

# Introduction

# **Introduction: The Case against Monocausal Explanations for Imperialism**

The aim of this thesis is to create a more comprehensive methodology for the assessment of Roman annexation in order to determine whether, and under what circumstances, annexation was advantageous to Rome. In doing so, it will also demonstrate that monocausal explanations for the causes of Roman annexation can only provide a simplified, and hence flawed, assessment of causality. The scope of this thesis is restricted to the imperial period, and specifically the reign of the emperor Trajan (AD 98 - 117). The usefulness of the methodology presented here is not restricted to this period, nor the annexationist actions of the Romans alone. With some minor adjustments, the methodology presented can be utilised to examine any annexationist imperialist action regardless of when it occurred or who the participants were.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, it will also be demonstrated that it is possible to utilise the methodology as an analytical tool to determine the likely advantage or disadvantage to be gained from a planned act of conquest. This is particularly

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this work annexationist imperialism is defined as acts of imperialism that involve the retention of significant amounts of conquered land by the conqueror.

useful for occasions where an emperor's motives for not engaging in an act of annexation are questioned.<sup>2</sup>

The primary limitation of the methodology presented in this dissertation is that it is only useful for the examination of acts of conquest and not military endeavours in general. Military action which does not involve the retention of conquered territory can be monocausal and undertaken in order to achieve far more limited objectives. The conquest of new territory requires the conqueror to interact with the conquered after the completion of military action and determines that they must be prepared, to a greater or lesser degree, to integrate the economy and people of the defeated nation into their own society. This consideration affects not only the post-war interactions and the conduct of the campaign itself but also the decision-making process that precedes a decision to engage in an act of conquest.

Too often the motives for Roman imperialism have been described in simplistic monocausal terms.<sup>3</sup> The most commonly assigned motivations for

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<sup>2</sup> See chapter 6 for a preliminary analysis of a possible German annexation beyond the Rhine.

<sup>3</sup> G. Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army of the First and Second Centuries A.D.*, 3rd ed. (London: A & C Black, 1981); W.V. Harris, "On War and Greed in the Century B.C.," *The American Historical Review* 76 (1971); E.S. Gruen, "Material Rewards and the Drive for Empire," in

conquest include: economic gain,<sup>4</sup> a desire for glory,<sup>5</sup> or as a part of a defensive policy,<sup>6</sup> but rarely as a combination of all of these factors. No phenomenon as complex as annexation can be attributed to a single cause, and any attempt to do so is highly likely to present unrealistic causal relationships. Often seemingly opposed viewpoints of causality such as those presented above are actually complementary, or are just presenting different aspects of the same motive.<sup>7</sup>

New approaches to the study of Roman imperialism, the metrocentric, pericentric and realist, have gone somewhat further than the traditional monocausal approaches, because they can be utilised to examine multiple

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*Roman Imperialism: Readings and Sources*, ed. C.B. Champion (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003). A notable exception is J. Rich, "Fear, Greed, and Glory: The Causes of Roman War Making in the Middle Republic," in *Roman Imperialism: Readings and Sources*, ed. C.B. Champion (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> G. K. Young, *Rome's Eastern Trade International Commerce and Imperial Policy, 31 BC - AD 305* (London: Routledge, 2001); Harris, "On War and Greed in the Century B.C."

<sup>5</sup> Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army of the First and Second Centuries A.D.*, p.41; B. Levick, *Claudius* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1993), p.139.

<sup>6</sup> T. Frank, *Roman Imperialism* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1925), pp.350-51; Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army of the First and Second Centuries A.D.*, p.28; Gruen, "Material Rewards and the Drive for Empire."

<sup>7</sup> L. H. Keeley, *War before Civilization, the Myth of the Peaceful Savage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.17.

factors within their chosen approach. However, in addition to often presenting essentially monocausal explanations for annexation, these approaches are too limited by the framework in which they present the causes of annexation. They claim that the causes of imperialism can be found by looking at either the society of the conqueror (metrocentric), the actions of the conquered (pericentric) or the nature of contemporary interstate relations (realist). As with traditional monocausal explanations, this is too simplistic and ignores the validity of the other approaches. All of these approaches have merit, but only a comprehensive examination of *all* the potential factors can demonstrate the true reason for annexation by clarifying all of its benefits and costs.

