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Strategic Lessons from the Small Wars Experience of the Roman Republic

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Henry W. Moore BA (Hons), MA

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Abstract

The modern experience of small wars, referring to armed conflict between belligerents divergent in military power, tactics, and strategies, has been one of infrequent and costly success. Some have attributed these difficulties to the discipline of 'counterinsurgency', the understanding of asymmetric conflicts as socio-political struggles for the population, which has been dominant throughout this period. With a return to conventional warfare looming, it is vital that all possible avenues for learning from this experience are explored. This thesis contends that the small wars conduct of the Roman Republic can contribute to this learning process. Previous examinations of this topic have done so largely by examining Imperial conduct through the lens of counterinsurgency. This study instead focuses exclusively on campaigns from the Republican period and takes a broader view of these challenges based on Charles E. Callwell's *Small Wars: Their Theory and Practice*. Using case studies of Roman campaigns in the Lusitanian, Jugurthine, and Gallic Wars; the thesis identifies seven key considerations that influenced Roman success across the levels of war. These are: limiting enemy freedom of operation, targeting centres of gravity, proper commitment, the value of intelligence, adaptation, the importance of the population, and the application of force to defeat the enemy. Comparison with the modern context reveals a number of shared difficulties and responses that proves the relevance of the Roman experience to the development of small wars thought, as well as showing Roman conduct to be more nuanced than reductionist appraisals acknowledge. This analysis shows that Roman success in small wars stems from an innate understanding of the nature of warfare that modern approaches (particularly those espoused by counterinsurgency theorists) often lack, having forgotten that the eternal principles of war established by Clausewitz still apply to small wars regardless of their distinct characteristics.

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Introduction

The inter-power dynamics of the post-Second World War world have resulted in the last several decades being dominated by asymmetric conflicts. These can be defined as armed struggles between more traditionally powerful actors and those (often lesser in political status) whose inferior resources, capabilities, and conventional strength often leads them to adopt non-traditional tactics and strategies to compensate.¹ Asymmetric warfare has taken on various forms over the years, ranging from the revolutionary proxy wars and colonial wars of independence of the Cold War to modern campaigns aimed at protecting global peace from non-state threats like terrorism. Regardless of the exact form, asymmetry in ways and means remains a constant characteristic. Much thought has been put into the conception and practice of these conflicts, which have been given a plethora of names to distinguish them to varying degrees from conventional warfare, including 'low-intensity conflicts', 'guerrilla warfare', 'anti-terrorist campaigns', and most recently 'counterinsurgency'.² However, the conventional powers have struggled to deal with these challenges, despite their often-overwhelming conventional strength and the complex thinking that has gone into many of their strategies. Though there have been a number of successful campaigns, a plurality of cases have ended in something resembling victory for the ostensibly 'weaker' side, and what victories *were* won by the conventional powers often took years of hard toil.³ Most recently, the US has been confronted with the failure of its 20-year struggle to defeat the Taliban, culminating in the group's return to power in Afghanistan.⁴ This is despite the US' expenditure of, as Kiras writes, much blood and treasure.⁵

The prevalence of asymmetric conflicts during this period prompted many to conclude that this trend would continue. Indeed, it was with this direction in mind that Rupert Smith infamously declared that "war no

¹ L. Deriglazova, *Great Powers, Small Wars: Asymmetric Conflict Since 1945* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), xvii-xviii, 1; D. Jordan et al., *Understanding Modern Warfare*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 307-308.

² R. Beaumont, 'Small Wars: Definitions and Dimensions', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 541 (1995), 20-35; Deriglazova, *Great Powers, Small Wars*, 2.

³ C. Paul et al, *Paths to Victory: Lessons from Modern Insurgencies* (Washington, D.C.: RAND Corporation, 2013), 18-20.

⁴ J. J. Collins, 'Defeat in Afghanistan: An Autopsy', *Parameters*, 53, 1 (Spring 2023), 5-26:5-6.

⁵ D. Jordan et al., *Understanding Modern Warfare*, 302.

longer exists”, with “industrial war” having been supplanted by “war amongst the people”.⁶ However, recent events have shown this not to be the case. The Russo-Ukrainian War has seen conventional warfare return to Europe,⁷ while escalating sabre-rattling from the People’s Republic of China as to its territorial claims in the Pacific suggests overt conflict might not be too far off there either.⁸ Though Israel’s latest campaign against Hamas shows asymmetric challenges have not necessarily gone away, states must ensure they consolidate whatever lessons can be learnt from these asymmetric experiences before conventional warfare demands all their attention again. If this is not done, we risk repeating the same costly mistakes when they recur in the future. Indeed, with Houthi threats to global shipping in the Red Sea escalating rapidly,⁹ this may happen sooner than we think.

It is this learning process which this thesis intends to contribute to. However, it will do it in a fundamentally different way: by taking the discipline back on its theoretical and historical roots. In the first case, this means reorienting the conception of the field back along the lines of ‘small wars’, the understanding of the problem espoused by Charles E. Callwell. As we will see, Callwell took a view of the various challenges these conflicts pose that was broader and without many of the overcomplicated trappings of the approaches that followed him.¹⁰ With regards to the second point, this thesis will take the work of Callwell and apply it to the experience of the Roman Republic. To this end, it will show that not only did the Romans engage in campaigns which can be recognised as small wars, but that they did so with a good deal of success (as indicated by the Roman state’s long history). Rome achieved this despite their comparatively small army and the obvious communications limitations of the period, which seriously impeded everything from more literal communications and intelligence-gathering to the mobilisation and organisation of troops. Even with technology and arms which all but negate these difficulties, modern armies routinely struggle to replicate this

⁶ R. Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 1-3.

⁷ M. Zabrodskiy et al, *Preliminary Lessons in Conventional Warfighting from Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine: February–July 2022* (London: Royal United Services Institute, 2022). Available online: <https://static.rusi.org/359-SR-Ukraine-Preliminary-Lessons-Feb-July-2022-web-final.pdf> [Accessed 10/1/2024].

⁸ O. Letwin, *China vs America: A Warning* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2021).

⁹ A. Stark, ‘A Precarious Moment for Yemen’s Truce’ [Blog Post], *The RAND Blog*. 13 December 2023. Available online: <https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2023/12/a-precarious-moment-for-yemens-truce.html> [Accessed 10/1/2024].

¹⁰ C. E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice*, 3rd edition (London: HM Stationery Office, 1906).

success against the irregular enemies faced in small wars. Rome's comparative success therefore begs the question: what did they know that we do not?

This thesis thus aims to extract lessons and principles from across the various levels of war for the conduct of 'small wars' based on the study of three campaigns undertaken by the Roman Republic: the Lusitanian War (155 BC – 139 BC), the Jugurthine War (111 BC – 106 BC), and the Gallic War (58 BC – 50 BC). This endeavour will be guided by four primary research questions:

1. What is the nature of small wars and can a concrete set of identifying characteristics be attributed to the label?
2. What was the small wars experience of the Roman Republic?
3. What are the challenges of small wars and how can they be addressed?
4. What implications does this have for modern theory and practice?

Following this overview, the introduction will continue with a review of Charles Callwell's *Small Wars: Their Principles & Practice* in order to answer the first research question. It will also engage with the literature behind the basic theories of 'counterinsurgency' that underpin much of the modern experience of small wars, as well as the main criticisms of that approach that have arisen during its conceptual dominance. Lastly, it will explore previous attempts within the field to examine the Roman experience of these kinds of conflicts in order to highlight areas of focus and identify where this thesis fits within the current library.

The second chapter will examine the methodological framework to which this thesis will work in addressing the aforementioned research questions: the analysis of the strategic and operational practices of the Romans in three case studies of small wars waged during the Republican period.

The next three chapters are the case studies themselves: the Lusitanian War (155 BC – 139 BC), the Jugurthine War (111 BC – 106 BC), and the Gallic War (58 BC – 50 BC). Each case study begins with an overview of the context within which the conflict sits, including an examination of the characteristics and operational art of the irregular enemy in question, before conducting a thorough overview of the campaigns that constituted

the war. The chapter will then establish the extent to which the enemy's characteristics and methods, as well as the nature of the campaign, align with the criteria and categories established by Callwell's work. The relative success of the campaign is then established by looking at the extent to which its specific policy objectives were met. Each case study concludes by identifying the various lessons the respective conflict shows for the conduct of small wars, with reference to modern theory. These chapters form a major part of this thesis' answer to the second research question.

The final chapter brings everything together to answer the latter three research questions. After briefly restating the purpose and aims of the work, the conclusion identifies the primary characteristics of what passes for the Roman approach to small wars, thereby completing the thesis' response to that research question. This is then followed by a collation of the key lessons identified within the Roman case studies, incorporating modern small wars examples to show areas of shared difficulties and responses between the two experiences, as well as the implications this has for modern practice. This last portion, in addition to the concluding remarks, serves to answer the remaining two research questions.

