 40, 60-61.

86. *Historia Augusta, Hadrian,* 11.2, cf. 12.6. Whittaker (*Frontières,* 39-40) rejects this evidence on the grounds that the separation of Romans and barbarians is a fourth-century idea, but this view discounts the emphasis on no more expansion in Hadrian's frontier policy and the symbolic value of permanent structures. Cf. Birley (supra n.3), 15-19; G. Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army* (London, 1969), 82-90.

87. See Strabo, 6.4.2, 17.3.25; Isaac, 248-49. The similarities between client kings and provincial governors can be exaggerated: D. Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King* (London, 1984; hereafter "Braund"), esp. 70-85.

interfering, or maintaining military presence beyond Roman territory,[88] but such conduct does not deny the existence of borders and does speak for ideas of defense. Distinction of a Roman Empire in a strict sense (territory of direct rule) from the Empire in its wide sense (area of direct rule, client kings, and zones of influence) is preferable to a complete denial of borders.[89] After all, British India had three distinct western borders between 1893 and 1907.[90]

The problem of the function of Roman forts and its relationship to the concept of a *limes* remains, but these issues must be examined within the context of Rome's Eastern frontier.

The Roman Army in the East

The East posed special problems for the Romans: only here did the Romans after 146 B.C. face foreign opponents from urbanized states possessing civilizations older than Rome's own; and here in the Imperial period, as in North Africa, the desert south of the Taurus Mountains led to an "open" frontier (no continuous artificial or geographical barriers), where cities became the chief points of occupation and where logistics, especially water supplies, could influence deployments.[91] North of the Taurus the border with Armenia would be a unique situation, contingent on Armenia's status as a client, a province, or a hostile neighbor under Parthian-Sassanid control.

Frequent wars and tortuous diplomatic maneuverings—where Roman strategy would be most prominent—characterized Rome's Eastern frontier for seven centuries. This conflict of "superpowers" receives relatively brief discussions in Isaac (15-53, 219-68), in whose view Parthia, except for occasional raids, posed no threat and the Sassanids only countered Roman moves east of the Euphrates. Attested Parthian-Persian threats and claims to Roman territory receive no credence.[92]

88. On expansionist vs. nonexpansionist emperors, see Birley (supra n.3).

89. See T. Liebmann-Frankfort, *La frontière orientale dans la politique extérieure de la République romaine* (Brussels, 1969), 9-15, and Luttwak's "hegemonic empire" vs. "territorial empire": 22-23. I shall return below to Roman use of border lines.

90. Curzon, 41: the administrative border of British India, the Durand Line (frontier of active protection), and the Afghan border (the advanced strategic frontier).

91. On open frontiers, see Luttwak, 78-80. For a recent survey of remains of military installations in the East, see D. Kennedy and D. Riley, *Rome's Desert Frontier from the Air* (London, 1990). Whittaker ("Trade," 112, 123 nn. 10, 13) seems not to understand the concept of an open frontier.

92. E.g. Parthians: Tacitus, *Annals*, 6.31.1; Dio, 59.27.3 (not in Isaac); Sassanids: Dio, 80.3; Herodian, 6.2.2-7; Julian, *Orations*, 1.27A-B; Ammianus Marcellinus, 17.5.5-6; Isaac, *Limits of Empire*, 21-23, 32; cf. P. Panitschek, "Zur Darstellung der Alexander- und Achaemenidennachfolge als politische Programme in kaiserzeit-

Armenia, the chief bone of contention between Rome and Parthia from the first century B.C. to the third century, continued to be either a casus belli or a battlefield in Roman-Sassanid conflicts, but Isaac gives little indication that Armenia was the major problem of Roman international relations in the East. Indeed for events north of Mesopotamia the promise of a return to the original sources is betrayed: except for the *Res Gestae* of Sapor I, Isaac largely relies on secondary literature and ignores primary Oriental evidence (Armenian, Georgian, and various Sassanid sources).[93] Geographical and factual errors are also evident.[94]

Armenia, however, provides the missing link for understanding the Eastern policy of the Flavian emperors (69–96). Isaac, acknowledging a Flavian reorganization of the upper Euphrates frontier, recognizes as the lessons of Corbulo's Armenian war (56–63) and as an aggressive rather than a defensive policy, the annexation of client kingdoms (Armenia Minor and Commagene in 72), the establishment of legionary

lichen Quellen," *Klio* 72 (1990): 457–72; D. S. Potter, "Alexander Severus and Ardashir," *Mesopotamia* 22 (1987): 147–57.

93. Even the secondary literature shows obvious omissions: e.g. a generation of work on Parthia by Josef Wolski; E. Dabrowa, *La politique de l'état parthe à l'égard de Rome—d'Artaban II à Vologèse I (ca 11–ca 79 de N.E.) et les facteurs qui la conditionnaient* (Cracow, 1983); H. Sonnabend, *Fremdenbild und Politik: Vorstellungen der Römer von Ägypten und dem Partherreich in der späten Republik und frühen Kaiserzeit* (Frankfurt a.M., 1986); M.-L. Chaumont, *La christianisation de l'Empire iranien: des origines aux grands persécutions du IVᵉ siècle* (Louvain, 1988); E. Winter, *Die sasanidisch-römischen Friedensverträge des 3. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.* (Frankfurt a.M., 1988).

94. Harmozica, the fort guarding the Iberian capital of Mtskheta, is erroneously (Map I) placed north of the Kura River: see O. Lordkipanidze, *Archäologie in Georgien: Von der Altsteinzeit zum Mittelalter*, tr. D. Mcheidse (Weinheim, 1991), 148 Abb. 68; Tomisa, the crossing of the Euphrates near Melitene in Cappadocia, is placed (Map II) on the west side of the river; and Commagene (Map III) appears east of the Euphrates. Armenian Kainepolis is falsely distinguished (52) from Vagharshapat (two names for the same site) and modern Yerevan is not the site of the capital of ancient Urartu, located at Tushpa (modern Van): see P. E. Zimansky, *Ecology and Empire: The Structure of the Urartian State* (Chicago, 1985), 51, 78–80. Similarly (29), Gabinius governed Syria in 55 (not 65) B.C.; the battle of Carrhae dates to 53 (not 54) B.C.; and Corbulo in 61 did not support the Armenian king Tigranes's invasion of Adiabene (cf. Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.1,3), but only tried to save Tigranes from Parthian reaction. Further (40), the annexation of Cappadocia (not Commagene) and the disposition of Cappadocia's king Archelaus in 17 brought a reduction in the Roman sales tax (Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.42; Dio, 57.17.3–7). Armenia (52) did not become a province after the Parthian war of 161–166, but reverted to rule by a client king supported by Roman troops, the pre-Neronian situation under Claudius (41–54). The view that the Flavians intended to encircle Armenia with a chain of forts (cf. Tacitus, *Histories*, 2.6.2) goes back to W. Schur, *Die Orientspolitik des Kaisers Nero* (Leipzig, 1923), 35–36, and does not originate (Isaac, 50 with n. 205) with A. B. Bosworth, "Vespasian's Reorganization of the North-West Frontier," *Antichthon* 10 (1976): 63–78.

bases on the upper Euphrates, and the need to improve communications (road building). Vespasian (69-79) prepared for a future Armenian war[95]—so Isaac, who omits that about three-fourths of Asia Minor, from Cappadocia to Phrygia, was united as a huge province under one governor from at least ca. 75 to ca. 114—a most unusual situation, since the Augustan system aimed at limiting the territorial control and tenure of governors in provinces with legions (cf. Tacitus, *Agricola*, 39.2). But of course none of this can supposedly be called strategy, even though Isaac realizes (41) that the forward movement of legions to the upper Euphrates is paralleled by Vespasian's similar advance of legions in Upper Germany; and he argues (in good reductionist fashion: 51) that no source states that Vespasian's policy was defensive. But in fact no detailed narrative sources for the Flavian era exist except for Byzantine epitomes of Cassius Dio and Suetonius's gossipy biographies.

If Vespasian wanted to prepare for a future Armenian war (whenever it would be profitable) and lacked defensive ideas, he and his successor sons apparently distrusted the Neronian compromise with Parthia, whereby Nero surrendered the Armenian throne to a Parthian candidate provided that the Roman emperor invested him. But Tiridates, crowned by Nero in 66, was no doubt long dead by 112 when the Armenian succession provoked Trajan's Parthian war (114-117). So a change of Armenian kings occurred, unnoticed in extant Graeco-Roman sources,[96] most probably under the Flavians, who thus by-passed a potential casus belli, just as they refused to help the Parthians against Alan inroads.[97] A Parthian victory of the Syrian governor (73/74-77/78), Marcus Ulpius Traianus (father of the future emperor), is obscure in date and details.[98] Certainly the Flavians had occasion for hostile or friendly Parthian entanglements, but none were wanted.

Nevertheless, the Flavian strategy emerges from the detailed context of individual events. Nero's compromise with Parthia essentially sur-

95. Isaac, 29-30, 33, 35, 41-42, 50-51; cf. Luttwak, 60-61, 66, on the Flavian defensive policy as a basis for offensive action beyond the border. Isaac (35) rejects that the construction of a harbor at Seleuceia in Pieria and a canal linking it to Antioch, the Syrian capital, was part of a planned infrastructure for a future Parthian war. See D. van Berchem, "La porte de Séleucie de Piéria et l'infrastructure logistique des guerres parthiques," *Bonner Jahrbücher* 185 (1985): 47-87.

96. The chronological problems of Armenian sources cannot be dealt with here.

97. Suetonius, *Domitian*, 2.2; Dio, 66.15.3; cf. M. Heil, "M. Hirrius Fronto Neratius Pansa, legatus exercitus Africae," *Chiron* 19 (1989): 165-84, esp. 172-77; A. Barzan, "Roma e i Parti tra pace e guerra fredda nel 1 secolo dell' imperio," in Sordi (supra n. 68), 216 with n. 17: Parthian support for a false Nero in response to this denial of aid.

98. References in E. Dabrowa, "Les rapports entre Rome et les Parthes sous Vespasian," *Syria* 58 (1981): 187-204 at 203 n. 5, who stresses the continuing tensions between Rome and Parthia.

rendered Armenia to Parthian control. As a fourth-century epitomator stated, "Nero lost Armenia."[99] The whole of Asia Minor, devoid of legions and formerly protected by a pro-Roman client king on the Armenian throne, now lay defenseless except for the forces of the Syrian governor far to the south. Adding legions to the upper Euphrates frontier opposite Armenia, a natural consequence of the Neronian compromise, had to be more than simply an improvement of lateral communications, unless of course one believes that Rome so trusted the Parthians, famous for trickery like many Eastern peoples, that no defensive measures were needed.[100] Despite official public pronouncements to the contrary, Parthians in the first century were always regarded as enemies.[101]

Isaac can find no threat to Rome from either Parthia or Sassanid Persia, although at one point he concedes possible long-term effects of both the Parthian invasion of 40 B.C., which for about a year overran Syria, Palestine, and southern Asia Minor nearly to the Aegean coast, and Sapor I's campaigns of the mid-third century, which captured Antioch, Armenia, Caucasian Iberia, and reached central Asia Minor. One might add the lasting impression of Carrhae on the Roman psyche, a disaster ranking with Allia, Cannae, and Adrianople in the annals of Roman defeats.[102] Failure of the Parthians and Sassanids, however, to hold any Roman territory west of the Euphrates or to declare its annexation supposedly indicates a lack of territorial ambition in the two Iranian empires.

Yet Isaac's case rests on the weak premise of an historical determinism that only what did happen could have happened, and ignores the psychological aspects of threat. Isaac never asks why Parthians and Sassanids did not exploit their military successes—a question requiring discussion of Iranian internal history.[103] The Parthians did not acquire

99. Festus, *Breviarium*, 20: *Nero . . . amisit Armeniam.*

100. On Parthian trickery, see e.g. Frontinus, *Stratagems*, 1.1.6; Plutarch, *Crassus*, 22.5; 30.3, 5; Dio, 40.20; Horace, *Letters*, 2.1.112, *Odes*, 4.15.23; Polyaenus, 7.41; cf. K.-H. Ziegler, *Die Beziehungen zwischen Rom und dem Partherreich* (Wiesbaden, 1964), 33, 44, 94–95. Armenians and Sassanids were also thought to be tricky. Armenians: e.g. Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.3.1, 12.46.1; Sassanids: e.g. Aurelius Victor, *Caesars*, 32.5; *Historia Augusta, Valerian*, 1.2; Themistius, *Orations* (ed. G. Downey), 11.148d, cf. 10.135d; anon. *De rebus bellicis*, 19.2; Ammianus Marcellinus 25.1.5, 3.1; Procopius, *Wars*, 2.3.9–10.

101. Barzanò (supra n. 97), 212 with n. 4, 220.

102. See D. Timpe, "Die Bedeutung des Schlacht von Carrhae," *Museum Helveticum* 19 (1962): 104–29. Dio (40.14.3–4) considered the Parthians Rome's military equal.

103. Dio (40.15.5–6) attributes Parthian failure to expand west of the Euphrates to a lack of logistic preparation and encountering new types of terrain. Terrain also figures in explanations of Roman failures in Central Europe and the Near East: see

an empire because they lacked the desire to expand. Both Parthians and Sassanids coveted Transcaucasia (Colchis and Iberia [former Soviet Georgia] and Albania [Azerbaijan]).[104] In fact the Parthians fit Thucydides's paradigm that an empire's decline begins when it ceases to grow.[105] But from the first century B.C. on, the Parthians suffered rebellions and innumerable civil wars for the throne. Augustus and Tiberius promoted this by keeping in stock a supply of Parthian princes as potential pretenders—an aspect of Roman policy Isaac ignores.[106] The Sassanids, though better organized and militarily superior to the Parthians, also suffered dynastic strife and, like the Romans, had to contend with barbarian inroads on their northern borders from the fourth century on.