The proponents of the metrocentric approach include Harris, Rich, Brunt and Mattern,<sup>8</sup> They believe that the reasons for annexationist imperialism can be found by looking no further than the institutional structures and social characteristics of Rome herself. These sorts of characteristics include fear and distrust of those outside the empire, lust for economic gain and the desire for

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<sup>8</sup> Harris, "On War and Greed in the Century B.C."; W. V. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome 327 - 70 BC* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); Rich, "Fear, Greed, and Glory: The Causes of Roman War Making in the Middle Republic."; S.P. Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy* (London: University of California Press, 1999).

military glory.<sup>9</sup>

Proponents of the pericentric approach include MacMullen, Woolf and Wells.<sup>10</sup> They believe that it was the actions of those outside of the empire that caused Roman expansionism. The pericentric approach seeks to explain imperialism in several ways. These can involve weak states inviting Roman intervention to protect them from external threats, or, in politically divided states, one party asking Rome for assistance against the other, or finally strong states generating a Roman military response against them through their own aggressive behaviour.<sup>11</sup>

The realist, or systemic, approach advanced by Luttwak, Isaac and Hopkins<sup>12</sup> argues that ancient societies required military actions in order

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<sup>9</sup> C.B. Champion and A.M. Eckstein, "Introduction: The Study of Imperialism," in *Roman Imperialism: Readings and Sources* ed. C.B. Champion (Oxford Blackwell 2003), p.4.

<sup>10</sup> P. S. Wells, *The Barbarians Speak, How the Conquered Peoples Shaped Roman Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); G. Woolf, *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); R. Macmullen, "Romanization in the Time of Augustus," in *Roman Imperialism: Readings and Sources*, ed. C.B. Champion (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> Champion and Eckstein, "Roman Imperialism," p.4.

<sup>12</sup> E. N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire, from the First Century A.D. To the Third* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1979); B. Isaac, *The Limits of Empire the Roman Army in the East* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); K. Hopkins, "Conquerors

to ensure the survival of the state. This approach emphasises the fierce competition between states for power and security by attributing to major powers such as Rome the belief that the need for state security could only be satisfied by the individual state's accumulation of power and influence.<sup>13</sup>

As with traditional monocausal approaches, these approaches also suffer from too restrictive an application. To suggest that the reasons for annexation can be found purely in an examination of Roman beliefs and institutions ignores the fact that a threat posed by someone outside of the empire might have significantly contributed to the decision to end the threat by annexation. It might be argued that such an annexation was based solely on the perception of the Romans, but this ignores the clear possibility that external threats could be real. Conversely, arguments that imperialism was caused only by the requests for assistance or the threatening behaviour of the conquered ignores the potential internal motivating factors within Rome itself, including a desire for glory, the need to secure an emperor's reign or the need to improve the financial situation of Rome. Finally, realist arguments that the survival of state hinged on continued expansion neglect the potential

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and Slaves: The Impact of Conquering an Empire on the Political Economy of Italy," in *Roman Imperialism: Readings and Sources*, ed. C.B. Champion (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> Champion and Eckstein, "Roman Imperialism," p.4.

for personal motivations on the part of the imperial decision-makers.

The argument presented in this work demonstrates that only through a comprehensive examination of potential contributing factors can the likely motivations for Roman annexationist imperialism be determined. It is evident that many researchers believe that the Romans were unable to think in these complex comprehensive terms.<sup>14</sup> Some of these authors utilise the fact that there are no extant contemporary texts explicitly describing the thought processes that went into the decision to commit to an annexation as evidence that these sorts of processes could not have occurred. This argument from silence is rendered even less convincing by evidence from other contexts which demonstrates that the Romans did engage in fairly sophisticated, if informal, cost-benefit analyses.