Callwell and the Theoretical Conception of Small Wars

Despite its recent association with the era of Cold War insurgencies and the Global War on Terror, small wars is not necessarily a modern discipline. In fact, the term has been in use for around 200 years,¹¹ with some of its pioneering practitioners and antecedent theorists predating 'classical' strategists like Clausewitz.¹² Although not formal doctrine, British Army officer Charles Callwell's *Small Wars: Their Principles & Practice* occupies a position as one of the foundational works on the topic. Informed by his experiences in various chapters of British 19th-century colonial warfare, Callwell's writing is naturally couched in a way representative of this colonial context and Victorian worldview. However, these concerns are not relevant to this study, which sees value in and focuses exclusively on his contribution to this niche of military theory. *Small Wars* lays out the

¹¹ Beaumont, 'Small Wars', 22.

¹² B. Heuser, 'Small Wars in the Age of Clausewitz: The Watershed Between Partisan War and People's War', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 33, 1 (2010), 139-162; D. Porch, *Counterinsurgency: Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1-12.

various challenges that modern armies of regular troops face when confronting irregular opponents, and how they might handle these. Though he addresses a plethora of issues, the key areas of friction Callwell identifies are: poor intelligence, formulating proper strategy, how to apply it through operational art and tactics, as well as matters relating to communications, logistics, and the provision of security.¹³

On the face of it none of this is new, but it is the context which is different. Indeed, a major part of Callwell's significance stems from the thoroughness of his exposition of this context of 'small wars'. Callwell attributes this label to "operations of regular armies against irregular, or comparatively speaking irregular, forces" who are inferior in armament, organisation, and discipline to greater or lesser degrees.¹⁴ Simply put, what we might now refer to as 'asymmetric' conflicts. Callwell states that these conflicts are often made more complicated by their highly diverse nature, which can feature different modes of warfare and unfamiliar operational conditions, thereby necessitating adaptation to their unique characteristics.¹⁵ Indeed, Callwell asserts that the distinct characteristics of small wars mean that they can "[diverge] widely from what is adapted to the conditions of regular warfare" to such an extent as to make it "an art by itself".¹⁶ Despite these campaigns generally being against forces making use of irregular tactics to address their relative conventional weakness, the contextualised nature of asymmetry as a concept means that certain adversaries may display some characteristics of regular armies. This can produce small wars that outwardly resemble conventional warfare in character and where "the principles of modern strategy and tactics are largely if not wholly applicable".¹⁷

One of *Small Wars'* other beneficial contributions in terms of this study is the articulation of what a small war looks like on the political level. Callwell divides small wars into three broad types: "campaigns of conquest or annexation, campaigns for the suppression of insurrections or lawlessness or for the settlement of conquered or annexed territory, and campaigns undertaken to wipe out an insult, or avenge a wrong, or to

¹³ A. Alderson, 'Britain', in T. Rid & T. Keaney (eds.), *Understanding Counterinsurgency: Doctrine, operations, and challenges* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 28-45:32.

¹⁴ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 21.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, 23.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ *ibid.*, 29.

overthrow a dangerous enemy".¹⁸ The first category is typically against an external actor of some kind, such as another state or nation; while the second clearly refers to conflicts against actors *within* one's state borders. Interestingly, he asserts that the two may occur in succession, with states securing their control over the land they have just annexed.¹⁹ The third class, which Callwell expands to also encompass "expeditions undertaken for some ulterior political purpose, or to establish order in some foreign land", represents something of a fusion between the first two. There is a potential policing element like that of the second class, but they are clearly couched in an expeditionary way against foreign threats. Furthermore, Callwell states that certain kinds (e.g., the punitive expeditions) might result in annexations like those wars of the first class.²⁰ This explanation is vital to the progress of this project in terms of establishing criteria to ascertain whether the case studies explored can be classified as small wars or not.

From reading *Small Wars*, Callwell clearly conceives these conflicts as purely military endeavours. This is evidenced by its preoccupation with operational minutia like identifying objectives,²¹ protecting lines of communication and supply,²² fighting in different terrains,²³ and the use of intelligence to reduce friction and locate the enemy.²⁴ This last point is especially important given the fact that Callwell identifies the actual decisive defeat of the enemy in the field as the way to win small wars.²⁵ However, this is complicated by Callwell's assertion that the irregulars hold the strategic advantage. Unlike the regulars, their light operational footprint and 'home-field advantage' enables them to operate independent of fixed bases or restrictive systems of supply/communication if necessary, as well as escape decisive defeats by dispersing into the environment.²⁶ Conversely, the tactical level favours the regular force, whose training, superior conventional strength, organisation, discipline, and *esprit de corps* confer a major battlefield advantage.²⁷ Forcing the

¹⁸ *ibid.*, 25.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, 25-26.

²⁰ *ibid.*, 27.

²¹ *ibid.*, 34-37.

²² *ibid.*, 115-118.

²³ *ibid.*, 127.

²⁴ *ibid.*, 43-56, 143-145.

²⁵ *ibid.*, 106.

²⁶ *ibid.*, 85-89.

²⁷ *ibid.*, 90.

irregulars into engagements where these advantages can be brought to bear for decisive effect is thus the crux of small wars in Callwell's view.²⁸

To this end, Callwell discusses the various ways the enemy can be forced out or cornered. Despite the danger it often poses in conventional warfare,²⁹ he states that dividing one's forces into smaller, strategically-dispersed flying columns can be highly useful in small wars, aiding mobility in the rougher ground irregulars often operate in and serving to dominate the initiative by overwhelming the enemy with successive or simultaneous attacks.³⁰ To draw the enemy out into the open, Callwell states it is often necessary to resort to punitive measures that aim to deprive both the enemy and the population that supports them of the means to survive.³¹ This appears to go against his own acknowledgement that there should generally be "a limit to the amount of licence in destruction", as it can "sometimes do more harm than good".³² However, Callwell maintains that these slightly unsavoury methods can be justified if they expedite the defeat of the enemy and are not used in such excess that they drive the enemy to acts of violent desperation. This utilitarian outlook is driven by the understanding of the primacy of political objectives in war.³³

Though many of the fundamental principles of warfare in general still apply to small wars, it is clear from Callwell's work that these conflicts differ in several key ways from conventional warfare. This largely stems from the asymmetry, which results in these principles and dynamics of general warfare manifesting themselves differently in the operations of each belligerent according to his regularity or lack thereof. With greater conventional strength, training, and discipline as force multipliers, the regulars seek to settle the issue tactically, and can use a number of direct or indirect means (some of which are coercive) to force such engagements. The irregulars, on the other hand, seek to avoid engagements unless they hold an advantage in some way. Instead, irregulars aim to leverage their advantages in intelligence, mobility, and survivability to gradually attrit the regulars over the course of the war. These stark differences in both the ways and means of their participants

²⁸ *ibid.*, 106.

²⁹ *ibid.*, 108-114.

³⁰ *ibid.*, 71-75, 130-136.

³¹ *ibid.*, 41, 145-146; Alderson, 'Britain', 32.

³² Callwell, *Small Wars*, 41, 149.

³³ *ibid.*, 41, 146-148.

are what set small wars apart from warfare between peers and will form a key part of this study's analysis. Despite the age of his work, Callwell's implicit understanding of what we now refer to as asymmetric conflict aligns with much of what is said by modern theorists. This thesis will therefore use the terms 'small war(s)' and 'asymmetric warfare/conflict' interchangeably throughout. This acknowledges that the modern understanding of military asymmetry is the essence of Callwellian small wars without unmooring the thesis from these Callwellian foundations.³⁴

Counterinsurgency

Around the middle of the 20th century, discussion within small wars circles pivoted towards what came to be known as counterinsurgency. Though this thesis is not a counterinsurgency work, the dominance of this specific discipline within the wider field of small wars and asymmetric warfare necessitates a brief overview of the topic's most influential works and historical influences. While Callwell's works focused on the 'military' problem, counterinsurgency theory embraced what it saw as the pronounced political nature of post-war insurgencies,³⁵ defined as "the organised use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region".³⁶ This capped off a process Charles Gwynn had already contributed to in *Imperial Policing*, where the changing imperial context saw operations increasingly take on policing characters. Gwynn still leaves a place for military-centric Callwellian small wars, which he describes as "[differing] in no respect from defensive or punitive wars undertaken to check external aggression", but clearly distinguishes them from missions in support of civil authorities.³⁷ The existence of insurgencies and counterinsurgencies is not a challenge to Callwellian small wars, as conflicts of that type neatly fit into the second class of war he describes.³⁸ Instead, counterinsurgency should be thought of as a more specific discipline within small wars along the lines of 'all insurgencies are small wars, but not all small wars are insurgencies'. Insurgencies may

³⁴ Deriglazova, *Great Powers, Small Wars*, xvii-xviii; Jordan et al., *Understanding Modern Warfare*, 307-308.