Explaining why something did not happen can be perplexing. But if threat must be equated with annexation of another's territory or complete conquest of the rival, then Isaac has accurately summarized the dismal record of Roman-Byzantine wars with the Sassanids at least for the period after Julian's Persian campaign (363),[107] when in various struggles to upset the balance of power Rome eventually came to recognize the

Luttwak, 45–46; Mann (supra n.3), 510–11 and (supra n.4) 177–78; cf. Traina, "Aspettando i barbari," 255–56, 259, 265–75. The social archaeologists have a different view on why expansion stopped, to which we return below.

104. Tacitus (*Annals*, 4.5.5) refutes Isaac's conclusion (50) that Transcaucasia had no role in Roman-Parthian strife. Isaac (231 n. 6) erroneously accepts the view that Armenia naturally controlled Iberia. Neither the ancient nor the modern history of Georgia and Armenia supports this interpretation. On the history of Transcaucasia through the second century, see E. L. Wheeler, *Flavius Arrianus: A Political and Military Biography* (diss., Duke University, 1977), 54–259.

105. Thucydides, 6.18.3–4, 6–7; cf. Wolski's thesis that the superiority of Parthian kings to the nobility resulted from use of tribes from South Russia and Central Asia as mercenaries to facilitate expansion of the empire; civil wars began when expansion stopped: "Le rôle et l'importance des mercénaires dans l'état parthe," *Iranica Antiqua* 5 (1965): 103–15.

106. Likewise omitted in E. S. Gruen, "The Imperial Policy of Augustus," in K. A. Raaflaub and M. Toher, eds., *Between Republic and Empire: Interpretations of Augustus and His Principate* (Berkeley, 1990), 397–98. Cf. S. Elbern, "Geiseln in Rom," *Athenaeum* 70 (1990): 97–140; E. Dabrowa, "Les premiers 'otages' parthes à Rome," *Folia Orientalia* 24 (1987): 63–71; A. Aymard, "Les 'otages' barbares au début de l'Empire," *JRS* 51 (1961): 136–42.

107. Isaac, 219, although his account (229–35) of Transcaucasia and defense of the Caucasus passes is superficial, failing inter alia to note the complexities of pro- and anti-Sassanid factions among the Armenian nobility and of the new problem of Christians vs. Zoroastrians. The ancient sources for Roman-Sassanid diplomacy and wars through 363 are now conveniently collected and translated in M. H. Dodgson and S. N. C. Lieu, eds., *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars (AD 226–363): A Documentary History* (London, 1991).

Sassanids as an equal—a status generally denied to the Parthians.[108] Yet Isaac ignores that the ancients recognized a distinction in strategic aims and rules of conduct between wars for honor and empire (usually involving other states) and those for survival (usually with barbarians or pre-state peoples).[109] Wars with Parthians and Sassanids would belong to the first category.

The objection must be raised, however, that Isaac's equation of threat with actual events and his rejection of Roman deterrence are false. Regardless of whether Parthian-Sassanid claims to be heirs to the old Achaemenid Persian Empire (supra n. 92) were historical realities or merely Roman propaganda, threat, a matter of perception, is psychological, requiring only fear of endangerment whether real or imagined. How many trillions of dollars have been spent since 1950 to deter a superpower nuclear war? Only hindsight permits the luxury of saying the threat did not exist because it did not materialize. The Romans had ample reason after Carrhae and the Parthian invasion of 40 B.C. to fear Parthian capabilities, a perception later justifiably transferred to the Sassanids. Nor has Luttwak's view of the Romans as astute practitioners of the psychological use of power anachronistically imposed a modern concept on the Romans. Greeks and Romans knew the psychological aspects of power. Thucydides's "truest cause" (1.23.6) of the Peloponnesian War (431–404 B.C.) was Spartan fear of Athens's increasing power—strictly a psychological motive. Stratagems, for which the ancients were famous, are often more psychological than physical: deception and trickery are mind games.[110] Even pre-state warriors knew the value of terror, a psychological technique related to stratagem,

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108. For Roman-Sassanid relations from the viewpoint of international law, see S. Verosta, "International Law in Europe and Western Asia between 100 and 650 A.D.," *Académie de Droit International, Recueil des Cours* 113 (1964-III: Leiden, 1966): 485–600; C. Dupont, "Guerre et paix dans l'empire romain de 312 à 565 après Jésus Christ," *Revue Internationale des Droits de l'Antiquité* 22 (1975): 189–222; E. Christos, "Some Aspects of Roman-Persian Legal Relations," *Kleronomia* 8 (1976): 1–48; R. C. Blockley, *Rome and Persia: International Relations in Late Antiquity* (Ottawa, 1985), and *East Roman Foreign Policy: Formation and Conduct from Diocletian to Anastasius* (Liverpool, 1992). Cf. V. L. Bullough, "The Roman Empire vs. Persia 363–502: A Study of Successful Deterrence," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 7 (1963): 55–68.

109. Cicero, *On Duties*, 1.38, cf. 3.86–87; *On Friendship*, 28, *For Sestius*, 59; Diodorus Siculus, 19.72.3, 20.80.3, 32.4.4; Appian, *Libyan (Punic) Wars*, 58, 254–57; Plutarch, *Demetrius*, 5.3.

110. Luttwak, 2–4, 33, 195–200; on stratagems, see Wheeler (supra n. 59) passim; idem, "The Modern Legality of Frontinus' Stratagems," *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen* 44.1 (1988): 7–29, and "Ruses and Stratagems," in T. N. Dupuy, ed., *International Military and Defense Encyclopedia*, forthcoming.

and Romans skillfully employed terrorist tactics.[111] Moreover, Thucydides parallels Luttwak's ideas of Rome projecting the psychological dimension of power as a defensive technique,[112] and the idea of deterrence (in the sense of military strength and preparedness as a prerequisite for peace) flourished in antiquity.[113]

Nevertheless, in Isaac's view no Parthian-Sassanid threat existed, so the field is free after his superficial assessment of the upper Euphrates and the northeast to develop his model of the Roman army as a profit-seeking instrument and force of occupation in the area south of the Taurus, the areas of northern Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, and Roman Arabia (Transjordan), the region to which the bulk of his study is devoted. This geographically lopsided perspective of Rome's Eastern frontier fits in with recent interest in Arabs and Roman Arabia,[114] although from the viewpoint of international relations the Arabian frontier was of secondary importance to northern Mesopotamia and Armenia until the third century and not of greater significance than the northern areas even then or later. The prosperous province of Syria of course remained a concern in all periods.

Roman Judea underlies Isaac's view of the army as a force of occupation, as if Roman efforts at pacification and provincial control have been ignored.[115] Although the case for Judea may be plausible and supported by hitherto unused Talmudic sources, problems arise from the attempt to generalize the Judean model to Transjordan (Arabia)

111. On the link between stratagem and terror, see E. L. Wheeler, "Terrorism and Military Theory: An Historical Perspective," *Journal of Terrorism and Political Violence* 3 (1991): 6–33 (= C. McCauley, ed., *Terrorism Research and Public Policy* [London, 1991], 6–33); Roman terrorism: e.g. Polybius, 10.15.4–5; Tacitus, *Annals,* 14.23.1; *Germania,* 29.2, 30.5, 32.2; *Agricola,* 20; Luttwak, 3–4, on the siege of Masada.

112. Thucydides, 6.11.4, cf. 6.38.4, and Tacitus, *Annals,* 15.31.2; Luttwak in supra n. 111 rejected by Starr, 121, followed by Ferrill, *Roman Imperial Grand Strategy,* 32, "Strategy," 80. Cf. on the concept of threat P. Karsten, P. D. Howell, and A. F. Allen, *Military Threats: A Systematic Historical Analysis of the Determination of Success* (Westport, 1984).

113. See W. Haase, "'Si vis pacem, para bellum'. Zur Bedeutung militärischer Stärker in der römischen Kaiserzeit," in J. Fitz, ed., *Limes: Akten des XI. internationalen Limeskongresses* (Budapest, 1977), 721–56.

114. See e.g. G. W. Bowersock, *Roman Arabia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983); M. Satre, *Trois études sur l'Arabe romaine et byzantine* (Brussels, 1982); I. Shahîd, *Rome and the Arabs: A Prolegomena to the Study of Byzantium and the Arabs* (Washington, 1984), *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century* (Washington, 1984), *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century* (Washington, 1989); S. T. Parker, *Romans and Saracens: A History of the Arabian Frontier* (Philadelphia, 1986) and, ed., *The Roman Frontier in Central Jordan: Interim Report on the Limes Arabicus Project, 1980–85* (Oxford, 1987).

115. Cf. Tacitus, *Agricola,* 19–21, on Agricola's pacification efforts in Britain.

and Syria. To prove his thesis, any threat from nomadic Arabs must be eliminated; the militarized border and any defensive concerns must be argued away; and the Roman advance into the eastern desert needs to become exclusively protection for profitable caravan routes. Hence the exploitation of provincials can be studied in detail (Ch. VI); Rome's emperors can be shown devoid of interest in developing provincial life through urbanization (Ch. VIII); and a need for internal security can be demonstrated from ideological resistance to Rome (the Jews) and extensive banditry (Ch. II).

As our concern is Isaac's attack on Roman strategy, a detailed response to all these theses is unnecessary. Yes, corruption and exploitation of provincials did occur, but Isaac's admirable collection of evidence on banditry only confirms the known: banditry existed in the Roman East, as elsewhere in the Empire. Extensive banditry does not eliminate a concern for external threats.[116] Moreover, a recently published papyrus archive of the second century from south of the Dead Sea does not indicate Jewish hostility to Rome or that Roman units here were an internal security force.[117]

More significant for our purposes is Isaac's view of the Eastern *limes* and Roman forts. As this was an open frontier, no attempt at a continuous defensive barrier covering hundreds of miles of desert perimeter occurred, and the Euphrates marked the Roman border in northern Syria only until the acquisition of northern Mesopotamia (north of the Khabur River). Attempts (so far) to plot fortified lines, based to some extent on aerial photography of remains (not always Roman or Byzantine), have long been refuted for Mesopotamia, where defense seems to have centered on fortified strongholds, especially cities. Even the supposed frontier line (argued for Trajan, Septimius Severus, and Diocletian), running from the Euphrates to the Tigris along the Khabur River and the Jebel Sinjar ridge to Eski Mosul (opposite Ninevah), would still have its eastern flank on the Tigris exposed.[118] But it must be emphasized that Roman Mesopotamia remains a poorly explored area archaeologically.

116. Isaac missed some support for his thesis in J. Dobiás, "Les premiers rapports des Romains avec les Parthes et l'occupation de la Syrie," *Archiv Orientální* 3 (1931): 215-56, who argues that Roman annexation of Syria resulted from a desire to stop piracy in the eastern Mediterranean.

117. See M. Goodman, "Babatha's Story," *JRS* 81 (1991): 169-75, esp. 170.

118. Isaac, 255-57; on the Khabur-Jebel Sinjar line, see F. A. Lepper, *Trajan's Parthian War* (Oxford, 1948), 114-21, 148-50; cf. D. Oates, *Studies in the Ancient History of Northern Iraq* (London, 1968), 68, 71. For new arguments that Trajan did not create a province of Assyria, see C. S. Lightfoot, "Trajan's Parthian War and the Fourth Century Perspective," *JRS* 80 (1990): 121-24, contested by D. S. Potter, "The Inscriptions of the Bronze Herakles from Mesene: Vologeses IV's War with Rome and the Date of Tacitus' *Annales*," *ZPE* 88 (1991): 277-90, esp. 279-86.

Nevertheless, major invasion routes to the most desirable Roman territory (northern Syria and Asia Minor) were limited chiefly to following the Euphrates or Tigris Rivers, just as geography dictated the same routes to Romans seeking the Parthian-Persian capital Ctesiphon (near Baghdad).[119] Given the limited routes of large armies into Roman territory, a continuous perimeter defense was unnecessary, and Roman troops were stationed along major lines of communications. Yet two of Isaac's prongs seem misdirected: first, the lack of emphasis on defensive lines in Ammianus's and Procopius's accounts of Persian campaigns in Mesopotamia; and second, the claim that occupation of northern Mesopotamia did not protect Syria from Persian invasion in the third century.[120] A defense based on scattered strongholds like fortified cities is only a holding action until a field army can arrive, and no one has argued a Maginot Line mentality for the Romans (cf. supra n. 68). Yet the Emperor Julian in 363 justifies his Persian expedition in terms of avenging recent Roman defeats in the East and providing security for the Empire's eastern flank (latus: Ammianus Marcellinus, 23.5.18). Furthermore, for the Persian attacks on Syria in the third century, Isaac fails to note that these occurred after the defeat of Roman field armies. In the disarray of such defeats the Empire was exposed to invasion. But the value of Roman occupation of northern Mesopotamia is clear from the lack of development of the military installations in Cappadocia, which became only a secondary frontier after Mesopotamia's occupation.[121]

Southern Syria and Arabia, however, pose a different problem: the desert precluded major invasions by conventional armies, but the transhumance of nomadic Arabs and occasional raids could be troublesome. Luttwak saw the Arabs as a low-intensity threat and, as nearly all physical evidence of Roman military installations on this frontier dates to the fourth century or later, he used this area as the paradigm for his view of defense in depth, which he then generalized to all Late Roman frontiers.[122] Mann severely criticized Luttwak's defense in depth for most frontiers, though conceding it in northern Gaul and in Syria and Arabia.[123] Isaac (186–88) will have none of it, and by attacking the basis

119. See, most recently, W. E. Kaegi, "Challenges to Late Roman and Byzantine Military Operations in Iraq (4th–9th Centuries)," *Klio* 73 (1991): 593–94.