Equally flawed is the argument that because contemporary literary sources describe a motive for a particular annexation in monocausal terms Roman policy-makers thought only in those terms.<sup>15</sup> This reductionist

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<sup>14</sup> Isaac, *The Limits of Empire*, pp.375; 377.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.377; Furthermore, this is highlighted by the fact that Dio (LIII.19.2-6) demonstrates that our primary sources often had difficulty getting accurate information on foreign affairs; additionally Polybius (XXIX.5.1-3.) illustrates the discomfort he felt in revealing private deliberations of the decision-makers.

argument is used to demonstrate that the Romans were incapable of strategic thought, and assessments of advantage.<sup>16</sup> The difficulties associated with the reductionist argument, particularly in relation to Roman thought processes regarding imperialism, stem from the fact that only a very small percentage of the contemporary literary works written remain extant. Even if a larger percentage were available, the likelihood would remain that they would not provide us with verbatim accounts of discussions, such as those conducted unofficially between individuals, that influenced the decision-making process. Furthermore, a reductionist approach must assume that the information published in regards to the causes of an imperialist action were actually the real reasons, not those that an emperor was willing to share with the public.<sup>17</sup>

Combatants and the civilian populace of a nation or state are frequently given a public monocausal motive to explain the onset of a war,<sup>18</sup> only to discover later that the truth was rather different.<sup>19</sup> In these cases either the

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<sup>16</sup> Isaac, *The Limits of Empire*, p.375.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.378.

<sup>18</sup> Keeley, *War before Civilization*, p.15.

<sup>19</sup> Harris, "On War and Greed in the Century B.C.," p.1372; Isaac, *The Limits of Empire*, p.378.

stated motive was a complete fabrication, or the motive made public was only a part of a more comprehensive motivation fully known only to those directly involved in the decision-making process.

To commit the resources of the Roman Empire to a war of conquest was no small matter. A successful war could bring great personal and public rewards, increasing not only the *gloria* of the emperor, or improving the financial position of the state and individuals within it, but also increasing the security of the empire and ensuring its continued longevity. Conversely, an unsuccessful war could achieve the opposite. It must therefore be assumed that all sensible emperors would have considered issues of this importance thoroughly,<sup>20</sup> and examined matters of potential advantage and disadvantage prior to reaching a decision as to whether the risks involved and disadvantages likely to result would be outweighed by the potential advantages and benefits gained from a successful annexation.

This is not to suggest that all emperors were sensible, infallible, or always made the correct decisions,<sup>21</sup> only that although based on often limited

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<sup>20</sup> J. B. Campbell, *War and Society in Imperial Rome 31 BC - AD 284* (London: Routledge, 2002) pp.133ff; 382ff.

<sup>21</sup> E. L. Wheeler, "Methodological Limits and the Mirage of Roman Strategy: Part Two," *The*

information it is likely that they would have attempted to determine not only the potential for success but also the consequences associated with it. Polybius in his examination of Roman imperialism during the republican era states:

No man of sound sense goes to war with his neighbours simply for the sake of crushing an adversary, just as no one sails on the open sea just for the sake of crossing it. In fact no one even takes up the study of arts and crafts merely for the sake of knowledge, but all men do all they do for the resulting pleasure, honour, or advantage which he may derive from them.

Polybius III.4.10-11.

It might be argued that the Romans felt that they had a right to dominate the world in which they lived, for the better part. They were not foolish enough however to attempt wholesale domination when it was apparent that the difficulties involved in a venture far outweighed the potential for success and would require them to expend resources far in excess of any possible gain.<sup>22</sup>

Suggestions that the Romans were incapable of calculating the potential disadvantages and advantages of conquest seem to be based on the false

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*Journal of Military History* 57, no. 2 (1993) p.222.