³⁵ I. Beckett, *The Roots of Counter-Insurgency: Armies and Guerilla Warfare – 1900-1945* (London: Blandford Press, 1988), 12.

³⁶ United States Department of the Army, *FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5: Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 2014), 1-2.

³⁷ C. W. Gwynn, *Imperial Policing*, 2nd edition (London: Macmillan and Co., 1939), 3-5.

³⁸ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 26-27.

pose different challenges to small wars of the first type, but at their core they remain asymmetric conflicts between regular forces and irregular enemies.

Although the diverse strategic cultures of different states means that there is no universal approach to counterinsurgency, what might be described as the 'classical' or 'Western' school of counterinsurgency has become particularly prominent over the last few decades. The theoretical base of this school comes from a few main sources. Considered one of the most influential figures in modern counterinsurgency, David Galula's work draws on his experiences serving in the French Army in Greece, Asia, and Algeria. His writings, *Pacification in Algeria, 1956-1958* and *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, propose a series of principles and general strategies for counterinsurgents. Though their exact wording varies between the two, Galula identifies four 'laws' of counterinsurgency.³⁹ Firstly, the population is the object rather than territory, and the counterinsurgent must win their support. This support is organised through the use of a supportive minority to rally the neutral majority and neutralise the hostile minority. Thirdly, this support is itself dependent on counterinsurgent conduct, namely belief in their success and perceived power. Lastly, one must recognise that conflicts of this type can be protracted and require considerable effort and resources, and thus must often be fought incrementally area by area. Galula then lays out how a counterinsurgent might apply these principles operationally:

In a Selected Area

1. *Concentrate enough armed forces to destroy or to expel the main body of armed insurgents.*
2. *Detach for the area sufficient troops to oppose an insurgent's comeback in strength, install these troops in the hamlets, villages, and towns where the population lives.*
3. *Establish contact with the population, control its movements in order to cut off its links with the guerrillas.*
4. *Destroy the local insurgent political organizations.*

³⁹ D. Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1964), 71-79; D. Galula, *Pacification in Algeria, 1956-1958* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2006), 246.

5. *Set up, by means of elections, new provisional local authorities.*
6. *Test these authorities by assigning them various concrete tasks. Replace the softs and the incompetents, give full support to the active leaders. Organize self-defence units.*
7. *Group and educate the leaders in a national political movement.*
8. *Win over or suppress the last insurgent remnants.*⁴⁰

Galula's comprehensive approach to counterinsurgency aligns with much of what was advocated for by his contemporary, Roger Trinquier. However, the latter took a more hardline approach that proposed restricting civil liberties and disregarding the rule of law, infamously making the case for the utility and even the necessity of torture in 'modern warfare' (his term for this kind of conflict).⁴¹

Also writing at this time was Sir Robert Thompson, whose 1966 book *Defeating Communist Insurgency* offers basic principles of countering insurgencies learnt from his time with the British colonial administration during the Malayan Emergency and as an advisor to the US Government during the Vietnam War.⁴² Thompson's primary insights come from a civilian perspective rather than a military one like Galula's. His requirements are therefore of the *government as a whole* rather than solely the military, indicating his rounded approach to the issue. According to Thompson, governments must: have a clear political aim, function within the law, have an overall plan, give priority to defeating the political subversion rather than the guerrillas, and securing their base areas first when engaged in a 'hot' insurgency.⁴³ In addition to these basic principles, many of which seem vague or downright obvious, Thompson also makes some operational observations. Like Galula, Thompson advocated for a sequential approach whereby designated areas would be systematically cleared by saturating them with troops and held so that security and good, stable governance can gradually be reintroduced. Within this, Thompson notes that a high operational tempo must be adopted in order to keep the insurgents on the defensive and maintain the initiative. This involves attacking their popular base with population control

⁴⁰ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 80; Galula, *Pacification in Algeria*, 273.

⁴¹ R. Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1964).

⁴² R. G. K. Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam*, (New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1966), 9.

⁴³ *ibid.*, 50-58.

measures, denying them areas of sanctuary, and attacking their lines of communication between the two.⁴⁴ Thompson also stresses the value of intelligence both prior to and during these operations in improving their efficacy, an enabler which was also seized upon by Kitson⁴⁵.

What emerges is a jointly political and military approach based around the recognition of the population as the centre of gravity in these kinds of conflict, hence the name 'population-centric', and which thus attempts a systematic reconstruction of the politico-military environment of the country in question. In fact, Galula echoes Maoist principles in his assertion that "a revolutionary war is 20 per cent military action and 80 per cent political".⁴⁶ In this sense, population-centric counterinsurgency can be thought of as a deliberate conceptual mirroring of revolutionary principles and strategies, aimed at destroying the enemy on an organisational level while securing the support of the local population.⁴⁷ This contemporaneity and relevance to the context of communist revolutionary warfare saw many of the principles of counterinsurgency laid out in this approach implemented during the Vietnam War, albeit to differing extents based on the tendencies of US senior leadership. However, US failure there (for which counterinsurgency is often blamed) saw the concept fall out of favour.⁴⁸ Combined with the disappearance of Western colonial empires, a shift in the tenor of the Cold War towards one that threatened conventional and nuclear war rather than small wars involving proxies ensured interest remained comparatively low until the 21st century, when the West received a crash reintroduction.⁴⁹

The modern counterinsurgency experience is arguably defined by the post-9/11 conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. After initial successes toppling the Taliban and Ba'athist regimes in each respectively, the United States and its allies found themselves mired in seemingly unexpected irregular wars.⁵⁰ In Afghanistan,

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, 111-120.

⁴⁵ F. Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency, and Peace-keeping*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1991), 95-96.

⁴⁶ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 89.

⁴⁷ J. McCuen, *The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War: The Strategy of Counter-insurgency* (London: Faber & Faber, 1966), 77-78.

⁴⁸ D. Fitzgerald, *Learning to Forget: US Army Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Practice from Vietnam to Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), 38-39.

⁴⁹ B. Collins, 'Case Studies in Colonial Counter-Insurgency', *British Journal for Military History*, 1, 2 (2015), 2-7:2.

⁵⁰ D. Jordan et al., *Understanding Modern Warfare*, 304.

many Taliban escaped destruction by withdrawing to the countryside or neighbouring Pakistan. There, they reorganised before returning to begin an insurgency against the new Afghan government and Coalition forces alongside al-Qaeda and other foreign fighters. Although Coalition forces continued their counterterror missions to try and disrupt the insurgency, the Coalition's limited capacity was increasingly diverted towards providing security for nation-building projects. The latter did little to curb the skyrocketing violence, and by 2006 the insurgency had spread across large parts of the country.⁵¹ In Iraq, the inability of Coalition forces to manage the power vacuum and accompanying security gap created by the rapid dismantling of the Ba'athist regime emboldened an array of opportunistic factions across the country. Though initial clearance operations initially checked the insurgents, the gutted Iraqi Security Forces struggled to maintain control, even with direct coalition involvement. By 2006, several different militant extremist groups had gained momentum, plunging Iraq into a period of intense intercommunal sectarian violence that left it on the verge of collapse.⁵²

As these insurgencies began to materialise, the US began a rework of their dated counterinsurgency doctrine. In the meantime, this old doctrine was combined with recent experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan to produce an interim field manual in 2004 titled *FMI 3-07.22: Counterinsurgency Operations*.⁵³ This bridged the gap until the release of the full field manual, *FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency* in December 2006.⁵⁴ Written in collaboration with experts from academia and the private sector as well as the military, *FM 3-24* would guide coalition counterinsurgency for most of the next decade until it was rewritten in 2014.⁵⁵ The influence of the theories of Galula and Thompson is particularly clear in the manual, which lays out what its writers saw as the

⁵¹ Collins, 'Defeat in Afghanistan', 6-9.

⁵² A. H. Cordesman, *America's Failed Strategy in the Middle East: Losing Iraq and the Gulf* (Washington, D.C., Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2020). Available online: https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/200122_Chair.Iraq_is_the_Prize.GH_FinalV.pdf [Accessed 10/1/2024], 2-3; C. Dale, *Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2008). Available online: <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/mideast/RL34387.pdf> [Accessed 10/1/2024], 35-51.

⁵³ United States Department of the Army, *FMI 3-07.22: Counterinsurgency Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 2004).

⁵⁴ United States Department of the Army, *FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5: Counterinsurgency* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 2006).

⁵⁵ TRADOC Military History and Heritage Office, 'TRADOC and the release of FM 3-24' [Blog Post], *U.S. Army*. 7 July 2023. Available online: https://www.army.mil/article/268197/tradoc_and_the_release_of_fm_3_24_counterinsurgency [Accessed 10/1/2024].

foundational concepts of the counterinsurgency challenge and the best ways to conduct counterinsurgency campaigns.