120. Isaac, 257, 260, 16; cf. Dio, 75.2.3–3; supra 18–19 with nn. 41–42.

121. See Wheeler (supra n. 66); cf. Isaac, 171.

122. Luttwak, 159–90; cf. the works of Parker (supra n. 114), who has extensively excavated on the Arabian frontier. Ferrill, *Roman Imperial Grand Strategy*, 21, errs in claiming that Trajan built extensive frontier fortifications in Arabia.

123. Mann (supra n. 4), 180–81, cf. (supra n. 3) 520; likewise Whittaker, *Frontières*, 88; Ferrill accepts defense in depth, but criticizes it as ineffective: *Roman Imperial Grand Strategy*, ix–x, "Strategy," 72–73.

of the paradigm seeks to eliminate not only a Roman defense in depth but any Roman defense.

Like Parthians and Sassanids, the Arab nomads (for Isaac) posed no threat: nomads and settlers enjoyed peaceful coexistence. Similarly, Trajan's annexation of Arabia in 106 cannot be tied to conflict with Parthia, and the lack of surviving evidence for a Roman advance into the Syrian desert before Septimius Severus (193-211) would indicate only policing (not protecting) the populace and security for profitable caravan routes.[124] These views are tied to two premises on the stationing of Roman troops and the function of Roman forts: first, the distribution of troops (if near a foreign border) permits no conclusion about strategy, but (as Isaac argues almost in self-contradiction) a widespread distribution over time in the interior indicates their use as an internal security force; second, placement of forts is no clue to their function: forts need not have a defensive purpose, since they can merely guard lines of communication, house soldiers for policing functions, or not be forts at all but road stations for travelers.[125]

Once again, the case is speciously strong but hardly airtight. Some problems permit only arguments rather than solutions, such as the obscure motives for annexation of Arabia and the peaceful or bellicose nature of Arab transhumance.[126] If Isaac's argument for Rome's advance into the desert as caravan rather than territorial protection be accepted, then the contradiction arises of bedouins hostile in the desert but peaceful during transhumance across Roman borders. Similarly, he

124. Isaac, 33-34, 68-77, 99, 101, 119, 131-33, 213-15.

125. Isaac, 6-7, 33, 54-55, 94-95, 101, 103, 159, 171, 184, 207-8. I. Shatzman anticipated many of Isaac's ideas (e.g. no defense in depth, emphasis on internal security, and some sites not military), in refuting the existence of a Flavian military frontier running across the Negev from Raphia on the Mediterranean to the southern end of the Dead Sea, although he concedes (147) a defensive line here from the fourth to the seventh centuries: see "The Beginnings of the Roman Defensive System in Judaea," *American Journal of Ancient History* 8 (1983): 130-60; an early Negev frontier is defended by M. Gichon, "Where and Why Did the Romans Commence the Defense of Southern Palestine?" in Maxfield and Dobson, *Roman Frontier Studies 1989*, 318-25.

126. Roman Arabia: Bowersock (supra n. 114), 76-109; Shahîd, *Prolegomena* (supra n. 114), 19-21; contra, J. W. Eadie, "Artifacts of Annexation: Trajan's Grand Strategy and Arabia," in J. W. Eadie and J. Ober, eds., *The Craft of the Ancient Historian: Essays in Honor of Chester G. Starr* (Lanham, 1985), 407-24; transhumance: E. B. Banning, "Peasants, Pastoralists and Pax Romana: Mutualism in the Southern Highlands of Jordan," *BASOR* 261 (1986): 25-50, and "De Bello Paceque: A Reply to Parker," ibid., 265 (1987): 52-54; S. T. Parker, "Peasants, Pastoralists, and Pax Romana: A Different View," ibid., 165 (1987): 35-51, and "The Nature of Rome's Arabian Frontier," in Maxfield and Dobson, *Roman Frontier Studies 1989*, 498-504; P. Mayerson, "Saracens and Romans: Micro-Macro Relationships," *BASOR* 274 (1989): 71-79 (against Parker).

distinguishes a defensive Roman posture for the Late Roman period in northern Syria and Mesopotamia (a sudden about-face in a book arguing that Romans did not think defensively) from the exclusive concern for internal security in southern Syria, Palestine, and Arabia, even though discussing at some length Roman and Sassanid use of Arab tribes and confederations for guerrilla warfare.[127] The concession of a Late Roman defensive posture in Mesopotamia is offset by an emphasis on the gradual development of this policy (i.e., no central planning) and reliance on locals to defend themselves. Nothing is said about the deteriorating military capability of the central Roman government especially in the fifth century.[128]

Isaac's premises on troop distribution and the function of forts are unpersuasive. Denying any outside threat puts troops on a supposed border in a vacuum, but Isaac spends little space on the tactical types of units and their placement as a key to their function.[129] The most recent discussion of troop distribution in Arabia and Syria Phoenice, as seen in the Notitia Dignitatum of ca. 395, clearly shows the bulk of troops, so far as sites have been identified, along the major border highways and not in the interior.[130] Strictly road security, Isaac would argue, but surely a distinction between protecting an army's lateral lines of communication and defending such a line against potential outside threats is hairsplitting. The size of the legionary fortress at el-Lejjun east of the Dead Sea in Jordan is totally disproportionate to mere communications security.[131]

Likewise the case against the military function of forts. Luttwak

127. Isaac, 76-77, 213-15, 235-37, 241, 248-49, 260. Despite an ingenious argument (226-28), the denial of any sense of Arab nationalism in the rise of the Palmyrene Empire in the 260s seems politically tendentious.

128. Isaac, 250, 254, 260. Cf. the military activity of Synesius of Cyrene as bishop of Ptolemais: J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, Barbarians and Bishops: Army, Church, and State in the Age of Arcadius and Chrysostom (Oxford, 1990), 228-35.

129. Isaac convincingly shows that colonies of veterans (as communities) lacked any connection with defense and, more significantly, that the limitanei of the Late Empire were not a peasant militia tied to the land: 169-70, 208-13, 311-32, and "Limes," 139-47; cf. Luttwak, 177-90; Ferrill (supra n. 4), 23-27. MacMullen (Corruption, 175-76, 274 n. 17) and Whittaker (Frontières, 89) anticipated Isaac's view of the limitanei. Veterans settled on frontier lands, however, could be mobilized effectively for military purposes: see S. Johnson, "Frontier Policy in the Anonymous," in Hassell and Ireland (supra n. 58), 1: 67-75, esp. 68.

130. S. T. Parker, "The Fourth Century Garrison of Arabia: Strategic Implications for the South-Eastern Frontier," in French and Lightfoot, Eastern Frontier, 2: 355-72; on the date and evolution of the Notitia Dignitatum, see now J. C. Mann, "The Notitia Dignitatum—Dating and Survival," Britannia 22 (1991): 216-19.

131. Cf. S. T. Parker, "Preliminary Report on the 1989 Season of the Limes Arabicus Project," BASOR, Suppl. 27 (1991): 141.

strenuously argued against a Roman "Maginot Line mentality" and denied any tactical function to Roman forts of the Principate, but Isaac would even deny the defensive function of many Late Roman forts.[132] Certainly all structures in literary and documentary sources called *praesidia* and *castra*, especially in provincial interiors, could have civilian functions or even be road stations (*mansiones*); Diocletian's palace at Split (in the form of an army camp) and the walls of the Kremlin are cited as examples of nonmilitary use of military architecture (Isaac 172-208). A different perspective would see here the permeation of military language among civilians, not a basis for demilitarizing the function of frontier forts, and the modern example of the Kremlin, originally a fortification, is unfortunate.

Isaac's trump card, however, Procopius's exaggerations about Justinian's building program, especially his erroneous claim that a fort in the Sinai defended Palestine against outside Saracens, does not come from the top of the deck.[133] Procopius's panegyrical foibles in describing sites he had not seen in a work celebrating Justinian's achievements are only a straw man for Isaac's case, betraying once again the literalist methodology that ignores a source's larger context.

In sum, Isaac's attempt to generalize the internal security model of Judea into a complete denial of Roman strategy falls far short of its goal. A misunderstanding of the concept of threat and a faulty methodology produce an argument more sophistic than accurate.[134] Certainly the mid-fourth-century emperors Julian and Valentinian I, like Augustus and Tiberius, thought Roman border forts of great defensive value, as they labored to shore up Roman security against barbarians on the Rhine and Danube frontiers.[135] Even in death Valentinian was remembered as an advocate of border defense (Ammianus Marcellinus, 29.4.11). Yet Isaac's barbs at Roman strategy are not without effect. What can be salvaged of Roman strategy?

[Note: Part II of this essay will be published in the April 1993 issue.]

132. Luttwak, 61-71, 134-35; cf. Isaac, 6-7, 103, 159, 186-87, 207-8, 417-18.

133. Procopius, *Buildings*, 5.8.9; Isaac, 94-95, 375.

134. The discussion of the military value of rivers (411-13) seems particularly contrived and is indeed compromised by its concluding disclaimer: "This is not of course to deny that a river can play an important role in a military campaign, or that it will have been used as an obstacle by the Roman army." In general on rivers as borders in antiquity, see R. von Scheliha, *Die Wassergrenze im Altertum* (Breslau, 1931).

135. See H. von Petrikovits, "Fortifications in the North-Western Roman Empire from the Third to the Fifth Centuries A.D.," *JRS* 61 (1971): 178-218; cf. T. S. Burns, "The Germans and Roman Frontier Policy (ca A.D. 350-378)," *Arheoloski Vestnik* 32 (1981): 390-402; for Augustus and Tiberius, see e.g. Werner (supra n. 79).

Methodological Limits and
the Mirage of Roman Strategy:
Part II[*]

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Recent works by C. R. Whittaker and Benjamin Isaac deny a Roman concept or use of strategy. Part I of this essay, printed in the January 1993 edition of this journal, presented methodological objections to this conclusion, which are derived from the new archaeology, the Annales school, and reductionism, and exposed omissions of evidence and false interpretations regarding Roman frontiers in general and the Eastern frontier in particular. Part II offers a case for Roman use of strategy.

BENJAMIN Isaac's assault on Roman strategy (*Limits of Empire,* 372-418) counters Edward N. Luttwak's "systematization...of modern scholarship" (Isaac, 5) in *Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire* with a synthesis of material from Luttwak's critics. J. C. Mann had already argued that frontiers evolved without planning and that no coherent Roman strategy existed: Romans tended to react rather than plan and anticipate events. F. Millar emphasized the lack of a general staff for centralized planning and Roman geographical ignorance that eliminated any possibility of planning, while J. B. Campbell reemphasized the lack of a general staff and planning, although distinguishing strategic aims for Roman wars in the north and west from a glory motive for

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[*] The following abbreviations will be used: *ANRW* = *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* (Berlin, 1972-); Isaac = Benjamin Isaac, *The Limits of Empire: The Roman Army in the East* (Oxford, 1990); *JRS* = *Journal of Roman Studies;* Luttwak = Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire* (Baltimore, 1976); *MEFAR* = *Mélanges de l'Ecole Française de Rome: Antiquité.*

Eastern wars.[136] Likewise, a cost-effectiveness motive for Roman Imperial expansion and annexation (i.e., expansion only if profitable: some peoples were not worth conquering) appeared in Mann, D. Braund, and Campbell.[137] In contrast, C. R. Whittaker and the social archaeologists, though rejecting Luttwak's views, also attack Mann's thesis of "accidental" frontiers and the emphasis on Roman reaction without prior planning. No centralized strategy supposedly existed, but frontiers were determined by local demographics, economic factors, and Roman logistics.[138] After such attacks on Luttwak's schematization of frontier systems and his stress on centralized command and control, not only Roman strategy but even Roman survival are now reduced to pure luck.[139] Surely the scholarly pendulum has swung too far. Critics often commit Luttwak's alleged error by rejecting Roman strategy not defined on its own contemporary terms but by twentieth-century standards. The following will attempt a less skewed perspective.

Isaac's sweeping denial of Roman strategy (375-76) fails to distinguish between grand strategy, a state's military planning and action over an extended period, and campaign or war strategy. We have noted (Part I, 21-24) the difficulties of tying ancient events to the limits of an eighteenth-century word and of ignoring the evolution of strategy as a formal concept in ancient military thought. It would be superfluous to demonstrate that ancient states went to war with definite war aims and plans, and that the "Great Captains" of antiquity made preparations, including planning, to attain their goals. Ancient commanders under-

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136. J. C. Mann, "The Frontiers of the Principate," *ANRW*, II.1 (1974; hereafter "Mann, 'Frontiers'"): 508-14, and J. C. Mann, "Power, Force and the Frontiers of the Empire," *JRS* 69 (1979; hereafter "Mann, 'Power'"): 175-80; F. Millar, "Emperors, Frontiers and Foreign Relations, 31 B.C.-A.D. 378," *Britannia* 13 (1982): 1--23; J. B. Campbell, *The Emperor and the Roman Army, 31 B.C.-A.D. 235* (Oxford, 1984), 114-15, 332, 356-57, 390-93.

137. Mann, "Power," 177-78; D. Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King* (London, 1984), 189; Campbell (supra n. 136), 390-401. Cf. Strabo, 2.5.8, 4.5.3, 6.4.2, 17.3.24; Appian, *Roman History*, Preface 7; Dio, 75.3.2-3. Luttwak, 45-46, suggested a "techno-military reason" for limits on expansion.

138. C. R. Whittaker, *Les frontières de l'empire romain*, tr. C. Goudineau (Paris, 1989: hereafter "Whittaker, *Frontières*"), 42-43, 48-49, 53; cf. M. Fulford, "Territorial Expansion and the Roman Empire," *World Archaeology* 23 (1992): 294-305; R. Jones, "Archaeology, the *longue durée* and the Limits of the Roman Empire," in J. Bintliff, ed., *The* Annales *School and Archaeology* (New York, 1991), 101-3.