<sup>22</sup> As is demonstrated by the criticism in the primary sources when a seemingly unbeneficial annexation occurred, Appian, *praef.*, 5.

premise that because the Roman Empire existed some 2000 years ago it was populated by individuals who were unable to grasp complex strategic and geographical thought,<sup>23</sup> and that this ability has only developed within the framework of modernity. Considering the numerous elements of Roman society that have found their way into our modern society and the repeatedly demonstrated political, social, and military acumen of the Romans, the idea that they were somehow our intellectual inferiors seems to me to be unsustainable. By the first century AD certain Greek and Roman individuals had frequently demonstrated complex thought easily equal to the task of determining the potential advantages and disadvantages of engaging in conquest.<sup>24</sup>

Suggestions have also been made that because there was no official position of military advisor that the emperor had no one to turn to for professional advice on a potential military venture.<sup>25</sup> The authors of these suggestions simply ignore the fact that just because the title did not exist does not indicate the skills were unavailable. Nor does it suggest that the emperor

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<sup>23</sup> Isaac, *The Limits of Empire*, pp.376-387.

<sup>24</sup> Pliny, *Epist.* 3.1.

<sup>25</sup> Isaac, *The Limits of Empire*, pp. 376-387; 404-408; Conversely, Wheeler, "Methodological Limits and the Mirage of Roman Strategy: Part Two," p.234, argues the probability of a centralised staff.

did not take advantage of those who possessed this sort of knowledge, particularly the commanders of armies stationed adjacent to a potential conquest, who would likely have had contact with these people.<sup>26</sup>

A brief survey of the more important works on imperialism and its motivation shows the limitations of the current paradigms. For example, Harris' seminal work *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome 327 – 70 BC* presents a discussion of the causes of war and imperialism centred on the belief that the Senate consistently sought new targets to attack and or annex, primarily in order to take advantage of the economic benefits inherent in a successful campaign. He also argues that some potential annexations were not undertaken because of purely practical reasons of a lack of advantage.<sup>27</sup> Although Harris presents a solid argument for the Roman desire for economic gain, his argument against the concept of defensive imperialism is less than convincing. For example, Harris' discussion of the Syrian war presents a significant problem. He begins by stating that defence was clearly the primary concern for Rome in this instance,<sup>28</sup> but finishes by stating that the most profound reason for this war was the significant benefits of success

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<sup>26</sup> This is discussed in the first chapter of this work.

<sup>27</sup> Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, p.133.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p.220.

and that too much importance has been ascribed to Roman security fears.<sup>29</sup> Harris' work therefore does not adequately examine the range of causes that contributed to the Roman decision to annex.

In an equally important work, Tenney Frank discusses the causes of imperialism in the Republican period. Frank convincingly argues that Rome had no early extensive maritime commerce,<sup>30</sup> and that early treaties did not demand special privileges for Roman traders.<sup>31</sup> However, Frank also demonstrates that during the empire, the use of differential tariffs, encouragement of harbour upgrades by subsidies and insurances would point to a distinct policy of encouraging mercantilism.<sup>32</sup>

Suggestions have been made that the Romans did not have a clear picture of the geography of the world around them and that this crippled their ability to determine the scale and difficulty of conquest.<sup>33</sup> Yet we know that Roman merchants were to be found well beyond the frontiers of the empire trading

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp.222-23.

<sup>30</sup> Frank, *Roman Imperialism*, p.278.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp.283-84.

<sup>33</sup> Isaac, *The Limits of Empire*, pp.403-5.

with outsiders,<sup>34</sup> shipping goods over extremely large distances and over all sorts of terrain both to and from these outsiders. This clearly indicates that many Romans had a very good understanding of the geographical conditions facing any army of conquest in many regions.<sup>35</sup>

In order to determine if annexation could be advantageous, and which conditions were required to make it so, this work presents a systematic methodology in chapter two. This is based, in part, on elements of hypotheses developed by modern strategic thinkers.<sup>36</sup> Although some authors argue that the use of modern hypotheses such as these is an anachronistic methodology,<sup>37</sup> these hypotheses, will not be used to provide evidence that an emperor possessed the ability to understand or determine advantage indicators of annexation. An examination of primary sources, undertaken in chapter one, demonstrates that although there is no direct evidence for the use of a cost

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<sup>34</sup> Pliny, *NH*, XXXVII. XI

<sup>35</sup> Wheeler, "Methodological Limits and the Mirage of Roman Strategy: Part Two," pp.236-239.