Among a range of operational considerations, *FM 3-24* proposes several ‘historical principles’ and ‘contemporary imperatives’, as well as examples of best and worst practice. The ‘historical principles’ include reminders of the long-term nature of counterinsurgency operations, the primacy of political factors and legitimacy, the importance of the rule of law, and the need to isolate insurgents from their support by securing the population.⁵⁶ The ‘contemporary imperatives’ are taken from the US’ more recent experiences and include considerations as to the appropriate use of force, the need to adapt to insurgent methods and varying local conditions, and the value of decentralised operational command.⁵⁷ The influence of Galula and Thompson is clear in these, as well as in the several so-called counterinsurgency ‘paradoxes’. The latter includes reflections that (sometimes) “the more you protect your force, the less secure you may be” and “the more force is used, the less effective it is” to name but a few.⁵⁸ Though force was not off the table, *FM 3-24* outlined a ‘population-centric’ approach where forces were encouraged to take on a dual soldier-social worker role. What this meant was the combination of combat operations with nation-building activities, in collaboration with host-nation security forces, to secure the population both physically and socio-politically.

US operations were thus reframed along the population-centric lines of the new field manual, pushing the security of the population to the fore alongside increased efforts to transition from Coalition to host-nation leadership. A surge of additional troops into Iraq in 2007 secured Baghdad and its surrounding area. Alongside a local ‘Awakening’ that saw certain tribes turn away from al-Qaeda, the surge (and its accompanying operational shift) helped to stabilise the immediate security situation. However, the US focus soon shifted to much-neglected Afghanistan, which received its own surge after 2009. Counterinsurgency failed to be properly integrated into a strategy in Afghanistan though, and this surge failed to achieve significant effect. With

⁵⁶ United States Department of the Army, *FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5: Counterinsurgency*, 1-20–1-24.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 1-24–1-26.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 1-26–1-28.

domestic support waning, in part due to perceptions of limited progress, the US began to draw down its commitments to both countries after 2011.⁵⁹

The situation in both countries deteriorated rapidly after this. Renewed sectarian violence broke out in Iraq, enabling the resurgence of Islamic State (IS) in the country; while the Taliban's steady progress in Afghanistan accelerated⁶⁰. Despite large-scale operations like those it detailed falling out of favour, the US updated *FM 3-24* in 2014 to incorporate 'lessons learned' from the experience of Iraq and Afghanistan. Though much remains the same, one interesting change is the replacement of the 'clear-hold-build' framework with one of 'shape-clear-hold-build-transition', incorporating a built-in exit strategy as part of a transition to host nations.⁶¹ Counterinsurgency's fall from grace is perhaps best shown by the posture of later support operations for both countries, which took on a much reduced advisory and air support role more in line with the 'foreign internal defence' concept.⁶² Though IS would be pushed out of Iraq, US support proved insufficient to prevent the fall of the Afghan government to the Taliban in 2021, which may well prove to be another 'Vietnam moment' for the US that further exacerbates this fall.

These perceived failures of counterinsurgency (and population-centric methods in particular) to deliver either a quick fix or lasting security in Afghanistan or Iraq have led to criticism of the concept, or at least this latest US version of it. One of these criticisms is a rejection of the necessity of legitimacy and popular support in their successful conduct. Hazelton is one of the more recent proponents of this rejection, arguing in *Bullets Not Ballots: Success in Counterinsurgency Warfare* that the 'good governance' approach which dominates Western thought on counterinsurgency is a very expensive fallacy.⁶³ This approach sees successful counterinsurgency as involving the use of nation-building efforts, reforms, and the provision of public services

⁵⁹ C. C. Crane, 'Military Strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq: Learning and Adapting under Fire at Home and in the Field', in B. Bailey & R. H. Immerman (eds.), *Understanding the U.S. Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2015), 124–146.

⁶⁰ C. Malkasian, 'The Meaning of Setbacks in Iraq and Afghanistan', *Prism*, 8, 2 (2019), 40-53:43-45.

⁶¹ United States Department of the Army, *FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5: Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies*, 9-1–9-10.

⁶² Malkasian, 'The Meaning of Setbacks in Iraq and Afghanistan', 44-46; D. Jordan et al., *Understanding Modern Warfare*, 305-306.

⁶³ J. L. Hazelton, *Bullets Not Ballots: Success in Counterinsurgency Warfare* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 2.

alongside the establishment of security to win over the population and marginalise the enemy.⁶⁴ However, Hazelton's study shows that many of the conflicts held up as examples of this in fact show the efficacy of elite accommodation, the use of coercion against civilians, and the destruction of the insurgents themselves. This echoes similar assertions made by Porch, who states that "better strategies, leadership, coercion, and contingent circumstances in their variety, not popular support, determined victory in small wars/insurgencies".⁶⁵ Gentile too is highly critical of this pro-'hearts-and-minds' narrative, which he sees as highly dangerous in that it risks distracting the armed forces from their warfighting role.⁶⁶

On the subject of strategy, both Porch and Gentile dismiss small wars and its counterinsurgency niche as being simply a collection of tactical and operational 'lessons learned' rather than a coherent strategy.⁶⁷ Given the enhanced political influences of these conflicts, and the fact that war is ultimately won on the strategic level,⁶⁸ Luttwak asserts that this new brand (*FM 3-24*) of theory's "prescriptions are in the end little or no use and amount to a kind of malpractice".⁶⁹ Porch also attacks the theoretical foundations of the school of thought in the work of Galula. Showing that the French did in fact implement many of the principles Galula advocated for, he points out that their defeat in Algeria thus serves as a poor endorsement of the "grab-bag of Jominian tactical reactions, each one more counterproductive than the next" that Galula's writings propose.⁷⁰ Porch is similarly dismissive of Callwellian thought, the 'art' of which the former describes reportedly "[boiling] down to a mastery of small wars tactics, the acquisition of tactical intel ... and a capacity to drink endless glasses of tea with tribal sheiks as they exact their price for cooperation".⁷¹ These critics are therefore sceptical of the idea that small wars represent a unique challenge with unique solutions, which they see as "a rejection of the

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, 8-15.

⁶⁵ Porch, *Counterinsurgency*, 303.

⁶⁶ G. Gentile, *Wrong Turn: America's Deadly Embrace of Counterinsurgency* [eBook] (New York, NY: The New Press, 2013).

⁶⁷ Porch, *Counterinsurgency*, 323; Gentile, *Wrong Turn*, 26-27.

⁶⁸ Porch, *Counterinsurgency*, 9.

⁶⁹ E. Luttwak, 'Dead End: Counterinsurgency Warfare as Military Malpractice', *Harper's Magazine*. February 2007, 33-42.

⁷⁰ Porch, *Counterinsurgency*, 196-200

⁷¹ *ibid.*, 327.

Clausewitzian character of war”.⁷² Ultimately this stems from a recognition that, to paraphrase Summers’ own turn of phrase, “war is war”.⁷³ It is death and destruction leveraged across the levels of war through a strategy appropriate to its context in pursuit of policy, and any attempts to revolutionise it are folly.

Rome and Counterinsurgency

A possible criticism of the use of Roman military campaigns as an educational tool in modern strategy (and small wars in particular) is that the characteristics of these ancient conflicts are too different from those of the purportedly ‘more complex’ conflicts of the modern era for practical comparisons and judgements to be made. Much of this is itself influenced by the prevalence of insurgencies in the world relative to more ‘traditional’ small wars, but also by the subsequent dominance over discussion of small wars this niche has. As a result, much of the literature that attempts to tie the Roman experience to modern theory does so through the lens and lexicon of insurgency and counterinsurgency. Therefore, central to this idea of incomparability is the perception that Rome did not face threats analogous to the insurgencies that regulars face today in irregular conflict. Instead, as Mattern identifies, Rome is described as either dealing with opponents given the vague descriptor of ‘bandit’ or ‘brigand’,⁷⁴ or larger revolts where the enemy displayed conventional characteristics and inclinations which do not jibe with the contemporary understanding of irregular opponents.⁷⁵

However, this misconception is addressed by Brooking, who instead states that “nearly all of Rome’s military challenges can be understood as insurgencies”.⁷⁶ With regards to their assigned labels, Brooking points out that the descriptors ‘bandit’ and ‘brigand’ should not necessarily be taken at face value, as “there is little evidence that Romans distinguished insurgency from more generalized acts of violence”.⁷⁷ Indeed, Shaw

⁷² *ibid.*, 318.

⁷³ H. G. Summers, ‘A War is a War is a War is a War’, in L. B. Thompson (ed.), *Low-Intensity Conflict: The Pattern of Warfare in the Modern World* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1989), 27-49; Porch, *Counterinsurgency*, 317.

⁷⁴ B. Shaw, ‘Bandits in the Roman Empire’, *Past & Present*, 105 (November 1984), 3-52.

⁷⁵ S. P. Mattern, ‘Counterinsurgency and the Enemies of Rome’, in V. D. Hanson (ed.), *Makers of Ancient Strategy: From the Persian Wars to the Fall of Rome* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 163-184:164-165.