139. P. A. Brunt, *Roman Imperial Themes* (Oxford, 1990: hereafter "Brunt"), 476. Of course Onasander, writing his *Strategikos* in the period 49-59, denied (Preface, 5-6) that Roman success was a matter of luck; cf. Polybius, 18.28.4-5. Greeks from the second century B.C. to the second century A.D. were fond of attributing Roman success to luck: see J.-L. Ferrary, *Philhellenisme et impérialisme* (Rome, 1988), 265-73.

stood the principles of war without formulating descriptive terms, e.g., "center of gravity," "indirect approach," etc. (cf. Thucydides, 3.13.5–6). The use of campaign or war strategy holds true, even if the motives for Rome's Eastern campaigns be limited to glory or profit.

But Isaac further implies (170, 375) that Romans had no word for strategy. The sources indicate the contrary; only a few examples must suffice. Livy has Hannibal characterize his strategic advice at Antiochus III's council of war in 191 B.C. as a "plan of the whole war" (*de ratione universi belli*: 36.7.16), which at the end of his speech is called his *consilium* (advice, plan: 36.7.21).[140] *Consilium*, also a synonym for stratagem,[141] frequently appears in the sense of "strategy" in Latin sources: e.g., Augustus's final policy of renouncing further conquests is *consilium coercendi intra terminos imperii* (Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.11.8; cf. *Agricola*, 13.2); Tacitus calls Vespasian's council of war in 69 for planning his strategy against Vitellius a *consilium de summa rerum* (*Histories*, 2.81.3, cf. 2.82); the Emperor Lucius Verus, in sending his former tutor Fronto sources from which to write a history of his Parthian war (161–166), wants the accounts of his plans to be recorded (*consiliorum meorum rationes*: Fronto, II, 194 Loeb = *Ad Verum*, 2.3, ed. van den Hout); and Cicero, discussing Pompey's strategy against Julius Caesar in 49 B.C., distinguishes a Themistoclean strategy (*consilium Themistocleum*) from a Periclean.[142]

Moreover, a Roman equivalent of the modern concept of grand strategy can be found in Cicero's view of what a senator should know about the military and foreign affairs (*Laws*, 3.41). Indeed, Greeks of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. were already thinking in grand-strategic terms and the truisms of foreign policy and strategy had been reduced to commonplaces (*topoi*) in manuals of rhetoric.[143] Would

140. Cf. *ratio belli* at Livy, 40.21.7, on Philip V's strategic plans in 181 B.C. A claim that Hannibal's speech (Livy, 36.7.2–21; cf. Appian, *Syrian Wars*, 14) is an invention of Polybius has no bearing on Livy's use of vocabulary: see N. G. L. Hammond and F. W. Walbank, *A History of Macedonia*, vol. 3, *336-167 B.C.* (Oxford, 1988), 450, n. 2.

141. See E. L. Wheeler, *Stratagem and the Vocabulary of Military Trickery* (Leiden, 1988), 52–56, and 51–52, where a view that Romans before the Second Punic War had no word for stratagem is refuted.

142. Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, 7.11.3 (= no.134 ed. Shackleton-Bailey), 10.8.4 (= no.199 ed. Shackleton-Bailey); cf. Plutarch, *Pompey*, 63.1. The distinction of types of strategy and their identification with specific historical figures represent a significant milestone in the development of ancient strategic thought. On the strategy of Caesar and Pompey in 49 B.C., see H.-M. Ottmer, *Die Rubikon Legende. Untersuchungen zu Caesars und Pompeius's Strategie vor und nach Ausbruch des Bürgerkrieges* (Boppard am Rhein, 1979).

143. See e.g., Thucydides, 3.13.5–6; Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 3.6.3–18, *Anabasis*, 1.5.9; Polyaenus, 7.16.2 (on Artaxerxes); strategy in rhetorical manuals:

critics of Luttwak prefer to see the Romans as a regression in military thought?

Too much stress, however, is placed on what is known of individual emperors, thus ignoring a broader view of what Romans collectively did. As Ferrill argues, all emperors, even the non-expansionists, had to deal with military and frontier policies that had developed over time.[144] The vast bulk of Rome's state archives has long since vanished; too many gaps disrupt any document trail. Indeed, the case for the non-existence of Roman strategy based on the apparent absence of a government bureau for strategic planning is essentially an argument from silence, coupled with tunnel vision on what strategy must be. By the logic of this argument, it could be said that Rome and modern Britain lacked the science of government because neither had a written constitution. Ancient societies, even literate ones, still relied on unwritten tradition, custom, and institutional memory.[145] The gradual and relatively late development of strategy as a formal concept in written military theory illustrates the point.[146]

Furthermore, although Luttwak attributed nearly every Roman war to a rational search for more defensible borders, it must certainly be too radical to deny any sense of rationality to Roman military operations. Is it a legitimate historical interpretation to apply a higher standard of rationality or attribute greater irrationality to Roman emperors than applies to modern heads of state? To extend this analogy, new heads of state often initiate new policies, and Roman emperors, particularly in the third century, did not enjoy long reigns. Inconsistencies in Roman policy must surely reflect to some degree the diversity of emperors rather than a lack of strategy. Note the frequent complaint that the United States lacks a coherent foreign policy. Indeed, detailed study of the context of events on a particular frontier, as already mentioned for Flavian policy on the upper Euphrates, can show some method in the alleged madness.

Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1.4, 1359b–60a; Anaximenes, *Rhetoric* (= Ps.-Aristotle, *Rhetoric to Alexander*), 1224b–25b.

144. A. Ferrill, *Roman Imperial Grand Strategy* (Lantham, 1991), 40; "The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire," in P. A. Kennedy, ed., *Grand Strategies in War and Peace* (New Haven, 1991; hereafter "Ferrill, 'Strategy'"), 73. His negative view of Nero need not be valid (despite the hostile literary tradition), if one carefully examines the Armenian war of 56–63.

145. Cf. W. V. Harris's conclusions on the survival of oral culture in antiquity: *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), 326–27.

146. Cf. G. Traina, "Aspettando i barbari. Le origini tardoantiche della guerriglia di frontiera," *Romanobarbarica* 9 (1986–87): 247–80, on the development of theory on guerrilla warfare, although the same basic points could be made without resort to the rhetoric of Foucaultian analysis.

The literalist approach to the sources fails to appreciate the limited access of ancient historians to detailed information. Cassius Dio, in a brief excursus (53.19.2-6), bemoans the great difficulty of obtaining accurate information on foreign affairs for the period from Augustus to presumably his own time, the early third century—and Dio had held high posts, consul in 205 (or 206) and 229, and governor of Pannonia Superior in 226-228, a frontier command with two legions. Polybius (29.5.1-3) confessed reluctance (as if it were improper for an historian) to report the secret diplomacy between Eumenes II of Pergamum and Perseus of Macedonia in 168 B.C. Operations security and surprise even at the highest levels were not unknown. Dio's evidence for secrecy about foreign affairs in the Imperial period finds parallels in the secrecy of meetings of the Roman Senate in the Middle Republic (264-133 B.C.) and in the secrecy of Athenian planning for the Sicilian expedition of 415 B.C. (e.g., a closed session of the ten strategoi and the Boule).[147]

Yet as detailed as Isaac's book is, the denial of Roman strategy seems premature when important points are not discussed. First, a general overview of the Empire's resources and capabilities is missing. What was and was not possible? Of course, by denying outside threats, the complexities of foreign policy and military failures are bypassed. Second, tactical developments are ignored. The army of Constantine[148] and certainly of Justinian (without considering organization and recruitment) differed vastly from the forces of Augustus.[149] Luttwak at least attempted to integrate tactics and strategy, and it has been argued that Roman use of the phalanx and reluctance to commit legionaries (as opposed to auxilia) to battle against non-Roman forces in the first

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147. See W. V. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome 327-70 B.C.* (Oxford, 1979), 6-7, 255; P. J. Rhodes, *The Athenian Boule* (Oxford, 1972), 41; cf. Diodorus Siculus, 13.2.6, 30.3; Lysias, 31.31; on operations security, see Frontinus, *Stratagems,* 1.1 ("On Concealing Plans").

148. The strategic implications of the reorganization of the Roman army under Diocletian and Constantine are too complex for discussion here. Whittaker (*Frontières,* 88-90) denies a change in strategy, but cf. Ferrill, *Roman Imperial Grand Strategy,* 45-50; Ferrill, "Strategy," 82-83; and Part I, n. 129. The standard work on the mobile field armies (chiefly concerned with the period 364-ca. 400), D. Hoffmann, *Das spätrömische Bewegungsheer und die Notitia Dignitatum,* 2 vols. (Düsseldorf, 1969-70), also has it problems: see T. Drew-Bear, "A Fourth-Century Latin Soldier's Epitaph at Nakolea," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 81 (1977): 257-74.

149. On tactical trends of the Early Empire, the best study (unknown to J. B. Campbell ["Teach Yourself to Be a General," *JRS* 77 (1987): 13-29]) remains F. Lammert, *Die römische Taktik zu Beginn der Kaiserzeit und die Geschichtschreibung* (Leipzig, 1931). Ferrill's cursory evaluation of Late Roman tactics merits skepticism (*The Fall of the Roman Empire: The Military Explanation* [London, 1986]), 29-30, though modified in "Strategy," 75-77. Likewise his belief in Roman tactical superiority, especially in the Late Empire, is debatable.

and second centuries reflects tactically the defensive disposition of the Empire strategically.[150] Third, Isaac (e.g., 373) denies that any argument for Roman defensive thinking can be based on outside threats, since no accurate picture of Rome's external enemies is possible. His book, however, reveals little effort to ascertain such information. Tacitus, of course, saw the Germans as a greater threat than Parthia and later events would confirm it; but the very need to make this point indicates that many Romans thought otherwise.[151] Three additional policies relating to peoples outside the Empire are omitted, although they reveal strategic thought: subsidies paid to barbarians to keep them quiet, a policy of starving barbarian raiders into retreat, and controls on exports to outsiders.[152]

Errors compound these sins of omission. As already noted, Isaac has misunderstood the concept of threat, and his argument that Romans did not appreciate the value of natural obstacles is misguided. Likewise, the denial that the ancients understood psychological aspects of power and its projection runs aground on Thucydides's comment to the contrary. But Isaac (376) further asserts that Romans never discussed the placement of forts or the subordination of military activity to political goals. On forts Isaac does not consider in this context e.g., Ps.-Hyginus Gromaticus, 56-57, Vegetius, 4.1, anon. *De rebus bellicis,* and Syrianus Magister, *De re strategika,* 9-11, although these abstract theoretical discussions undoubtedly do not supply the specific geo-

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150. See E. L. Wheeler, "The Legion as Phalanx," *Chiron* 9 (1979): 303-18; similar views on Republican use of the phalanx in M. Samuels, "The Reality of Cannae," *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen* 47.1 (1990): 7-31.

151. Tacitus, *Germania,* 37.2-5; cf. Mann, "Power," 179; Ferrill, *Roman Imperial Grand Strategy,,* 13, "Strategy," 79. Whittaker of course eliminates outside threats through arguments for an economic and cultural symbiosis of Romans and Germans: see Part 1, n. 69.

152. C. D. Gordon, "The Subsidization of Border Peoples as a Roman Policy of Imperial Defense" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1948), and "Subsidies in Roman Imperial Defense," *Phoenix* 3 (1949): 60-69; cf. Braund (supra n. 137), 62-65, 183; starving raiders: E. A. Thompson, *The Early Germans* (Oxford, 1965), 132, 140-47, and *Romans and Barbarians: The Decline of the Western Empire* (Madison, 1982), 3-19; Whittaker, *Frontières,* 98; export controls: J. Kunow, "Bemerkungen zum Export römischer Waffen in das Barbarikon," in *Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms,* vol. 3 (Stuttgart, 1986), 740-46; W. G. Kerr, "Economic Warfare on the Northern *Limes*: Portoria and the Germans," in V. A. Maxfield and M. Dobson, eds., *Roman Frontier Studies 1989: Proceedings of the XVth International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies* (Exeter, 1991), 442-45; Whittaker, *Frontières,* 68, and "Trade and Frontiers of the Roman Empire," in P. Garnsey and C. R. Whittaker, eds., *Trade and Famine in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1983), 118-20; cf. E. Winter, "Handel und Wirtschaft in Sasanidisch—(ost-) Römischen Verträge und Abkommen," *Münstersche Beiträge zur antiken Handelsgeschichte* 6 (1987): 46-72.

strategic material he seeks for strategy. Tacitus, however, praises his father-in-law Agricola for his skill in establishing forts: none of his were ever captured, surrendered, or abandoned (*Agricola, 22.1-3*), and experts praised his eye for terrain (*adnotabant periti non alium ducem opportunitates locorum sapientius legisse*). It can be inferred that not all Roman generals were good at siting forts and that proper placement of forts was a contemporary criterion in the late first century for good generalship.

The assertion that Romans lacked an understanding of the equivalent of Clausewitz's dictum that war is the continuation of policy by other means is more problematic.[153] Conquest, at least until the Teutoburg Forest disaster of A.D. 9, had been a traditional Roman solution to security problems.[154] But certainly, Clausewitizian ideas already flourished in antiquity.[155] Thucydides, the shrewdest Western analyst of war before Clausewitz, does not explicitly paraphrase the dictum on war and policy, although his emphasis on the role of intelligence (wisdom) and financial resources in war (e.g., 2.13.2) implies his awareness of the principle. Aristotle, however, stresses that war is a means, not an end, and must accord with both the good of the state and a state's relationship with its neighbors. Polybius has similar ideas, and Syrianus Magister states that the general's art is the most important part of politics.[156] These Greek and Byzantine examples antedate and postdate "Roman literature" in a strict sense. Nevertheless, Roman belief in the subordination of military energies to political goals is twice explicitly attested: first, Maharbal chided Hannibal after Cannae (216 B.C.) that he knew how to win but not how to use a victory; second, Caesar reproached Pompey after the siege of Dyrrachium (48 B.C.) with similar words.[157] The rebuke of Hannibal probably goes back to Cato the Elder,

153. "Roman literature offers little justification for the assumption that the Romans subjected their military energies to the discipline of political goals": Isaac, 376.