<sup>36</sup> Including Libermann and Feierabend, some of the hypotheses that provide the factors utilised in order to determine profitability include: quagmire hypothesis, coercion hypothesis, and time, size, and trade hypothesis, each of which examine multiple factors that determine advantages and disadvantages related to conquest.

<sup>37</sup> Isaac, *The Limits of Empire*, pp.374; 377; Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy*, p.2.

benefit analysis of annexation in Roman decision-making there is a strong circumstantial case for believing that the Romans were capable of thinking in complex cost-benefit terms.<sup>38</sup> It is almost universally agreed that wealthy Romans spent a great deal of thought on matters that would help them remain wealthy.<sup>39</sup> This included everything from carefully examining the pros and cons of a new estate they were considering purchasing to the risks associated in investing in goods that required ocean transport.<sup>40</sup> Yet it is often promoted that profitability was not an important concern when considering an annexation.<sup>41</sup> If the Roman aristocracy carefully weighed the pros and cons of their investments, how much more so would this same class of people think about the economic viability of a new province?

This thesis utilises an examination of the complexities of Roman thought in other areas to demonstrate that the Romans were in fact capable of complex multi-causal thought and did think in terms of advantage before making decisions far less significant than whether to commit to an expensive

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<sup>38</sup> P. Liberman, *Does Conquest Pay? The Exploitation of Occupied Industrial Societies*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), chapter 2.

<sup>39</sup> M. I. Finley, "Empire in the Graeco-Roman World," *Greece and Rome*, 25, (1978): p.11.

<sup>40</sup> Pliny, *Epist.*, 3.1.

<sup>41</sup> Frank, *Roman Imperialism*, pp.278-282; E. Badian, *Roman Imperialism in the Late Republic*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1968), pp.17; 19; 21.

and dangerous war of annexation.<sup>42</sup> The decision to annex territory was of importance to the survival of the empire and of vital importance to the individual emperor. A failed war might not only weaken the Roman armies through the loss of experienced troops, and damage the Roman fiscus, but could also act as a demonstration of Roman vulnerability which a foreign power hostile to Rome might try to exploit.<sup>43</sup>

This thesis examines in detail the Dacian annexation of AD 107 by utilising the methodology presented in the second chapter of this work. This focuses on the four key groupings: economic factors, geopolitical factors, systemic frustration and internal factors. The results of this examination clearly demonstrate that, although resulting in some disadvantages, the Dacian annexation overall was significantly advantageous to Trajan and Rome. The suggestion that any one advantage should be presented as the sole reason for Trajan's decision to annex Dacia is unrealistic and ignores the importance of the other equally valid contributing factors.

Mackendrick, Gibbon, Wells, Brunt, Salmon and Campbell<sup>44</sup> agree that

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<sup>42</sup> This is discussed in chapter one.

<sup>43</sup> Germans were feared to be waiting for this; Tac. *Germ.*, 37; Tac. *Ann.*, II.18.

<sup>44</sup> P. MacKendrick, *The Dacian Stones Speak* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina

Trajan's wars against Decebalus were primarily the result of the emperor's desire for glory. The consensus among them is that Trajan was most concerned with enhancing his stature in the eyes of the empire's citizens by defeating a powerful people known to have caused problems for previous Roman rulers and renowned for the defeats they had inflicted on the Roman forces they had faced in the past. This opinion clearly has some validity and the emperor's desire for glory most certainly contributed to his decision to declare a costly and dangerous war. This does not however justify the view that a desire for glory was the only, or even the predominant, reason for the Dacian wars. It is also clearly far from an explanation why Trajan, after defeating the Dacians in the first war, committed even more forces and money to a second war and an annexation which required a garrison of approximately 60,000 Roman troops in the region.<sup>45</sup> Trajan assumed the title *Dacicus* and was hailed as victor after the first war by his contemporaries. Trajan had achieved in the first war all the glory these authors believe he sought—without the need to commit to a

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Press, 1975), p.71; R. P. Longden, "The Wars of Trajan," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, ed. S. A. Cook, F. E. Adcock, and M. P. Charlesworth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), p.224; E.T. Salmon, "Trajan's Conquest of Dacia," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 67 (1936), p.87; and Campbell, *War and Society in Imperial Rome 31 BC - AD 284*, p.14.