⁷⁶ E. T. Brooking, *Roma Surrecta: Portrait of a Counterinsurgent Power* (University of Pennsylvania College Undergraduate Research Electric Journal, 2011). Available online:

<https://repository.upenn.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/59ec15bf-1f53-4e8f-bb49-04a6c924b4d7/content> [Accessed 10/1/2024], 108.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 99.

asserts that it was applied to anyone who upset the Roman order in some sort of violent way.⁷⁸ It is therefore not difficult to imagine situations where those engaging in insurgencies and small wars against Rome were saddled by the Roman authorities with the same incriminating designation as more literal criminals with no political object.⁷⁹ This is rightly identified as a way to rob both the movement itself and the wider cause they are agitating for of legitimacy by declaring their criminality.⁸⁰ Such language has modern parallels in the British description of the Malayan National Liberation Army as “Communist Terrorists”.⁸¹ Brooking puts this behaviour down to Roman pride, contending that to recognise the ‘bandits’ as anything close to legitimate combatants would be to admit a failure of the Roman state, which the Roman psyche could not abide. Rather than being bandits out for personal enrichment, Brooking points out that many of these movements had explicit political, nativist, and anti-Roman aims, sometimes culminating in the establishment of functioning counter-states.⁸² On top of this, Mattern remarks that, though they may have *officially* declared the ‘bandits’ to be nothing more than mere criminals, Roman *practice* appears to suggest a different perception. This perception sees the ostensible ‘bandits’ being treated as outright “enemies of the state” subject to war by the Romans just as a foreign enemy might be.⁸³

Further criticism of the Roman experience stems from those conflicts where the sequential evolution of enemy strength laid out in Maoist theories of ‘people’s war’ is seemingly entirely absent, resulting in large-scale revolts and rebellions where the enemy forms conventionally capable armies out of nowhere.⁸⁴ Though Callwell asserts that some small wars might exhibit conventional characteristics, this apparent truncation is problematic in the specific context of insurgencies, being uncharacteristic of their typical evolution from small bands practicing irregular tactics into conventional forces in the face of counterinsurgent failure. Brooking

⁷⁸ Shaw, ‘Bandits in the Roman Empire’, 3-4.

⁷⁹ Brooking, *Roma Surrecta*, 99-100.

⁸⁰ L. Brice, ‘Insurgency and Terrorism in the Ancient World: Grounding the Discussion’, in T. Howe & L. Brice (eds.), *Brill’s Companion to Insurgency and Terrorism in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2015), 3-27:22.

⁸¹ K. Hack, ‘Everyone lived in fear: Malaya and the British way of counter-insurgency’, *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 23, 4-5 (2012), 671-699:692.

⁸² Brooking, *Roma Surrecta*, 95-101.

⁸³ Mattern, ‘Counterinsurgency and the Enemies of Rome’, 169-170.

⁸⁴ T.T. Mao, *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-tung* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1963).

asserts that this is not due to the absence of such a process, rather that it is due to the nature of the sources, which “marginalise or exclude insurgency’s irregular beginnings”. This understanding recognises that the vast breadth of Roman territorial holdings and the overwhelming torrent of ongoing events that such a large domain is bound to experience means that only ‘the highlights’ are liable to be recorded. These inevitably turned out to be instances of large pitched battles between the legions and rebellious forces, likely because those confrontations generally resulted in resounding victories for the legions.⁸⁵ Mattern points to the records of the endemic ‘banditry’ the Romans experienced for centuries in Judaea,⁸⁶ which in fact appears to have been a series of low-level insurgencies that simmered between the larger outbreaks of revolt⁸⁷.

Lastly comes the understanding of the Roman counterinsurgency experience that asserts that while the Romans *did* conduct counterinsurgency, their method consisted of base terror and brutality. Mattern states that the same Roman chauvinism which Brooking blames for the ‘bandits’ label saw them perceive revolt as “an insult and a challenge to which the appropriate response was vengeance extreme enough to re-instil awe and fear in their rebellious subjects”. This resulted in frequent use of large-scale brutality, including “mutilation, mass deportation, mass destruction, and mass slaughter short of genocide to punish, avenge, and deter”.⁸⁸ Tovy rightly points out that the codification of international law and increased importance of public relations for political leaders, makes such morally questionable methods all but unusable in the modern context.⁸⁹

However, this ‘all-terror’ image is undermined by evidence of less kinetic approaches. Russell paints a picture of pre-Great Revolt practice in Judaea which is reminiscent of the more benevolent strain of ‘hearts-and-minds’ counterinsurgency which has found favour in recent decades.⁹⁰ Tovy also discusses the strategic use of Roman institutions in troublesome provinces as a means of eradicating rebellious thought through a

⁸⁵ Brooking, *Roma Surrecta*, 97-98.

⁸⁶ Mattern, ‘Counterinsurgency and the Enemies of Rome’, 169.

⁸⁷ F. Russell, ‘Roman Counterinsurgency Policy and Practice in Judaea’, in T. Howe & L. Brice (eds.), *Brill’s Companion to Insurgency and Terrorism in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2015), 248-276.

⁸⁸ Mattern, ‘Counterinsurgency and the Enemies of Rome’, 167.

⁸⁹ T. Tovy, “‘They Make a Solitude and Call it Peace’: Counterinsurgency – The Roman Model’ [Blog Post], *Small Wars Journal*. 10 December 2012. Available online: <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/they-make-a-solitude-and-call-it-peace-counterinsurgency-the-roman-model> [Accessed 10/1/2024].

⁹⁰ Russell, ‘Roman Counterinsurgency Policy and Practice in Judaea’, 249-255.

gradual process of 'Romanisation'. Taking place over generations if need be, this process aimed to shift the loyalties of local leaders towards the Roman administration⁹¹. Similarly diplomatic strategies are described by Brooking and Sanders, who note Rome's willingness to gradually weaken insurgent movements by exploiting their fractious nature through compromise and canny "wedge-driving".⁹² Populations were also plied with more positive means of persuading them into stability.⁹³ As Sanders identifies,⁹⁴ this strategy essentially represented a 'divide and rule' approach, a principle closely linked to population-centric counterinsurgency theory and British conduct in particular.⁹⁵

In conclusion, these main sources contend that a significant proportion of the military/security challenges Rome encountered during its long existence *can* and *should* be thought of as insurgencies, a subset within the broader category of small war. Furthermore, the sources show that, while the legacy of campaigns like Judaea have etched the Romans into the popular imagination as indiscriminate crucifiers, actual Roman conduct involved broader use of the various instruments of power. Indeed, this conduct is representative of many of the principles central to modern counterinsurgency theory and doctrine, as well as many of the wider tenets of small wars practice. Most notably, though they appear to have a somewhat warped perception of insurgency as a security challenge, the Romans *did* understand the socio-political aspects of insurgency and made the all-important recognition that the population is key to the defeat of these rebellions. The Romans were subsequently able to leverage their ability to foster and manage social relationships to isolate insurgencies so that they could then be stamped out by the legions.

This overview of the literature surrounding the various topics this thesis addresses has provided us with a few key things. Firstly, it has helped to establish the conceptual foundations upon which this thesis will

⁹¹ Tovy, "“They Make a Solitude and Call it Peace””.

⁹² D. C. Sanders, *Julius Caesar and the Gallic Campaign: A Roadmap to the Use of the Instruments of Power*. MMS Thesis (USMC Command and Staff College, March 2010). Available at: <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA600103.pdf> [Accessed 10/1/2024], 24-25; Brooking, *Roma Surrecta*, 103-105.

⁹³ Brooking, *Roma Surrecta*, 105.

⁹⁴ Sanders, *Julius Caesar and the Gallic Campaign*, 27-28.

⁹⁵ I. A. Rigden, 'The British Approach to Counterinsurgency: Myths, Realities, and Strategic Challenges', in H. R. Yarger (ed.), *Short of General War: Perspectives on the Use of Military Power in the 21st Century* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2010), 207–230:215.

be based in the form of an overview of the key principles and themes contained within *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice*. As the next chapter on the methodological framework of this thesis will show, Callwell's description of the asymmetry present in small wars and the form these campaigns can take will be essential in our analysis of how the case studies we examine can be considered small wars. Furthermore, the themes that surround Callwell's suggestions as to the prosecution of small wars will provide useful context in our analysis of Roman conduct on both an individual and collective basis. This will ultimately guide the conclusion and the lessons these case studies offer for practitioners of strategy engaging in small wars in the modern era.