154. Cf. Mann, "Frontiers," 509; Whittaker, *Frontières*, 85.

155. E.g., friction in war: Aristotle, *Politics*, 7.12.9 (the concept, although not in a strictly military context); fog of war: E. L. Wheeler, *"Polla kena tou polemou:* The History of a Greek Proverb," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 29 (1988): 153-84.

156. Aristotle, *Politics*, 7.2.17-18, cf. 7.14.13, 21-22; cf. St. Thomas Aquinas's commentary on Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1.2 and 10.11: political science determines what military science ought to do; political science uses war, undesirable for its own sake, for a political end and for the good of the state; Polybius, 3.4.9-11; Syrianus Magister, *De re strategika*, 4.1 ed. Köchly and Rüstow = p. 21 lines 7-8, ed. Dennis (cf. Part I, n. 60).

157. Maharbal: Livy, 22.51.4; Valerius Maximus, 9.5 ext.3; Plutarch, *Fabius*, 17.1; Florus, 1.22.19; Ammianus Marcellinus, 18.5.6; Caesar: Appian, *Civil Wars*, 2.62, 260; cf. Suetonius, *Julius*, 36; Plutarch, *Caesar*, 39.8, *Pompey*, 65.5, *Moralia*, 206D. Cf. also Polybius, 3.4.3-6.

author not only of the *Origines* (the first history of Rome in Latin), but also of the first military handbook in Latin.[158] To deny that Romans appreciated the relationship between war and political goals seems unfounded.

Furthermore, the thesis that not defensive thinking but glory and profits (cost-effective expansion with long-term gain for the Empire and immediate booty for the soldiers) motivated Roman wars needs closer scrutiny.[159] The thesis is falsely posed, as glory from military success does not necessarily exclude rational objectives for military action. Emperors, like modern heads of state, could increase their personal prestige and popularity through military adventurism. Claudius's invasion of Britain in 43, it could be argued, offers perhaps the best example, and Augustus set the precedent that emperors should continue the Republican tradition of martial virtues.[160] Yet much of the argument for the motive of glory rests on Cassius Dio, whose views cannot be judged impartial nor taken at face value and generalized beyond the immediate historical context in which he wrote (Part I, 18). Denial of Roman strategy should not be based on the assumption that all strategy must be optimal and that Romans would infallibly choose the best course of action.

The case for the motive of booty is even weaker. As Isaac admits (280), no systematic study of Roman acquisition and distribution of booty in the Imperial period yet exists. Thus the argument rests on scattered general references to soldiers looting and plundering, besides inclusion of booty in the conventional rhetorical pre-battle pep-talks of generals to their troops. To use a reductionist argument, not a single ancient passage testifies that an emperor was goaded into war by booty-hungry troops, and by Isaac's own arguments (383–84) the organization of the Roman rank-and-file and the officer corps deterred any such pressure on an emperor. The Republican army had definite regulations about booty (Polybius, 10.16.2–17.5). Captives to be sold into slavery, usually the most profitable type of loot, became the property of the state. Rank-and-file soldiers had no legal right to booty, although in practice profits from the sale of booty would be distributed equally.[161]

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158. Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights*, 10.24.7 = Cato fr. 86 (H. Peter, *Historicorum Romanorum Reliquiae*, I² [repr. Stuttgart, 1967]); cf. Livy, 22.51.2–4; on Cato's *De re militari*, see A. E. Astin, *Cato the Censor* (Oxford, 1978), 184–85, 204–5.

159. Isaac, 380–87; cf. supra n. 137.

160. Claudius: Campbell (supra n. 136), 390; cf. Luttwak, 50, who does not see Claudius's move into Britain as contradictory to his view of the Julio-Claudian system; Augustus: E. S. Gruen, "Augustus and the Ideology of War and Peace," in R. Winkes, ed., *The Age of Augustus* (Providence/Louvain, 1985), 51–72, showing that martial virtues, not the proverbial "Augustan peace," were emphasized in Augustus's propaganda. Cf. Isaac, 387.

161. See I. Shatzman, "The Roman General's Authority over Booty," *Historia*

In the often more relaxed discipline of the Imperial era, it is difficult
without a detailed study to say whether the Republican regulations were
enforced, modified, or abandoned. To offer a parallel, booty played a
significant role in the mercenary armies of the fourth century B.C. and
the Hellenistic period, but Pritchett's minute examination of booty in
Greek warfare shows that, especially in the fourth century, profits from
booty often did little more than feed armies.[162] Thus booty need not
signify immense gain for individual soldiers. At any rate, we do not
know how much the average soldier could expect to get from a successful
campaign. Besides, emperors from Augustus on knew their power rested
on control of the army and provided for the army's welfare through
regular pay, retirement benefits, and increasingly through donatives
(bonuses) and later pay in kind (*annona militaris*), until the army in
the Late Empire emerged as a privileged entity (at least in law) within
Roman society. Although corruption in the military supply system and
in treatment of provincials is known, loot could not figure into a
soldier's expected source of income.[163] The motive of booty remains an
unproven conjecture.

Moreover, a close reading of the evidence cited (Isaac, esp. 24-28)
does not support the allegation of an absence of defensive thinking.
Cassius Dio (52.37.1), writing on Augustus's reign, may have opposed
further expansion, but he preaches the necessity of a strong defense
and at 52.27.3 frontier defense in particular. For Strabo (6.4.2, C288),
although the nomads of South Russia might not be worth conquering,
they required surveillance, just as Augustus's administrative division of
the Empire between himself and the Senate assigned to the emperor
the portion requiring military protection against conquered and
unconquered tribes (17.3.25). Strabo reflects the defensive attitude of
Tiberius, in whose reign he completed his *Geography*, as does Nicolaus
of Damascus's implications of an emphasis on defense at the beginning
of his biography of Augustus.[164]

Documentary evidence now also confirms Roman defensive thinking

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21 (1972): 177-205; W. K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, vol. 5 (Berkeley,
1991), 72, 375-76 with additional bibliography.

162. Pritchett (supra n. 161), 68-541, esp. 439-504.

163. A survey of pay and donatives in G. R. Watson, *The Roman Soldier*
(Ithaca, 1969), 89-114; cf. V. A. Maxfield, *The Military Decorations of the Roman
Army* (Berkeley, 1981), 55-60; on corruption see Part I, n. 14.

164. See E. Noè, "Considerazioni sull' impero romano in Strabone e Cassio
Dione," *Rendiconti, Istituto Lombardi, Classe di Lettere e Scienze Morali e
Storiche* 122 (1988): 105 n. 17, 106, 114; Nicolaus, in F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente
der griechischen Historiker*, vol. 2A (Berlin, 1926), 391 (= no. 90 fr. 125). For the
dating of Nicolaus's biography to after A.D. 14, see M. Toher, "The Date of Nicolaus'
Bios Kaisaros," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 26 (1985): 199-226.

at this time. The Tabula Siacensis, two bronze tablets found in 1982 near Seville (Spain), preserves a copy of a decree of the Senate in late December A.D. 19, recording funerary honors for Germanicus, Tiberius's nephew and former commander on the Rhine, who had died in Syria on 10 October. Although readings and restorations of various lines of the text remain uncertain, the Rhine is mentioned as the border of Roman territory and Germanicus's campaigns into Germany (A.D. 14-16) are characterized as measures for the defense of Roman Gaul.[165]

Finally, despite Isaac's and Whittaker's rejections of Herodian 2.11.5 as having any connection with the concept of *limes* (see Part I, 28 n. 80), the passage clearly expresses defensive thought. Herodian here uses the verb *proballō* (put in front of, shield) and its derivative noun *problēma* (barrier, defense). Dio's quotation of Septimius Severus on the annexation of northern Mesopotamia (75.3.2) calls the new province a *probolos* (defense, bulwark), another derivative of the same verb, and Arrian, in his tactical scenario for fighting the Alans, describes deployment of his legions in phalanx formation as a *probolē* (defense, bulwark), likewise from *proballō*.[166] So an historian (Herodian), an emperor (Severus), and a provincial governor (Arrian) imply that this word group was frequent in military language of the second and early third centuries. They further indicate not only an integration of strategic and tactical terminology in this period, but also a defensive disposition in both these spheres of military activity.

If we have repulsed some recent assaults on Roman strategy, this defensive operation has so far been passive, attempting only to counter hostile initiatives. But any defense of Roman strategy should also include traditions arising in the Republican period. Roman military practices hardly began with Augustus. Although scholars differ on many points, a brief look at Republican strategy can offer some insight for Imperial developments.

Some traditional notions of Roman strategy, frequent in textbooks, require modification or abandonment. The concept of "divide and rule" did not dominate Roman military thought: the phrase *divide et impera* first occurs ca 1600 in an Italian commentary on Tacitus and little evidence suggests that Republican Rome created divisions for her own profit, although under the Empire Romans knew that barbarian discords benefitted security.[167] Likewise, antiquity knew not a Pyrrhic

165. See the discussion of G. A. Lehmann, "Das Ende der römischen Herrschaft über das westelbische' Germanien: Von der Varus-Katastrophe zur Abberufung des Germanicus Caesar 16/7 n. Chr.," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 86 (1991): 79-96, esp. 90 with nn. 28-29.

166. See Wheeler (supra n. 150), 303-4, 311; cf. 316-17.

167. See J. Vogt, "*Divide et impera*—die angebliche Maxime des römischen Imperialismus," in F. Taeger and K. Christ, eds., *Orbis* (Freiburg, 1960), 199-218;

but a Cadmean victory, a proverbial phrase derived from the myth of Cadmus and the warriors sprung from the dragon's teeth.[168]

On the other hand, despite innumerable chronological difficulties and fabrications in the Roman historical tradition, general patterns in Roman strategic conduct during the early Republic (509-264 B.C.) are discernible.[169] Roman expansion within Italy in the fourth and early third centuries B.C. displays a concern for surrounding hostile neighbors through alliances or Roman colonies on the flanks or rear of potential enemies, and securing strategic connections through road building.[170] Given these maneuvers, an argument for Roman geographical ignorance of Italy would hardly be credible. The same procedure sometimes also appears after the First Punic War (264-241 B.C.), when Romans began to employ the extra-legal concept of patron and client in foreign relations: an offense to a Roman *amicus* (friend) situated on the flank or rear of a potential opponent's territory could become a *casus belli*, even though Rome was in no way bound by treaty to render aid or defense.[171]

Of course, Roman Republican strategy is inextricably joined to Roman imperialism—a particularly vexatious problem for Roman overseas expansion after the Second Punic War (218-201 B.C.). Polybius (ca. 200-118 B.C.), our best source for this period, implies that Roman control of the Mediterranean world resulted from conscious efforts,

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similarly Brunt, 127 (unaware of Vogt's paper); cf. Hammond (supra n. 140) 454, who connects the concept with Roman policy in the Balkans and Asia Minor in the 180s B.C.; and Braund (supra n. 137), 98, who accepts "divide and conquer" as standard Roman practice. Roman delight at barbarian divisions: e.g., Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.48.2; *Agricola*, 12.2, 32.1; *Germania*, 33.2; Julian, *Orations*, 1.12A-B, 21B; Ambrose, *Letters*, 24.8; Claudian, *On the Sixth Consulship of Honorius*, 218-22; Orosius, 7.43.14-15; Malchus, fr. 18.2, in R. C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicizing Historians of the Later Roman Empire*, vol. 2 (Liverpool, 1983), 429, lines 30-42.

168. Herodotus, 1.166.2; Plutarch, *Moralia*, 10A, 488A; Malchus, fr. 18.2, in Blockley (supra n. 167), 429, lines 39-41. The concept but not the phrase was, however, used regarding Pyrrhus's victory at Asculum (279 B.C.) in both Greek (Plutarch, *Pyrrhus*, 21.9-10, *Moralia*, 184C) and Latin (the proverb *Osculana pugna*: Festus, *De verborum significatu*, 214, ed. Lindsay). The phrase "Pyrrhic victory" first appeared in English in the British newspaper *Daily Telegraph* on 17 December 1885.

169. For a study of how the word *imperium* came to denote "empire," see J. S. Richardson, "*Imperium Romanum*: Empire and the Language of Power," *JRS* 81 (1991): 1-9.

170. See J. Vogt, "Raumauffassung und Raumordnung in der römischen Politik," in Taeger and Christ (supra n. 167), 172-98; cf. R. Rowland, "Rome's Earliest Imperialism," *Latomus* 42 (1983): 749-62, for more recent bibliography.

171. See the classic study of E. Badian, *Foreign Clientelae, 264-70 B.C.* (Oxford, 1958). Cf. W. Dahlheim, *Struktur und Entwicklung des römischen Völkerrechts im dritten und zweiten Jahrhundert v. Chr.* (Munich, 1968).

although he is vague about specific plans.[172] Yet Roman reluctance to annex territory for direct rule produced the modern oxymoronic concept of "defensive imperialism"—a view dating from Theodor Mommsen.[173]

Since the 1970s, revisionist scholarship, concentrating especially on the second century B.C., has generally rejected the view of defensive imperialism. As the nineteenth-century word "imperialism" has no exact Greek or Latin equivalent, the term is judged anachronistic, and for the Greek East some urge that only a Roman drive for hegemony can be shown.[174] By this logic no imperialism or empires existed before the nineteenth century (cf. Harris [supra n. 147], 3–4), and we have seen the fallacies of a similar semantic argument applied to "strategy." Others, in contrast, stress Roman aggression: Harris, the most Polybian, finds its source in the Roman aristocratic ethos—competition to win personal glory through expansion; Veyne stresses both a Roman bellicose habit and isolationism, manifest in a desire to be left alone and to impose Rome's national will.[175]

In any event, whether one accepts Roman motives as aggressive, naive, or defensive, the Empire's origins, especially in terms of direct rule, were gradual and without evidence of a master plan, although an emphasis on long-range planning may be another red herring: Roman control need not be equated with annexation, as frequent use of client kings attests, and Roman expansion often resulted from logical extension

172. Polybius, 1.3.6, 9–10; 3.1.4–5, 2.6.

173. For contemporary influences on the views of Mommsen, Maurice Holleaux, and Tenney Frank, see J. Linderski, "*Si vis pacem, para bellum*: Concepts of Defensive Imperialism," in W. V. Harris, ed., *The Imperialism of Mid-Republican Rome* (Rome, 1984), 133–64; for Roman just war, see Harris (supra n. 147), 163–254; S. Albert, *Bellum Iustum: Die Theorie des "gerechten Krieges" und ihre praktische Bedeutung für die auswärtigen Auseinandersetzungen Roms in republikanischer Zeit* (Kallmünz, 1980); J. W. Rich, *Declaring War in the Roman Republic in the Period of Transmarine Expansion* (Brussels, 1976).