<sup>45</sup> See manpower section of chapter 2 for a discussion of how this figure was derived.

second war and an annexation.

Another popular explanation for the onset of the Dacian wars is the emperor's need to boost the flagging imperial economy.<sup>46</sup> Dacia certainly possessed extremely rich gold mines in the Roşia Montana region in addition to the large quantities of other valuable natural resources such as agricultural land, iron ore, stone quarries (of various types), and salt pans. This justifies the belief that there was wealth to be exploited by a conquest of the region. Further support for this view derives from Dacia's involvement in significant external trade by the time of the Trajanic annexation, as this ensured that the Roman administration was able to gain more income through taxation levied on this trade.

However, evidence does not indicate that the imperial finances were in a particularly bad state at the time of Trajan's accession.<sup>47</sup> In addition, any statement that this was the sole or even primary reason for the annexation of Dacia ignores the simple fact that the emperor would have gained a substantial

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<sup>46</sup> J. Carcopino, "Les Richesses Des Daces Et Le Redressement De L'Empire Romain, Sous Trajan," *Dacia - Revue d'archéologie et d'histoire ancienne* I (1928): p.28.

<sup>47</sup> Pliny, *Paneg.*, 41; Sutherland, *The State of the Imperial Treasury at the Death of Domitian*, p.152; Syme, *The Imperial Finances under Domitian, Nerva and Trajan*, p.57

financial benefit from the booty obtained after the completion of the Second Dacian War,<sup>48</sup> without committing to the ongoing expenses associated with annexation.

The final commonly used explanation for the Dacian annexation is that it significantly increased the security of the empire. Webster, Bennett, Arnold, Haynes and Hanson,<sup>49</sup> are proponents of this view. This view is also easily justified, by the fact that Dacia was engaged in trying to form an anti-Roman alliance with other regional enemies of Rome which might have led to significant security problems at least for nearby provinces.<sup>50</sup> Additionally, the historical contact between Dacia and the Roman Empire clearly demonstrates that the Dacians, particularly during periods of unification, posed an ongoing

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<sup>48</sup> John Lydus, 127.3.

<sup>49</sup> G. Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army of the First and Second Centuries A.D.*, (London: A & C Black, 1981), p.58; J. Bennett, *Trajan Optimus Princeps: A Life and Times*, (London: Routledge, 1997), p.97; W.S. Hanson and I.P. Haynes, "An Introduction to Roman Dacia." In *Roman Dacia the Making of a Provincial Society*, edited by W.S. Hanson and I.P. Haynes. (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2004), p.15; W.T. Arnold, *The Roman System of Provincial Administration to the Accession of Constantine the Great*, (Oxford: B.H. Blackwell, 1906), p.160.

<sup>50</sup> P. T. R. Wilcox, *Barbarians against Rome, Rome's Celtic, Germanic, Spanish and Gallic Enemies* (Oxford: Osprey, 2004), p.28; Bennett, *Trajan Optimus Princeps*, p.86. This is discussed in depth in the security section in chapter four.

military concern to nearby provinces.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, the Dacian defeat of several Roman military units demonstrates that they were able to defeat Roman forces in combat.<sup>52</sup> However, the Dacian threat to the security of the empire could have been mitigated without recourse to annexation. This could have been achieved by a punitive action culminating in the destruction of the Dacian citadels in the Oraştie Mountains and the killing of a significant percentage of their warrior class or the indigenous elite who provided the leadership in Dacia's anti-Roman endeavours. This would at least have ensured that there was a significant time interval before Dacia could apply pressure on the frontiers again. Alternatively, Trajan might have entered into political deterrents such as sponsoring potential claimants to the Dacian throne, or even sowing disunity through financial inducements to disaffected Dacian nobles,<sup>53</sup> or the Iazyges, who had lost land to the Dacians.