Secondly, this review has provided us with an insight into the modern context this thesis is attempting to contribute to. Thought in the context of small wars has evolved significantly since Callwell's work. Therefore, though this is not a counterinsurgency thesis, it is important to acknowledge the fundamental principles that underpin the prevalent trends within the field since then. These trends themselves provide context for the modern practice that this thesis' conclusion will refer to in both its drawing of parallels with and its testing of Roman small wars conduct. We have shown that much contemporary literature focuses on the particular niche within the wider small wars context that is counterinsurgency, so much so that it has come to be synonymous with its antecedent concept. As a result, many of the attempts at learning within small wars have focused on either refining the counterinsurgency process further or doing away with the concept entirely. This thesis hopes to forge something of a middle ground between these two points, advocating that a greater appreciation of the original principles from which these newer developments progressed can provide a reorientation of thought into something more in line with the nature of warfare.

Lastly, this section has provided an overview of previous attempts to join the study of Roman military history with modern strategic challenges below the threshold of conflict between peers, identifying the gaps this work intends to fill. This examination has shown that, likely due to the dominance of counterinsurgency within the study of asymmetric warfare in recent decades, most attempts at similar studies have done so by portraying these conflicts as insurgencies and framing the Roman response along counterinsurgency lines. This is something this thesis will do differently. Though insurgencies do fall within the bounds of small wars, and

the recognition that parallels can be drawn is useful, the two are not synonymous. By widening the lens of examination to include the whole spectrum of small wars, we can extract lessons that are applicable on a wider basis in line with the myriad threats that make up asymmetric conflicts, as well as ones which might have broader strategic relevance outside of simply dealing with insurgencies.

This is another way that this thesis stands out from other works on Roman small wars. While the works examined focused largely on simply drawing parallels between the modern theory and ancient practice, this thesis will go one step further and use these parallels to identify lessons that can be drawn to guide future practice across the levels of warfare. Furthermore, because of this desire for more obvious parallels between the two contexts, most of the Roman case studies that are used come from the Imperial period (the Principate more specifically). Given the expansion of the empire and the entrenchment of Roman control that took place during this time, this period thus covers most of the more obvious examples of insurrection against the Roman state that will have been of interest to previous attempts at study in the model we have discussed. In comparison, this project will focus specifically on the period of the Roman Republic. These considerations will help to ensure that this thesis is making a valuable and original contribution to the fields of both strategy and Roman military history.

Chapter 1: Methodology

As laid out in the introduction, the purpose of this study is to examine the small wars experience of the Roman Republic to find out what lessons it may offer practitioners of strategy in the modern context. This was not always the case, however, and this thesis' research objectives have undergone some evolution before ending up in the format we have now.

Initially, the project intended to focus on the sub-genre of small wars that is counterinsurgency, examining areas of overlap between Roman and modern practice to identify shared avenues of relative success. However, while focusing on counterinsurgency might allow a greater concentration on the finer points of this area and its attendant theory, it became too limiting in terms of the scope of the work. Furthermore, as shown by the literature review, there have already been a number of works that examine Roman practice in asymmetric contexts through the lens of counterinsurgency theory. This would therefore limit the originality and subsequent impact of this study. Given the interrelationship of counterinsurgency with wider small wars also touched upon by the literature review, the remit of this work was thus widened to examine the latter as a whole. This impacted the research aims and potential implications of the work in several ways. Firstly, it expanded the number of potential case studies the research could make use of in both contexts without resorting to excessive intellectual gymnastics to force them to fit within the parameters of the study. Secondly, it enables a re-examination of the concept of small wars and counterinsurgency, as well as the relationship between them and warfare in general. As the literature review revealed, for various reasons there is some debate as to the continued correctness or even necessity of some of these concepts. By expanding the scope of the study, it becomes possible to also make a valuable contribution to this debate in the process of answering the primary research aim and its attendant research objectives.

As the thesis progressed, it became apparent that the project was aiming to do too much within its limited size. Originally, the thesis planned to do several full case studies from both contexts so as to provide a more complete comparison between the two. However, it was soon realised that attempting to do so would necessitate making each case study so short as to prevent any serious examination of the campaigns and their

conduct, effectively undermining the entire purpose of the study. The decision was thus made to both reorient the thesis and scale back the number of planned case studies. With regards to the first, this involved adjusting the footing of the thesis from one where both contexts receive equal coverage to one where Roman conduct is the focus and the modern context would instead be used to frame the lessons in the conclusion. In retrospect, this should have been the structure from the outset, as it recognises the relative importance of the Roman context as that from which we are trying to learn as part of the research aim while still providing the contextual backdrop of the modern experience. With the Roman case studies now the focus, it became even more important that they be conducted in sufficient depth to produce a good level of detailed analysis for the conclusion. This therefore necessitated a reduction in the number of case studies that would be covered to three case studies (the selection of which will be addressed later) to strike a balance between depth and breadth of study.

Despite these shifts in scope, the basic nature of this research project remains the same, taking a relatively straightforward format which can broadly be understood through three primary characteristics: textual analysis, a case study approach, and a qualitative approach to investigation. The approach this thesis will take with each of these will now be discussed, with reference to any anticipated potential intellectual hazards, challenges, and possible limitations.

Sources

The primary means of data collection for this research is that of analysis of textual sources. Most of these sources are secondary in nature. Given that the focus of the thesis is the Roman context, the majority of these secondary sources take the form of ancient works of history. This is because they broadly possess greater contemporaneity to the period of study, though this has its own positives and negatives. These sources are used to establish the narratives of the campaigns and, in some cases, allow insights into decision-making processes behind events on both an individual and national level. Other kinds of secondary sources used include modern journal articles and academic books such as those examined in the literature review. Though some might be used to provide supplemental information to the narratives of the case studies (particularly if

they collate other less readily accessible sources of information), most of these are used in the elements of the thesis that draw on modern theory and practice. Again, the value of these works comes from the efficient collation of useful information about certain topics or theories within single sources. Where possible, this study has endeavoured to use primary sources as well. This is largely within the context of the Roman case studies, in the form of personal campaign commentaries and works with direct contemporaneity to their subject, where they offer even greater insight into events by virtue of proximity.

Textual sources were selected as the primary means of data collection for this study for a few reasons. Firstly, this is the format in which most of those explicitly 'academic' works (e.g., journal articles and papers) on either topic can be found. Being subject to peer-review, these works are more academically acceptable secondary sources of information. This benefit of prevalence also extends to more ubiquitous forms of secondary sources, as both Roman military history and strategic theory have the benefit of being the subjects of relatively extensive libraries of books. Despite being a few steps removed from the events they describe, these pieces remain valuable sources of information on their given topics, and so their extensive presence will undoubtedly benefit this investigation.

Although comparatively few in number compared to secondary sources, surviving primary sources can be found in a variety of different forms, ranging from manuscripts to more traditional physical artefacts. However, the overwhelming majority of these are of relatively limited use to a study looking at the operational and strategic details of military campaigns. Furthermore, these kinds of primary sources can be difficult to access due to their geographical spread and the measures taken to conserve and/or commercialise them. Documentary sources are of much greater use in this regard. Not only are there many examples of such documents but they are much more likely to contain information relevant to this study than other kinds. While relevant textual sources may be pervasive, if they cannot be accessed this fact becomes rather academic. This is another benefit of using textual sources (both primary and secondary), which can be readily accessed in both physical and digital formats.

However, the use of textual sources like these also raises a few potential issues. A significant portion of the literature being used in this study are texts translated to English from either Latin or Ancient Greek. This raises a pair of interlinked concerns: translation and interpretation. Translation between any two languages is always difficult, and those attempting to do so are face a number of challenges in terms of both technical linguistic matters as well as problems arising from working with expressions and concepts across cultures.⁹⁶ These difficulties are especially pronounced in Latin and Ancient Greek. Firstly, both languages are highly inflected and have a highly flexible word order, making the grammar harder to decipher. This is further exacerbated by the Roman and ancient Greek desire to flaunt rhetorical skill through deliberate complexity. Additionally, though we know much about the classical world, we do not know everything. As such, there are doubtless many cultural nuances and references which modern readers will be ignorant of and struggle to accurately translate. Lastly, due to the physical decay of original versions of a source, what we have now are either translations of copies from additional languages or potentially imperfect copies of earlier translations, which themselves might contain mistakes.⁹⁷ They may therefore may have run the gamut of these translation difficulties repeatedly, each time potentially accumulating compounding mistranslations. Furthermore, each translation involves an interpretation of the original meaning, often resulting in its dilution over time. The interpretative nature of Latin and Ancient Greek only adds to the risk of this.

One can manage these issues to varying degrees in any of the following three ways, be that as a combination of multiple methods or just one of them. The first option would be to engage in a translation of each necessary source personally. This would ensure that, if any instances of paraphrasing took place, the interpretations would at least be universal in their outlook, as no single author has translated all the ancient texts this study uses. However, not only would this take an unworkably long time to do, the author is not an experienced translator and this would therefore dramatically increase the risk of mistranslation. Furthermore,

⁹⁶ T. Yousef, 'Literary Translation: Old and New Challenges', *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies*, 13, 1 (2012), 49-64.