174. See R. Werner, "Das Problem des Imperialismus und die römische Ost-politik," *ANRW* 1.1 (1972): 501–63, where concepts of imperialism are extensively discussed; E. S. Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome* (Berkeley, 1984), 1: 1–8, covers the same ground more briefly. Cf. E. Hermon, "L'impérialisme romain républicain: approches historiographiques et approche d'analyse," *Athenaeum* 67 (1989): 407–16. For critiques of Gruen's thesis that naive Romans succumbed to sophisticated Hellenistic Greek entanglements and adopted Greek diplomatic methods, see A. Giovannini, "Roman Eastern Policy in the Late Republic," *American Journal of Ancient History* 9 (1984): 33–42; R. A. Bauman, "Rome and the Greeks: Apropos of a Recent Work," *Acta Classica* 29 (1986): 85–97; see also C. Habicht, "The Seleucids and their Rivals," *Cambridge Ancient History* VIII² (1989): 324–87 at 382–87.

175. Harris (supra n. 147); P. Veyne, "Y-a-t-il eu un impérialisme romain?" *MEFAR* 87 (1975): 793–855, strongly influenced by R. Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations* (Paris, 1962).

of initially modest commitments.[176] Similarly, the extent to which the Senate supervised and controlled policy and expansion is debated,[177] as is the degree and location of expansion through "triumph hunting" in the Late Republic (133-31 B.C.).[178] Even views of Augustus's intentions in Germany, ended by the Teutoburg Forest disaster, range from nonannexation of Germany to expansion across Eastern Europe to the Caspian.[179]

Certainly the Empire to which Augustus laid sole claim in 31 B.C. had been acquired unsystematically and without regard for defensible borders, but some legions of the Late Republic already seemed to have permanent assignments in the provinces and others held strategic points throughout the Empire.[180] Whatever Augustus's aims in Germany, elsewhere he filled in the territorial gaps and rounded off the areas of direct rule by completing the conquest of Spain, annexing the Alpine districts, and pushing the Balkan border to the Danube.[181] An emphasis

176. Harris (supra n. 147), 107; S. L. Dyson, *The Creation of the Roman Frontier* (Princeton, 1985: hereafter "Dyson"), 270-77. Dyson's study, a masterful collection of archeological data for northern Italy, southern France, and Spain in the second and first centuries, B.C., and heavily influenced by anthropology (especially the peoples-of-the-hills vs. peoples-of-the-plains model), escapes many pitfalls of the new archaeology.

177. Senate-expansionist and repository of strategy: Harris (supra n. 147), 107, 197 n. 1; Dyson, 277; Ferrill, "Strategy," 74; cf. Livy's comparison of Alexander the Great and the Romans (9.17-19), where Alexander's youthful strategic judgment is contrasted with the Senate's collective wisdom (9.17.14); little supervision of Senate: A. M. Eckstein, *Senate and General: Individual Decision-Making and Roman Foreign Relations, 264-194 B.C.* (Berkeley, 1987), stressing ad hoc decisions of field commanders; J. R. Richardson, *Hispaniae: Spain and the Development of Roman Imperialism, 218-82 B.C.* (Cambridge, 1986), 174-80, likewise emphasizing "on the spot" decisions; Brunt, 443-44.

178. Triumph hunting in the East but not the West: Dyson, 270, 278; in the West but not the East: E. Badian, *Roman Imperialism in the Late Republic* (Ithaca, 1968), 11-13, 54-55. The problem of triumph hunting may be a false problem arising from domestic politics—charges made at Rome by political opponents of field commanders: cf. Plutarch, *Lucullus*, 24.3.

179. No annexation: K.-W. Welwei, "Römische Weltherrschaftsideologie und augusteische Germanienpolitik," *Gymnasium* 93 (1986): 118-37; E. S. Gruen, "The Imperial Policy of Augustus," in K. A. Raaflaub and M. Toher, eds., *Between Republic and Empire: Interpretations of Augustus and His Principate* (Berkeley, 1990), 396, 403-4: mimicking Mann's thesis that Romans only react; cf. Syme, "Military Geography at Rome," *Classical Antiquity* 7 (1988: hereafter "Syme"), 241-50; annexation to the Caspian: Brunt, 455-56; conquest to the Elbe: Ferrill, *Roman Imperial Grand Strategy,*, 13. The Tabula Siacensis may indicate that formal Roman renunciation of expansion into Germany came only in A.D. 19: see Lehmann (supra n. 165).

180. Mann, "Frontiers," 513-14, followed by Isaac, 388; Late Republican legions: Ferrill, *Roman Imperial Grand Strategy*, 74.

181. On Augustus's military reforms and their political context, see K. Raaflaub,

on the absence of systematic territorial acquisition and of long-range planning, i.e., no coherent strategy under the Republic or Augustus,[182] overlooks less grandiose employment of strategy. After all, from 146 B.C. (if not 167 B.C.) until Carrhae (53 B.C.) proved Parthian capability, Rome lacked a major state as an enemy. Friendly kings turned hostile, such as Jugurtha in Numidia or Mithridates VI in Pontus, could be troublesome, but Rome faced problems as they arose.

If Romans never planned and only reacted, we should ask why. Demosthenes in the fourth century B.C. (*First Philippic*, 39)—certainly no great original thinker—had already preached that those properly managing a war should anticipate rather than follow events. Perhaps the answer lies not in Roman ignorance of strategy, geography, defensive thinking, intelligence gathering, etc., but in self-confidence (or arrogance) derived from military success. In the Roman mindset any project must be completed and any plan was possible (Polybius, 1.37.7). The rhetorical tradition dating from Polybius that Romans preferred open terrain for legionary camps rather than taking advantage of natural obstacles symbolizes this Roman arrogance.[183]

Moreover, any assessment of Roman strategy should not ignore the traditional Roman concern, derived from the Etruscans, for enclosing and defining space and the Roman obsession with surveying, whether in laying out cities, army camps, or even provinces.[184] Indeed, a recent study (conceptually the antithesis to Isaac's approach) argues a strong influence of surveying on Roman campaign planning in Caesar's Gallic War and Roman operations in Germany.[185] Contrary to Isaac's emphasis on peoples rather than definite borders (395-98), Republican Rome did define borders by rivers, mountains, and ditches. Rome's treaty with Hamilcar Barca of ca. 226 B.C. set the Ebro River as the eastern limit of

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"Die Militärreformen des Augustus und die politische Problematik des frühen Prinzipats," in G. Binder, ed., *Saeculum Augustum* (Darmstadt, 1987), 246-307; cf. Ferrill, *Roman Imperial Grand Strategy*, 1.

182. Brunt, 443-44; Mann, "Frontiers," 513-14; Gruen (supra n. 179), 396, 414; contra, Syme, 241-49.

183. See Traina (supra n. 146), 265-74, although his thesis is insufficiently nuanced; cf. Tacitus, *Agricola*, 22.1-3.

184. See Vogt (supra n. 170), 172-98; O. A. W. Dilke, *Greek and Roman Maps* (London, 1985), 18-19, 88-101, 103, and *The Roman Land Surveyors: An Introduction to the Agrimensores* (Newton Abbot, 1971). Balbus, a civilian surveyor, accompanied Trajan in his conquest of Dacia (101-103, 105-106): see his treatise in F. Blume et al., eds., *Die Schriften der römischen Feldmesser* (repr. Hildesheim, 1967), 1: 91-108, esp. 92-93. Roman concern for surveying is noted in the earliest Roman literature: see A. Valvo, "'Finitor': nota a Plaut. 'Poen.' 49," in M. Sordi, ed., *Il confine nel mondo classico* (Milan, 1987), 166-77.

185. W. Hartke, "Mathematisches Kalkül in der römischen Strategie an Schelde und Maas, Rhein und Main," *Militärgeschichte* 22 (1983): 312-32.

Carthaginian Spain, and the Peace of Apamea (188 B.C.) marked the western limit of the Seleucid Empire at the Taurus Mountains and the Tanais River.[186] But besides fixing borders of hostile powers, Rome in the early second century B.C. defined her own northern border in Italy as the Po River with the areas between the Alps and the Po as a buffer, and ca. 146 B.C. Scipio Aemilianus divided the new province of Africa from Numidia by a ditch, the Fossa Regia, possibly the earliest frontier work of the Roman army.[187] In fact, if Dyson's conjecture (229-31) of a "protolimes" be correct, Caecilius Metellus Pius in 79-71 B.C. experimented with elements later standard in the Imperial Roman frontier system—a combination of a scorched earth policy, military garrisons connected by roads, and loyal natives—to cut off Sertorius from the Lusitanian coast.

Emphasis on Rome's piecemeal annexation of territory also overlooks logical developments in Roman strategy. Roman acquisition of Carthaginian Spain after the Second Punic War led to interest in controlling the land route between Spain and Italy, i.e., Transalpine Gaul.[188] Similarly, the annexation of Macedonia in 146 B.C. and increasing Roman involvement in Asia Minor, intensified by the bequest of the Attalid kingdom to Rome in 133 B.C., no doubt figured in Roman upgrading of an old Greek road (ca. 130 B.C.), the Via Egnatia, linking the Adriatic with Byzantium and later the chief overland route to the East.[189] Nor should Pompey's reorganization of the East after the Third Mithridatic War (74-63 B.C.) be omitted—a system of client kings and provinces that extended Roman control to the Euphrates and beyond.[190] In sum, if the Roman Republic lacked a coherent strategy in the sense

186. For sources and discussion see F. W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1957-79), 1: 167-72, 3: 156-64; also see A. Giovannini, "La clause territoriale de la paix d'Apamée," *Athenaeum* 60 (1982): 224-36, although omitting the role of Armenia in the treaty.

187. Po: Dyson, 41-43; 54; Fossa Regia: Pliny, *Natural History*, 5.25; L. Keppie, *The Making of the Roman Army* (London, 1984), 44.

188. Vogt (supra n. 170), 182-83; Dyson, 126-73.

189. Cf. Syme, 249. F. W. Walbank would date the Via Egnatia to the 140s B.C.: *Studies in Greek and Roman History and Historiography* (Cambridge, 1985), 193-209. For topographical studies of the Via Egnatia, see J. P. Adams, "Polybius, Pliny, and the Via Egnatia," in W. L. Adams and E. N. Borza, eds., *Philip II, Alexander the Great and the Macedonian Heritage* (Lantham, 1982), 269-302; N. G. L. Hammond and M. B. Hatzopoulos, "The Via Egnatia I-II," *American Journal of Ancient History* 7 (1982): 128-49; 8 (1983): 48-53.

190. Various assessments in Vogt (supra n. 170), 186; Badian (supra n. 178), 77-88; G. Wirth, "Pompeius in Osten," *Klio* 66 (1984): 574-80; A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Foreign Policy in the East, 168 B.C. to A.D. 1* (Norman, 1984), 186-234. For use of client kings to defend Asia Minor 63-31 B.C., see W. Hoben, "Untersuchungen zur Stellung kleinasiatischer Dynasten in dem Machtkämpfen der ausgehenden römischen Republik" (Ph.D. diss., Mainz, 1969).

of a great "master plan" for empire, this does not exclude strategy in
general for how to defend it, traditional Roman concepts of marking off
and defining borders by rivers and ditches, or Roman arrogance/con-
fidence in their ability to meet any threat.

Finally, two major tenets of Luttwak's critics merit response: the
lack of a Roman general staff (or "high command") and the alleged
Roman ignorance of geography.[191] We have noted the fallacy of tying
strategy to the existence of a governmental department (supra 216–18,
Part I, 21–24), and since a Roman bureaucracy only began to evolve
under Augustus, Rome's ability to manage even multi-theater wars,
such as the Second Punic War in Italy, Spain, Sicily, Greece, and Africa,
did not depend on a central bureau for strategic planning. Under the
Republic, direction of foreign policy and wartime strategy traditionally
belonged to the Senate, but in the "restored republic" of the Principate
such matters fell to the emperor, who might keep the Senate advised
about the army and foreign affairs without this venerable body's collective
input in formulating policy.[192] An emphasis, however, only on what is
explicitly stated in sources about emperors' decision making severely
underestimates the role of individual friends and advisors, as well as the
degree of centralized archives and supervision.[193] Should we accept a
view that the institution consuming, even on a conservative estimate,
40 to 50 percent of the state's revenues and the most bureaucratized
and best documented aspect of Roman government lacked administrative
oversight and planning?[194] After all, one could argue that the United

191. General staff: Millar (supra n. 136), 4–15; Campbell (supra n. 136), 114–15,
327–34, 345–46, 356–57; Isaac, 376–87, 404–8, 416; geographical ignorance:
Millar (supra n. 136), 15–20; Isaac, 401–6; R. MacMullen, *The Roman Government's
Response to Crisis* (New Haven, 1976), 52–54, cf. 67–69. The false issue that Rome
lacked a central reserve is addressed by C. G. Starr, *The Roman Empire, 27
B.C.-A.D. 476: A Study in Survival* (New York, 1982: hereafter "Starr"), 123–24,
followed by Ferrill, *Roman Imperial Grand Strategy*, 16, 35.