Each of the explanations presented above is easily justified and possess some validity. However, each of them ignores the possibility that an opposing view might be of equal value and validity. It is argued throughout this

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<sup>51</sup> Discussed in depth in the security section in chapter four.

<sup>52</sup> This is examined in the security section of chapter four.

<sup>53</sup> The potential for this was demonstrated in Burebista's reign and is discussed in the aspirations section of the Dacian cost-benefit analysis.

work that monocausal explanations, like the ones illustrated above, are too simplistic and that the true reason for an annexation or significant military incursion can only be found when it is accepted that *all* of these factors played a substantial role in the decision to annex. Of course, each military action needs to be examined individually to determine the factors that contributed in that specific case.

The first chapter of this work will argue that the Romans sought advantage from their military endeavours and possessed a relatively complex concept of the factors that could contribute to advantage (or disadvantage). This section will demonstrate that the Roman decision-makers understood the economic, geopolitical, systemic and internal factors that contributed to overall advantage. These four areas are described in this work as the four key groupings that constitute the likelihood of advantage.

The second chapter of this thesis divides each of these four key groupings into a number of sub-factors. When the methodology is applied to the case-studies in chapters four and six, these sub-factors are individually examined in order to determine whether they provided Rome or the emperor an advantageous outcome. Only then is an assessment of each of

the key groupings conducted to determine the overall level of advantage or disadvantage to Rome.

The third chapter introduces the numerical indicator scale, which is based on the modern cost-benefit analysis tool. This is designed to assign values to individual factors in order to make the comparison of multiple annexations easier. The visual weight graph, which is based on the results of the numerical indicator scale, is designed to graphically represent the results of the research in an easily understood format.

The fourth chapter presents the primary case-study utilised in this work, the Dacian annexation. This annexation has been the subject of a variety of differing monocausal explanations, which makes it an ideal case-study for this work. As noted above, Trajan's conquest has variously been described as the result of one of three main factors: the desire for military glory, the need for a significant injection of capital into a waning economy, or as a means of stabilising the frontier security of the empire. This work demonstrates that each of these reasons contributed to the decision to annex Dacia, and that an attribution of cause to only one of these reasons does not present a realistic interpretation of why the immense sums of money were dedicated to this

conquest. Nor does it explain why an emperor with proven military ability would engage in such a risky venture against an opponent that on several occasions had demonstrated their ability to defeat the Roman forces sent against them.<sup>54</sup>

The fifth chapter summarises the results of the assessment of the Dacian annexation. This section uses the numerical indicator scale and visual weight graphs to present and summarise the results of the examination carried out in the preceding chapter.

The final chapter presents a preliminary cost-benefit assessment of an annexation which did not occur — Germania during the reign of Trajan. This assessment indicates that any German annexation at this time, would have resulted in some significant disadvantages to Rome and Trajan. This chapter also demonstrates the utility of the methodology when applied as a model to potential or planned annexations.

Although the expansion of the empire was not orchestrated by a single individual or to a set of defined guidelines, it seems likely that the imperial frontiers were developed on a reasoned and thought-out strategy based

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<sup>54</sup> Wilcox, *Barbarians against Rome*, p.28; Bennett, *Trajan Optimus Princeps*, p.86.

on a determination of advantage rather than a haphazard come-what-may attitude.<sup>55</sup> The political and military leaders of the republican era can, to some degree, be accused of unplanned expansion resulting purely from a desire to increase their personal glory, reputation and wealth, because they were not personally responsible for the continued prosperity of Rome. However, even then it must be remembered that the Roman Senate made the final decision as to whether, and in what form, acquisitions would be retained.<sup>56</sup>

Somewhat surprisingly, an examination of republican acquisitions demonstrates that this often did not result in the official annexation of the territory claimed by the general in question.<sup>57</sup> Rather, the acquisition often remained outside Rome's explicit control but was expected to follow the 'guidance' of the Senate in foreign affairs and anything else that might affect Rome.<sup>58</sup> This policy would result in a reduced expenditure on manpower, administration and policing. It must, therefore be seen that although the Republic did not necessarily accept every opportunity to expand the physical extent of the Roman holdings, under the guidance of the Senate it did

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<sup>55</sup> Polybius, 1.36; 1.39.