⁹⁷ R. A. Gabriel, 'Can We Trust the Ancient Texts?', *Military History*, 25, 1 (March/April 2008), 62-70.

there is a risk that the author might (either consciously or unconsciously) interpret the texts in a way that was exclusively supportive of the study's hypothesis and thereby be guilty of confirmation bias.

The second option would be to use only a single translation of each text. This would avoid the risk of potential confirmation bias, but instead means that the study is reliant on a singular outside source in each case, putting the investigation at the mercy of that translator's interpretation. The third option would be to make use of multiple translations of each text where possible. This would allow a translation to be confirmed by consensus, thereby reducing the risk of mistranslation and bias on behalf of the individual sources. With these considerations in mind, this project will be operating in line with the third option, as it best manages the risks described earlier. Where possible, three different translations of each text will be compared so as to better ensure that the reading taken is representative of the consensus.

On top of these issues is the more directly ethical matter of bias and inaccuracy. Despite claims to the contrary from their authors, Roman histories have a tendency towards limited objectivity, and are often rife with revisionism, prejudice, partisanship, and exaggeration.⁹⁸ Obviously, given the aforementioned prevalence of sources like these in this project and the need to accurately answer the research question, this concern must be explored. The bias displayed by Roman sources stems from the historians themselves. Firstly, the lack of a formal system of state-sponsored universal education meant that only those from wealthy families could afford the tuition that taught the skills necessary for historical writing. This resulted in an academia dominated by the equestrian and Senatorial classes of Roman society, men who also had the wealth and free time necessary to engage in writing pursuits.⁹⁹ Due to the strict property requirements for Senatorial admission, Rome's economic and political elites overlapped extensively, meaning that the 'writing class' was also the most politically conscious due to its direct involvement with the mechanisms of government.¹⁰⁰ In addition to the material costs, writing was much more of a chore than it is now, meaning one had to be motivated about a particular topic in order to put pen to papyrus. These characteristics come together to create historians with

⁹⁸ J. D. Mackie, 'Bias and the Historian', *Library Review*, 5, 2 (February 1935), 50-58:50.

⁹⁹ S. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome: From the Elder Cato to the Younger Pliny* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014).

¹⁰⁰ J. Marincola, 'Ancient Audiences and Expectations', in A. Feldherr (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Historians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 11-23:12.

considerable personal and political baggage and who write to convince their audiences (typically something relating to their personal political or moral agenda).¹⁰¹ Furthermore, their shared socioeconomic and political backgrounds resulted in little diversity of thought, which in turn skews historical narratives.

Classicist T.J. Luce states that claims as to freedom from bias stem from a fundamental misunderstanding of the classical historians' standards of impartiality. Simply put, ancient historians perceived the 'truth' in negative terms rather than positive. While today we might identify 'the truth' as being a product of deliberate 'impartiality' or 'objectivity', Roman historians had no comparable terms. Instead, the Romans believed that the 'truth' simply meant the *absence* of 'favouritism' or 'hatred' in their telling of events. Men who had received (or might hope to receive) favours might write works that flattered the persons or families of their patrons, while those who had suffered at the hands of certain individuals or groups might write in such a way that maligns them. Therefore, the Romans also saw these issues as being diminished with distance from the subject chronologically, since one is less likely to receive attention (either positive or negative) because those about whom one writes may no longer be around. Roman historians thus felt that, if they had not received favours or been slighted by a subject, they could not possibly be biased. As Luce says, this calculation was simple to these historians: "when favouritism and hostility are removed, truth is the residuum".¹⁰² On top of this personal incarnation of bias, one also encounters the issue of patriotism. Unlike now, where objectivity is demanded, Roman historians were almost expected to be biased *towards* Rome itself and thus *against* its enemies.¹⁰³ These are important factors to consider for this study in terms of its implications for the objectivity of the sources used.

One must also consider the impact of medium. Gabriel identifies that, since it was generally expected that these works of history would not simply be read but be recited, 'historical accuracy' was subordinate to rhetorical and dramatic concerns. This often led to the historians omitting, embellishing, reworking, or

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, 21.

¹⁰² T. J. Luce, 'Ancient Views on the Causes of Bias in Historical Writing', *Classical Philology*, 84, 1 (January 1989), 16-31:17-18.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, 20-21.

inventing details (e.g., casualty numbers, army sizes, etc.) to make the narrative more dramatic or meaningful to the intended audience.¹⁰⁴ Especially guilty of this is Livy, whose works are notorious for poetic licence, frequently including anachronisms and embellishing events with details and speeches from characters which could not possibly be known.¹⁰⁵ This issue is compounded by the fact that many of these historians were not military men and thus had little understanding of the historical battle and campaigns of which they wrote, harming their description of events. Furthermore, those authors with military experience were often too far removed from their subjects to apply their knowledge.

Only a handful of sources describe events in which the author actively participated, the most notable example being Caesar's various commentaries. However, these primary sources are vulnerable to many of the same criticisms relating to bias as the secondary sources. Though Caesar's work is vital to this thesis' investigation of the Gallic War, it is widely acknowledged that the work likely takes many liberties in its reporting of events. Roman achievements are exaggerated (e.g., enemy numbers/losses) to aggrandise Caesar's achievements, while political narratives are spun along Caesarian lines.¹⁰⁶ Gabriel points out that these issues are further exacerbated by the translation and transcription of these sources by medieval monks. As well as a lack of military knowledge, many of these monks lacked the necessary skills in Latin and Roman numerals, leading to mistakes or the outright invention of details to fill gaps.¹⁰⁷ All of these issues compound to distort the narratives of the sources even further, posing a significant barrier to accurate analysis of the campaigns.

These issues seemingly paint a bleak picture of this study's historical library, where primary sources are few and secondary sources prone to being distorted by bias, dramatic license, and poor translations. However, these issues ultimately cannot be avoided in the absence of the original sources themselves, and so

¹⁰⁴ Gabriel, 'Can We Trust the Ancient Texts?', 62-70.

¹⁰⁵ H. Rose, *A Handbook of Latin Literature: From the Earliest Times to the Death of St. Augustine* (London: Methuen & Co., 1966), 300.

¹⁰⁶ A. Lintott, 'Roman Historians', in J. Boardman, J. Griffin & O Murray (eds.), *The Oxford History of the Classical World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 636-652:642; D. Henige, 'He Came, He Saw, We Counted: The Historiography and Demography of Caesar's Gallic Numbers', *Annales de Démographie Historique*, 1 (1998), 215-242.

¹⁰⁷ Gabriel, 'Can We Trust the Ancient Texts?', 62-70.

must be worked around. Fundamentally, it is not the purpose of this study to assess the historiographical validity of the history of the military campaigns in question, nor is its purpose the subsequent reconstruction of the historical narrative. The study instead aims to extract strategic lessons from Roman practice and therefore must work with the sources available, accepting their accounts (albeit with a heavy pinch of salt) unless faced with incontrovertible evidence to the contrary. It is possible to reduce the uncertainty of this situation somewhat by cross-referencing between as many different sources as possible when investigating a particular case study to construct as accurate an account as possible. However, in some cases only a single surviving account of a certain event exists, meaning one must simply work with the sources that are to hand and be aware of the issues that have been covered.

Case Studies

This thesis takes the form of a case study approach wherein three military campaigns undertaken by the Roman Republic are examined through the lens of the ‘small wars’ concept laid out by Callwell. This section will explore why such an approach has been adopted, identify potential pitfalls, and give an overview of the considerations relating to the selection and analysis of the case studies. A case study approach was chosen for its suitability in achieving the primary research aim, and in answering the second and third research questions in particular. This conclusion was reached based upon the following factors.

Firstly, a case study approach allows for the development of “conceptual validity” in that a researcher can “identify and measure the indicators that best represent the theoretical concepts [they] intend to measure”.¹⁰⁸ As George and Bennett point out, the social sciences deal with concepts and variables which are often highly contextualised, complicating measurement. Unlike more statistically-oriented studies, which do not easily allow for the in-depth consideration of contextual factors and are therefore more likely to be guilty of “conceptual stretching”, case studies allow for what Locke and Thelen refer to as “contextualised

¹⁰⁸ A. L. George & A. Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 19.

comparison”.¹⁰⁹ This is a research strategy which instead looks for “analytically equivalent phenomena – even if expressed in substantively different terms – across different contexts”.¹¹⁰ Through this in-depth, tailored investigation of each study, the use of case studies offers a much more nuanced approach to the analysis of issues and the variables therein, lending itself to the identification of explanatory factors. As Clausewitz points out, war itself is highly contextualised, being ‘chameleon-like’ and involving myriad unpredictable variables that make each one unique in character.¹¹¹ Context is even more important in this study given the massive differences in the character of war between the two historical periods involved. Likewise, because of the various reasons states might go to war, what exactly constitutes ‘success’ in wars is highly contextual too, being dependent on a state’s specific policy objectives in each case. This is an important metric within our analysis, making an approach which lends itself to dealing with such contextual variance useful.