192. For the evidence (or lack of it), see R. J. A. Talbert, *The Senate of Imperial
Rome* (Princeton, 1984), 230–31, 425–30; cf. 402.

193. Syme (246) sagely implies (in his typically Tacitean mode) significant
advisory roles for Marcus Agrippa, Augustus's son-in-law, and two ex-consuls who
frequently played dice with Augustus. He ponders other such cases, "if more were
known."

194. Campbell (supra n. 136), 163–65, though his calculations exclude the cost
of donatives and discharge bonuses; cf. R. MacMullen, "The Roman Emperor's
Army Costs," *Latomus* 43 (1984): 157–80; Starr, 86–90; K. Hopkins, "Taxes and
Trade in the Roman Empire (200 B.C.-A.D. 400)," *JRS* 70 (1980): 101–25; Ferrill,
Roman Imperial Grand Strategy, 37–38, who would increase annual expenses to
1.5 billion sesterces (rather than ca. 800 million) and reduce Roman military
spending to 30 percent. All such calculations are only scholarly guesswork. On
documentation: Harris (supra n. 145), 217–18, cf. 293–94.

States lacked a grand strategy before "containment," although strategy was implicit in military budgets and force structure.[195]

Upon his death in 14, Augustus's testament included an inventory of the Empire (*breviarium totius imperii*), listing all military forces and their deployments, the fleets, client kingdoms, provinces, direct and indirect revenues, and the state of the various public treasuries, in addition to a statement of his policy against expansion of the Empire.[196] A financial balance sheet for the Roman state was new, but Rome's census had scrupulously maintained figures on available manpower (traditionally) since the regal period (before 509 B.C.).[197] In the Late Republic the legions began to be individually numbered and to assume regimental identities, just as the auxilia units did from the time of Augustus.[198] Daily administration and maintenance of these forces empire-wide generated thousands of documents, of which only a minute fraction survive—mainly on papyrus from Egypt and the East where conditions favored preservation.[199] These documents included daily and monthly reports on the effective strength of individual units.[200]

195. I owe this point to Alex Roland.

196. Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.11.7-8; Suetonius, *Augustus*, 101.4; Dio, 56.33.2; C. Nicolet, "L'empire romain: espace, temps et politique," *Ktema* 8 (1983): 163-73, esp. 168; cf. F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (Ithaca, 1977: hereafter "Millar, Emperor"), 267-68. An earlier version of the inventory existed in 23 B.C.: Suetonius, *Augustus*, 28.1; Dio, 53.30.2.

197. See P. A. Brunt, *Roman Manpower, 225 B.C.-A.D. 14* (Oxford, 1971); for a study of Augustus's efforts to draw up a complete inventory of Roman resources and territories and to improve administrative organization, see C. Nicolet, *L'inventaire du monde: géographie et politique aux origines de l'Empire romain* (Paris, 1988).

198. Legions: Keppie (supra n. 187), 55-56, 78, 133-40; H. M. D. Parker, *The Roman Legions*, rev. ed. (New York, 1971), 36, 55-71, 261-72; auxilia: G. L. Cheesman, *The Auxilia of the Roman Imperial Army* (repr. Chicago, 1975), 59-62, 170-90, updated by P. A. Holder, *Studies in the Auxilia of the Roman Army from Augustus to Trajan* (Oxford, 1980) and D. B. Saddington, *The Development of the Roman Auxiliary Forces from Caesar to Vespasian* (Harare, 1982).

199. E.g., R. O. Fink, *Roman Military Records on Papyrus* (Cleveland, 1971). Most military inscriptions, funerary or commemorative and therefore private, lack details of daily administration or strategic information—material unlikely to be carved on stone for public display. Inscriptions are, however, a major source for army organization and individuals' careers. The latter, if of senators or equestrians of high rank, can provide data regarding military commands, from which strategy on a particular frontier can be deduced. The bronze discharge certificates of auxiliary units (military diplomata) also furnish important evidence on deployment of these units: see M. M. Roxan, *Roman Military Diplomas, 1954-1977* and *1978-1984* (London, 1978, 1985). The basic work on internal organization remains A. von Domaszewski, *Die Rangordnung des römischen Heeres*, ed. B. Dobson (Cologne, 1967); on provincial governors, see B. E. Thomasson, *Laterculi praesidum*, I-III (Göteborg, 1984-90).

200. For a recently discovered example from Britain, see A. K. Bowman and

Provincial governors also sent reports to the emperor and, as noted earlier, the Emperor Lucius Verus had documents of strategic information to send Fronto.[201]

Luttwak's critics were quick to note the gap in the extant document trail between the provinces and the emperor, and a specific agency for dealing with military affairs is unknown. But if it can be demonstrated that the Roman government continued to maintain detailed accounts of recruitment and deployment, barring Isaac's belief that deployment indicates nothing about strategy (33), grand strategy in the sense of manpower management can be deduced.

Such records on deployment are demonstrable. Tiberius's concern for recruitment and his review of the army's deployment before the Senate in 23 occasions Tacitus's excursus on the deployment of the army. Similar surveys of the legions appear in Josephus and Cassius Dio, indicating that such records were available. Likewise, Strabo ended his *Geography* with an overview of the Empire's administration, and Appian promised (not fulfilled) to conclude his history of Rome's wars with an inventory of Roman deployments and revenues. Probably under Antoninus Pius (138–161), a monument at Rome listing all the legions clockwise by location beginning with Britain was erected and twice later emended to include new legions raised under Marcus Aurelius and Septimius Severus.[202] Hadrian (117–138) kept himself informed of the army's strength and of provincial revenues, and Severus Alexander (222–235) supposedly kept detailed records of army deployments in his bedroom.[203] Finally, the continuity of detailed records of army deploy-

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J. D. Thomas, "A Military Strength Report from Vindolanda," *JRS* 81 (1991): 62–73, esp. 63–65.

201. Governors: e.g., Tacitus, *Agricola*, 39.1; Arrian, *Periplus of the Euxine Sea*, 6.2, 10.1 (reports to Hadrian in Latin, as opposed to Arrian's literary account in Greek); Verus: Fronto II, 194 Loeb.

202. Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.4.4–5.6; Josephus, *Jewish War*, 2.361–87; Dio, 55.23.2–24.8; Strabo, 17.3.25; Appian, *Roman History*, Preface, 15, 61 ("Arrian" should be Appian at Starr, 79); H. Dessau, ed., *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, 3 vols. in 5 (Berlin, 1892–1916), 2288. Citing Suetonius, *Caligula*, 16.1, Millar (*Emperor*, 267) believes the "accounts of the Empire" lapsed under Tiberius, but Tacitus (this note) contradicts this. Possibly Tiberius after 23 failed to publish such accounts and Caligula, as Suetonius indicates, revived their publication. C. Saulnier, "Flavius Josephus et la propaganda flavienne," *Revue biblique* 98 (1991): 215, would attribute the Flavian disposition of troops in Josephus to a census taken by Vespasian and Titus in 73–74, but no evidence is cited to support this view.

203. *Historia Augusta*, *Hadrian*, 10.8–11.1, and *Severus Alexander*, 21.6–8 (rejected by Millar, *Emperor*, 267 n. 52). Although the *Historia Augusta* contains much bogus information and this account of Severus Alexander may be suspect, given the frequent travels of third- and fourth-century emperors and the concentration of power associated with the emperor's bedroom and chief chamberlain, the

ments is suggested by the *Notitia Dignitatum,* a nearly complete order of battle of the Roman army and provincial administrative posts at the end of the fourth century.[204] If emperors kept detailed records on military strengths and location of troops, did they then fail to ponder their use?

But Millar's workaholic model of emperors shows that they were busy people, and extant evidence gives no clue to a possible chief of staff. A likely but unproven possibility is the praetorian praefect (often jointly held), which in the third century increasingly assumed legal and military burdens.[205] The post also eventually included responsibility for army supplies and pay (including after Diocletian the important matter of pay in kind, the *annona militaris*). By the latter fourth century, there were regularly four praefects. All this is suggestive, although Constantine switched the position from the military to the civilian sphere.[206] Of course, the Late Empire offers a different administrative situation, but Claudian indicates that in the late fourth and early fifth centuries the chief secretary of the emperor's administrative council (*consistorium*), the *primicerius notariorum,* performed many functions of a military chief of staff (e.g., assigning commands, recording troop strengths and deployments, assembling forces, etc.).[207]

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praepositus sacri cubiculi, the account is plausible in a Late Roman context, especially for a late-fourth-century author.

204. Millar, *Emperor,* 268, doubts that emperors after Caligula collected and published full accounts of the Empire's resources. On the *Notitia,* see J. C. Mann, "The Notitia Dignitatum—Dating and Survival," *Britannia* 22 (1991).

205. See L. L. Howe, *The Pretorian Prefect from Commodus to Diocletian* (Chicago, 1942), 21-31, rejected by Campbell (supra n. 136), 114-15, who misrepresents the argument. Some praetorian praefects in the second century had previously served as quartermasters general of the army in major wars: see D. van Berchem, "La porte de Séleucie de Piéria et l'infrastructure logistique des guerres parthiques," *Bonner Jahrbücher* 185 (1985): 47-87; cf. F. Bérard, "La carrière de Plotius Grypus et la ravitaillement de l'armée impériale en campagne," *MEFAR* 96 (1984): 259-324.

206. Despite citation of J. Osier, "The Emergence of Equestrian Military Commanders," *Latomus* 36 (1977): 674-87, Ferrill (*Roman Imperial Grand Strategy,* 50) errs in attributing to Diocletian the prohibition of senators from military commands. This occurred ca. 261 under Gallienus (Aurelius Victor, *Caesars,* 33.34). Diocletian had consolidated a third-century trend of using officers for traditionally civilian administrative posts by "militarizing" the Roman government. Constantine reversed this trend somewhat. On the switch to civilian praetorian praefects, see Zosimus, 2.32-33; cf. John the Lydian, *On Magistrates,* 2.10.2, 3.40.1. Zosimus's contention that Constantine increased the number of praefects to four is wrong: see A. M. H. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (Norman, 1964), 1: 50-51, 100-103; F. Paschoud, *Zosime, Histoire Nouvelle* (Paris, 1971), 1: 105 n. 45, 230-34 nn. 45-46 (with additional bibliography).

207. Claudian, *Carmina,* 25.82-91 = Loeb ed. 2: 210. Cf. the Seleucid army's "chief secretary of forces" (*archigrammateus tōn dynamenōn*), a general adminis-

Roman capability in maintaining its army as well as an emperor's ability to transfer units from one frontier to another and to assemble expeditionary forces for major wars clearly indicates that general staff work was done, even if the specific mechanisms of higher command and control remain one of the arcana of Roman government. The gap in the document trail, however, is a double-edged sword: to argue a lack of planning and military action exclusively from an emperor's individual decisions ignores the amount of staff work required even to put an emperor's whim into action, especially a whim dictating the movement of thousands of men and animals long distances. The existence of centralized archives for diplomacy (Part 1, n. 51) renders a parallel centralized army staff all the more probable.

Yet here, the *Annalistes* and the social archaeologists paradoxically (given their general rejection of strategy) contribute to the argument for Roman strategy. Rather than Mann's "accidental" frontiers and the incapability of Romans to do more than react, these scholars maintain that the placement of frontiers was *conscious* and *planned*. In Britain, Africa, and on the Rhine and the Danube, the Romans practiced cost-effective imperialism, stopping precisely where Roman territory would include the most population and agricultural production. Supposedly Scotland or the Elbe River in Germany could never have been frontiers, since both lacked adequate social and economic infrastructures to support Roman occupation.[208] This interpretation, though based to some extent on an economic and historical determinism, presumes a refined Roman expertise in intelligence gathering, especially in demographic and economic surveys.

Moreover, this view includes a growing belief that frontier forces were not self-sufficient but dependent on a state-controlled/sponsored supply system, involving long-distance trade and extensive state planning.[209] We know that the emperor's *a rationibus* ("State Minister of Finance") kept accounts of military expenses and, as recently argued, the *praefectus annonae* (responsible for the grain supply of the city of Rome) may also have supervised army supplies, although various *procuratores Augusti*, directly under the emperor's supervison, checked his power.[210] Whatever the *praefectus annonae*'s role, by the reign of

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trator who ranked below the satraps: B. Bar-Kochva, *The Seleucid Army* (Cambridge, 1976), 86–87.

208. Whittaker, *Frontières*, 44–50; Jones (supra n. 138), 101–3; Fulford (supra n. 138), 294–305, esp. 302.

209. Whittaker, *Frontières*, 53, 58–65; Fulford (supra n. 138), 294–305; cf. van Berchem (supra n. 205) and Bérard (supra n. 205).

210. *A rationibus*: Statius, *Silvae*, 3.3.98–102, referring to Claudius Etruscus's father, who held the post under Vespasian (cf. Millar, *Emperor*, 73–74); *praefectus annonae*: J. Remesal-Rodriquez, *La annona militaris y la exportación de aceite*

Diocletian, administration of food supplies passed to the praetorian praefects, who also had responsibility for the delivery of arms and equipment from the newly created state arms factories—another innovation of Diocletian.[211] Romans clearly planned in many different spheres of military administration. The search for an independent Roman general staff may in fact be another red herring for functions performed separately by parts of the bureaucracy but somehow coordinated. In any case, there was no lack of strategy.