<sup>56</sup> Badian, *Roman Imperialism in the Late Republic*, chpt. 3.

<sup>57</sup> W. V. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, p.132.

<sup>58</sup> Polybius, XVIII.46; Livy, XXXIV.49.

significantly extend the reach of Roman authority and influence.

This situation changed somewhat towards the end of the Republic and the early years of the principate. The Roman Empire developed new methods of governance of foreign holdings and began to discover that allowing a region to remain independent often meant that the will of Rome could be too easily ignored. This in effect robbed Rome of some of its freedom of choice when it came to choosing which actions to engage in, potentially drawing Rome into many disputes that taxed the Roman economy and manpower reserves unnecessarily.<sup>59</sup> It can be argued that because much of the incorporation into the empire of foreign holdings was achieved over a relatively short period of time that some concerted effort was put in place to ensure that these additions to the Empire were in fact sound choices both economically and defensively.

This dissertation argues that the use of monocausal explanations of Roman imperialist annexation are too simple to demonstrate likely causes for annexation. These explanations have primarily centred on the concepts of Roman desire for money, security or the individual's desire for glory. The argument presented here is that *all* these factors are important in determining

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<sup>59</sup> Greece provides a good example of this. Badian, *Roman Imperialism in the Late Republic*, pp.2; 7; Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, pp.131-132.

the reasons for annexation. As with most issues the assigning of one cause as the reason for engaging in a complex endeavour seems, to me, to be far too simplistic. Rather, any examination of imperialism requires a relatively more complex explanation. It is therefore my argument that each of these factors played a role, to a greater or lesser degree, in the decision making process.

The thesis further argues that the Romans did have a relatively sophisticated concept of cost/benefit and that they applied the concept of advantage gained from annexation to the decision to annex. As Levick notes, it was not difficult for the Romans to determine the likely advantage/s to be gained from a successful annexation.<sup>60</sup> The true difficulty would most likely have lain with the determination of the prospects for success. It should be noted here, though, that although financial gain is one demonstrable element of advantage, 'advantage' in this context does not simply equate to economic profitability.

I consider that the Romans examined the potential advantages and disadvantages and generally factored these into any decision to commit to the expensive and often risky venture that was (and is) a war of conquest.

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<sup>60</sup> B. Levick, *The Government of the Roman Empire, A sourcebook*, (London: Routledge, 2000), p.2.

The method utilised in this work to determine advantage demonstrates that, although there were disadvantages associated with the annexation of Dacia, it provided Rome with an overall advantage, and that it was this overall advantage that led to Rome's decision to annex Dacia.

As each emperor ultimately had the sole authority to determine whether an annexation occurred, the methodology provides an opportunity to delve into the character of the emperor. This is particularly so in cases where an application of the methodology suggests that an annexation would not have provided significant advantage to Rome. If a disadvantageous annexation was carried out, it seems likely that it resulted either from a flawed analysis at the time, or from greater weight than normal being given to one or more positive factors—even though the assessment overall suggests the result would have been negative. A close examination of the emperor's reign with particular attention paid to the positive factors in the assessment, may reveal a significant weakness either in the empire or more likely in a specific emperor's reign that in some way necessitated an increased emphasis on one of the positive factors in the assessment.

At a wider level, the intention of this dissertation is to provide a

framework within which Roman annexation can be examined in a more comprehensive manner. The methodology presented undoubtedly attributes a high level of sophistication to Roman decision-making, but a careful examination of the ancient evidence suggests that this level of sophistication can be demonstrated, and did exist, during the imperial period.