If Luttwak's critics have overstated their case regarding the Roman high command, the same is true of their assessment of Roman intelligence and especially the allegation of Roman geographical ignorance. Isaac's cursory discussion of intelligence gathering (406–8) rehearses the now familiar argument that the Romans, lacking a Central Intelligence Agency, had no concept of the need of intelligence for strategic planning or the emperor's decision making, but the social archaeologists, of course, would make the Romans experts in strategic intelligence. Like other aspects of strategy, espionage becomes a standard chapter of military manuals only in the Byzantine period and without the geo-strategic focus the anti-Luttwakians seek. But intelligence gathering, a tricky business even today, boasts failures as well as successes, and authorities must act upon what they receive. Failure to act or misreading even good intelligence does not necessarily indicate a lack of information or attempts to acquire it. Instances of Roman negligence in gathering intelligence in the East could equally be attributed to arrogance, and once again Romans should not be held to a higher standard of efficiency than modern leaders (cf. Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait).

Romans, in fact, were by no means ignorant of the world's second oldest profession and its strategic value.[212] Frontinus devotes a chapter

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bético a Germania (Madrid, 1986), esp. 74–76, and "Die Procuratores Augusti und die Versorgung des römischen Heeres," in H. Vetters and M. Kandler, eds., *Akten des 14. Internationalen Limeskongresses 1986 in Carnuntum*, 2 vols. (= *Der römischen Limes in Österreich* 26 [Vienna, 1990]), 1: 55–65. Whittaker (*Frontières*, 58) rejects this view, claiming insufficient evidence.

211. See S. James, "The Fabricae: State Arms Factories of the Later Roman Empire," in J. C. Coulston, ed., *Military Equipment and the Identity of Roman Soldiers* (Oxford, 1988), 257–331.

212. On Roman intelligence gathering, see G. Brizzi, *I sistemi informativi dei Romani* (Wiesbaden, 1982), although misguided: cf. supra n. 141; F. Dvornik, *Origins of Intelligence Services* (New Brunswick, 1974); R. M. Sheldon, "Tinker, Tailor, Caesar, Spy: Espionage in Ancient Rome" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1987); A. D. Lee, "Information, Frontiers and Barbarians: The Role of Strategic Intelligence in the Relations of the Late Roman Empire with Persia and the Northern Peoples" (diss., Cambridge, 1988); W. Riepl, *Das Nachrichtenwesen des Altertums* (repr. Hildesheim, 1972), esp. 437–48, 464–73. Ferrill's overly optimistic

(*Stratagems*, 1.2) to finding out the enemy's plans and contrasts (1.2.2) primitive Roman intelligence methods of the late fourth century B.C. with those of his own time: "when shrewder ways of finding out the enemy's plans were still unknown to Roman generals" (*cum adhuc incognitae forent Romanis ducibus sagaciores explorandi viae*). Although Isaac and Whittaker dismiss Frontinus's chapter as proving no role of intelligence in strategic decision making, this view cannot stand. Despite the gray borders between grand strategy and strategy as between strategy and tactics, three of Frontinus's nine examples could be considered grand strategic.[213] Moreover, among the new Roman army documents from Vindolanda, a fort immediately behind Hadrian's Wall, we now have an example (although fragmentary) of a local intelligence report describing tactics.[214]

But Roman geographical ignorance has also been alleged (cf. supra n. 136): Romans allegedly campaigned without knowing where they were going; topography had no effect on any planning; and modern maps can tell us nothing about Roman strategy. In one of his last papers, the late Sir Ronald Syme refuted this school of thought and demonstrated the logical progression of Augustus's conquests 26 B.C.-A.D. 9—by no means conducted in geographical ignorance. Roads and communications, he believed, were keys to Roman strategy.[215] I need add only a few points.

Roman military maps are explicitly attested in Velleius Paterculus, Pliny the Elder, and Vegetius.[216] Both the Praetorian Guard and some legions had their own map makers. *Picturae*, possibly maps, were

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view of the efficiency of scouts and spies attached to the legions (*Roman Imperial Grand Strategy*, 25-27, 56-57) will perhaps be substantiated by evidence in his "Roman Military Intelligence," in B. McKercher and K. Neilson, eds., *Military Intelligence*, forthcoming.

213. Grand strategic: 1.2.2-4; strategic: 1.2.5-6, 9; tactical: 1.2.1, 7-8; cf. Isaac, 408 n. 182; Whittaker, *Frontières*, 31.

214. See A. K. Bowman and J. D. Thomas, "Vindolanda 1985: The New Writing Tablets," *JRS* 76 (1986): 122 (inv. no. 32).

215. Syme, 226-51. At a lecture delivered 30 January 1992 at North Carolina State University, Isaac announced that a second edition of *Limits of Empire* is in preparation, in which he will respond to Syme and refine his own geographical arguments.

216. References collected and discussed in R. K. Sherk, "Roman Geographical Exploration and Military Maps," *ANRW* 2 (1974): 534-62. Isaac errs (402) in equating Vegetius's *itineraria picta* with the Late Roman road map, the Peutinger Table, which was not a military map: see Dilke, *Maps* (supra n. 184), 112, 115, 120. For a reconstruction of Agrippa's famous map, see R. Moynihan, "Geographical Mythology and Roman Imperial Ideology," in Winkes (supra n. 160), 153-62, although Syme (238) showed that this map is irrelevant for judging Augustus's strategy in Germany.

included in the documentary material Lucius Verus sent Fronto for writing the history of his Parthian war.[217] Further, Roman campaign strategy displayed a penchant for coordinated attack columns moving against the enemy from different directions to concentrate at a common point, i.e., pincers. Roman campaigns in Germany in the first and fourth centuries (simultaneous advance from the Rhine and the Danube), Trajan's Dacian Wars, and probably also Julian's Persian campaign of 363 (simultaneous columns along the Tigris and the Euphrates) illustrate this strategy.[218] Such sophisticated maneuvers hardly indicate geographical ignorance. In fact, Velleius (2.109.3-5) explicitly ties such a strategy to German geography for the campaign planned against Moroboduus in Bohemia in A.D. 6, and Hartke has shown how surveying techniques could have influenced the planning of this operation.[219]

For the Near East the charge of geographical ignorance lacks credibility: campaigns crossed terrain already under civilized states for at least two thousand years before the Romans arrived. Such territory hardly seems *terra incognita* and a vast store of geographical information and campaign experience probably circulated within the Roman officer corps.[220] Would Romans be either intellectually or practically incapable of having a map of an area made for military purposes, when Arabs of the seventh century could do so for their campaign against the Persian province of Daylam in the rugged area southwest of the Caspian Sea?[221]

Generally unnoticed in the debate on Roman geographical ignorance are passages from George of Pisidia, the panegyrist of the Byzantine emperor Heraclius (610-641): Heraclius used diagrams to plan his Persian campaigns.[222] Although the excessive claims of any panegyrist

217. C. Nicolet, "De Vérone au Champs de Mars: chorographi et carte d'Agrippe," *MEFAR* 100 (1988): 127-38; Verus: supra n. 201.

218. References in A. Neumann, "Kriegskunst," *Der kleine Pauly* (Stuttgart, 1969), 3: 345-46. Septimius Severus's campaign in Adiabene in 195 involved three attack columns: Dio, 75.3.2; cf. A. R. Birley, *Septimius Severus: The African Emperor*, rev. ed. (New Haven, 1989), 116-17.

219. C. Jodry, "L'utilisation des documents militaires chez Velleius Paterculus," *Revue des Etudes Latines* 29 (1951): 265-84; Hartke (supra n. 185). The recently discovered legionary camp at Markbreit on the Main River near Würzburg may be associated with this campaign: see D. Timpe, in M. Pietsch, D. Timpe, and L. Wamser, "Das augusteische Truppenlager Markbreit," *Bericht der römisch-germanischen Kommission* 72 (1991): 311-19, with a review of Augustan operations in Germany.

220. W. E. Kaegi, "Challenges to Late Roman and Byzantine Military Operations in Iraq (4th-9th Centuries)," *Klio* 73 (1991): 589.

221. B. Lewis, *The Assassins* (London, 1967), 41-42.

222. George of Pisidia, *Expeditio Persica*, 2.46-48, 179-81; *Heraclius*, 2.139, in A. Pertusi, ed. and tr., *Giorgio di Pisidia, Poemi: I. Panegirici Epici* (Ettal, 1959), 99, 105, 257. Cf. Plutarch, *Philopoemen*, 4.4-5, where the *theorēmata*

are naturally suspect and do not necessarily prove Heraclius's use of maps, George does show that the idea of strategic planning with maps and diagrams was known and something that the conscientious ideal emperor would do.

Yet methodological flaws here as elsewhere enter the debate. Isaac (403–5) treats the conflict between Pliny (*Natural History*, 6.40) and Tacitus (*Histories*, 1.6.2) on the purpose of Nero's proposed Caucasian expedition of 66 as proof of Roman geographical ignorance: was it directed against the Alani north of the Caucasus or the Albani in Azerbaijan? Similarly, he attempts to exploit Strabo's rejection (11.1.5–6) of the Stoic polymath Poseidonius's estimate of the width of the Caucasus isthmus, on the assumption that Poseidonius used reports of Pompey's Caucasian campaign (66–65 B.C.). Thus, a conclusion that geographical information from military sources was not reliable. Poseidonius's history of Pompey, however, is not extant; we cannot be sure from Strabo either that this estimate derives from Poseidonius's work on Pompey (rather than from an earlier treatise *On the Ocean*) or that Poseidonius had access to Pompey's campaign records; and Poseidonius as an historian was, as Strabo indicates, indifferent to accuracy. Yet more flawed is the broad conclusion drawn from the Pliny-Tacitus conflict over Nero's plans—an expedition that did not take place but, we should emphasize, *there were plans*. A source conflict, not geographical ignorance, lies at the heart of this matter. A plausible solution appeared years ago.[223]

But even if arguments for geographical ignorance be accepted, should Romans be castigated for failing to meet twentieth-century standards? Not until Bonnie Prince Charlie tried to seize the British crown in 1745, did the English realize that they had no military map of Britain; they still did not until 1791.[224]

The real issue for Luttwak's critics, however, is the alleged lack of geo-strategic thought. Once again, methodological blinders obscure the evidence. Military intelligence underlies the earliest known assemblage of ethnographic and geographic material in the Near East—from Sumer

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found in the *Tactica* of Evangelus may indicate more elaborate diagrams than the schematic drill formations seen in the manuscripts of Asclepiodotus and Aelianus Tacticus.

223. Tacitus and the manuscript reading, *Albanos,* should be preferred: see E. L. Wheeler, "Flavius Arrianus: A Political and Military Biography" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1977), 117–23, rejected by Isaac (404 n. 167) without appreciation of the argument's subtleties.

224. T. G. Fergusson, *British Military Intelligence, 1870–1914* (Frederick, 1984), 17–18.

on.[225] A geographical excursus became an historiographical convention before the description of a major campaign (e.g., Thucydides, 6.1–6, on Sicily; and Caesar, *Gallic War,* 1.1, on Gaul).[226] Romans, in fact, did think in geo-strategic terms. Cato made a point of including geographical and ethnographic material in his *Origines* with an eye to aiding Roman frontier policy (Dyson, 59–60, 191). If the examples above on pincers movements be valid only for campaigns rather than grand strategy, others can be adduced. Polybius (1.10) shows that Romans knew the geographical consequences of Carthaginian control of Sicily and he prophetically digressed (4.38–45) on the strategic importance of the site of Byzantium. Strabo (6.4.1–2) discusses the geo-strategic advantages of Italy as a base for Roman conquest of the Mediterranean. Florus (1.33.3–5) discusses the defensive advantages of Spain's geography and how these could have hindered Roman conquest. Likewise, Florus (1.40.4–5) observes that Roman civil wars in the West left Rome's eastern flank exposed to Mithridates's aggression, and Ammianus (23.5.18) has Julian speak of Rome's eastern flank. More significantly, John the Lydian says (*On Magistrates,* 3.33–34) that Constantine left behind at his death (337) written plans for a surprise attack on the Sassanids. He relates this plan to a monograph on how to beat the Persians through a surprise attack via Colchis (and presumably Armenia), written apparently under the influence of Corbulo's Armenian campaigns (56–63) by (most probably) Cornelius Celsus, a contemporary of Corbulo and the author of a military handbook later used by Vegetius.[227]

In sum, critics of Luttwak's overly schematized Roman strategy seem too zealous in their rebuttals, in part hamstrung by methodologies prohibiting a just interpretation of the evidence and blinding them to its possibilities. Strategy evolved as an art and as a concept of written military theory. We should not be too quick to deny its ancient forms

225. K. Müller, *Geschichte der antiken Ethnographie und ethnologischen Theoriebildung* (Wiesbaden, 1972), 1: 18–19.

226. Isaac's criticism (406) of Ammianus's excursus on the Persians (23.6) fails to consider that Ammianus follows an historiographical convention without regard for up-to-date information. Cf. M. F. A. Boak, "Die Quellen von Ammians Excursus über Persien," *Mnemosyne* N.S. 4 28 (1975): 47–56. Ammianus, a former Roman officer in the East and a participant in Julian's Persian campaign, had extensive personal knowledge of northern Mesopotamia, and his digression on Arabia (14.8) also shows that he used second- and third- rather than fourth-century sources: see J. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (London, 1989), 48–57, 343, and 537 n. 13 (additional bibliography). Matthews omits a commentary only on the Persian excursus.

227. See W. E. Kaegi, "Constantine's and Julian's Strategies of Strategic Surprise against the Persians," *Athenaeum* 59 (1981): 209–13; Wheeler (supra n. 223), 366–67.

because they do not exactly correspond to modern expectations. Romans could be sophisticated as well as arrogant and negligent. The latter does not exclude the former. Much remains unknown about Roman strategic thinking and administration of the Empire, but too much evidence has survived to deny the Romans an understanding of strategy.[228]

228. A version of this paper was delivered 22 March 1991 at the annual meeting of the Society for Military History held at Duke University.