From this, George and Bennett identify another advantage of case studies: their value as a means by which one can examine causal mechanisms in detail within each case.¹¹² The heightened focus that comes from looking at individual case studies allows for the analysis of intervening variables and inductive observation of any unforeseen conditions of particular causal mechanisms, as well as assisting in the identification of which specific factors present in a case activate the causal mechanism. To put it simply, a case study approach allows researchers to go beyond simply describing what occurs in a case and instead explain how and why.¹¹³ This is obviously highly useful in a study such as this, which aims to examine the causal roots of success in small wars and advise future conduct accordingly. It is these factors that are behind the decision to use a case study-based approach to this investigation.

While one could simply investigate the success of a single small wars campaign conducted by the Romans and make recommendations for today based on just that, this would not provide an adequate answer

¹⁰⁹ R. Locke & K. Thelen, ‘Problems of Equivalence in Comparative Politics: Apples and Oranges, Again’, *American Political Science Association: Comparative Politics Newsletter*, 8 (Winter 1998), 9-12:11.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹ C. Clausewitz, *On War* (1832). Translated from German by M. Howard & P. Paret (eds.) (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 87-89.

¹¹² George & Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 19.

¹¹³ *ibid.*, 21.

to the primary research question. The primary research aim suggests that this study draws upon the whole experience of the Roman Republic, a state which existed for nearly 500 years. The purpose of the work is thus to identify recurring themes in Roman conduct within this period and use them to synthesize general principles of small wars and strategy with reference to the modern experience. Using just one war as the basis of this would fatally limit the usefulness of the study, since such a small sample size can hardly be considered representative of the entire experience. More technically, such a limitation would leave the study open to a number of failures in measurement and analysis identified in *Designing Social Inquiry*.

The first of these is that insufficient breadth could risk inconclusive results being produced if no clear causal factor can be clearly identified due to possible alternative explanations arising, thereby making a valid inference almost impossible.¹¹⁴ Similarly, using multiple case studies can serve to reduce the risk of results being skewed by “systematic measurement error” born from biases on the part of the researcher,¹¹⁵ as well as the impact of unexpected or unrecognised outlier results.¹¹⁶ For example, if a single Roman campaign demonstrated that a certain tactic or approach in particular was the key to success in small wars (possibly due to other variables unknown to us), then the study’s ‘answer’ to the research question would seemingly reflect this as the truth because it had failed to examine other case studies which potentially showed the opposite. In this way, the aggregation of results that the use of multiple case studies provides serves to strengthen the reliability of results and the answer they provide to the research questions.¹¹⁷

One of the chief concerns relating to the case study approach is the inherent risk of over-simplification and generalisation of complex issues that comes with using a limited number of case studies. This issue is already well-embedded within small wars, especially in counterinsurgency, with Greenhill and Staniland stating that “it is not uncommon for scholars and analysts to employ the same two or three case studies as the basis for all of their recommendations and conclusions”.¹¹⁸ The fixation on the Jewish Wars is an example of this in

¹¹⁴ G. King et al., *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 210.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, 155-156.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, 211.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, 210.

¹¹⁸ K. M. Greenhill & P. Staniland, ‘Ten Ways to Lose at Counterinsurgency’, *Civil Wars*, 9, 4 (2007), 402-419:403.

the study of Roman small wars. By limiting one's focus to the usual case studies, one runs the risk of ignoring campaigns that might otherwise provide relevant insights, such as the Lusitanian War or the Jugurthine War. In a way, using the Roman experience as a vehicle for learning rather than the usual modern case studies already represents a useful departure from this problem of case study overuse. Clausewitzian theory tells us that wars are inherently diverse in nature, seemingly arguing against drawing conclusions from a handful of campaigns (particularly the same few). However, Clausewitz himself recognises that theory does not need to be (nor should it try to be) an exhaustive guide to every eventuality, but should provide a general guide as to the principles of war and strategy to aid independent thought as necessary.¹¹⁹ Indeed, in this context, the simplifying effect of the case study approach is beneficial to the purpose of the thesis.

As per the introduction, the aim of this work is to extract strategic lessons and principles from across the various levels of warfare in the conduct of small wars from the study of campaigns undertaken by the Roman Republic. This therefore puts it under the category of research known as 'theory development'. George and Bennett point out that, while theory development is generally understood to involve deductive reasoning, when it is done via case studies it is primarily an inductive process.¹²⁰ This in turn has implications for the specifics of case study selection, as the potential damage posed by measurement error through the biased cherry-picking of conflicts is especially great and would invalidate the whole theory. Therefore, the case studies selected should be representative of the diverse nature of small wars and be varied in the respective success of their conduct.

To properly answer the primary research question, it is also vital that all cases included in the study must be 'small wars' campaigns. The terminological interchangeability which has developed in the discipline as particular 'sub-genres' of small war (such as counterinsurgency) have achieved prominence has led to some confusion in this regard. However, as established in the introduction, this thesis is working from the Callwellian conception of small wars, which provides us with a working set of criteria.

¹¹⁹ Clausewitz, *On War*, 132, 141.

¹²⁰ George & Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 111.

From our investigation of *Small Wars*, it is clear that asymmetry is the key identifier of a small war in terms of character. This refers to disparities or differences in capabilities and characteristics such as: armament (heavier vs lighter), professionalism (regular troops vs irregulars), discipline and training, *esprit de corps*, organisation, strategy (direct vs indirect), and tactics (conventional vs less conventional).¹²¹ Many of these feed into one another, such as how the relative conventional weakness of the irregulars leads them to adopt indirect strategies and guerrilla tactics. In some cases, this asymmetry is more pronounced than others. However, that does not mean the latter are not small wars, what matters is that the asymmetry is present. While these considerations refer to the character of the war, Callwell also identifies three categories for the nature of the war. These are: “campaigns of conquest or annexation; campaigns for the suppression of insurrections or lawlessness or for the settlement of conquered or annexed territory; and campaigns undertaken to wipe out an insult, or avenge a wrong, or to overthrow a dangerous enemy. ... [and] expeditions undertaken for some ulterior purpose, or to establish order in some foreign land”.¹²² These are the criteria with which each of the Roman campaigns this thesis will cover will be screened to ensure they are in keeping with its research aims.

Further details taken into consideration in the selection of cases are chronological and documentary in nature. Firstly, as per the title, only conflicts that occurred during the period of the Roman Republic will be included in the study. This provides us with a chronological bracket that stretches from the founding of the Republic in 509 BC to the beginning of the Principate (generally located to around 27 BC). The modern small wars referenced in the conclusion will be broadly be limited to those from the post-1945 era, as it was this period that proved most influential in the development of modern small wars writing and doctrine. Events beyond these chronological brackets may be alluded to, but will not represent serious points of investigation. The availability of sufficient sources is an additional criterion for selection, as a certain degree of detail is required for proper analysis. While this applies less to the modern conflicts due to their relative recency, the scarcity of documentation touched upon earlier in the methodology limits the viability of some conflicts in this regard. Aside from representing a gap in the literature with regards to coverage by other strategists within the

¹²¹ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 29-32.

¹²² Ibid., 25-28.

context of small wars, the Republican period was chosen for its surviving historical library, including both sources with direct contemporaneity to relevant conflicts and those which cover these as part of larger histories.

As we have established, the case studies that this thesis will use to answer its research questions are the Lusitanian War (155 BC – 139 BC), the Jugurthine War (111 BC – 106 BC), and the Gallic War (58 BC – 50 BC). Analysis within their case studies will show that these wars meet the criteria laid out as per *Small Wars* in terms of both their character and nature. The other criteria apply as follows:

- With regards to the diversity of their small wars characteristics, the case studies do comply. Though all three saw the legions face enemies possessing some capacity for both direct, conventional approaches and indirect, less conventional approaches, there are distinctions within this. The Lusitani and Numidians leant more towards the latter in this regard, while the Gauls favoured the former.
- Though all wars ultimately saw the Romans achieve their political objectives, some proved broadly more successful than others. The Lusitanian War could be argued to show the Romans snatching victory from the jaws of defeat, having taken heavy casualties with little progress in return for much of the war before finishing with a flourish of good strategy. In Numidia, initial setbacks in the early stages of the war soon gave way to steady progress for the legions for the remainder of the war. In Gaul, the legions made consistently rapid progress with their conquest, and were able to overcome the late Gallic surges to secure this.
- All three wars sit within the period of the Roman Republic.
- Enough sufficiently complete sources were available for all three case studies, as shown by their treatment.

Analysis

The use of textual sources and a case study approach point to this project being best suited for qualitative analysis. Small wars, strategy, and indeed conflict in general are complex blends of human decisions and

political actions, with cultural and emotional aspects inevitably tied to them.¹²³ As a result, a qualitative approach is thus preferable to a quantitative one due to the fact that it is much better suited to interpretive, phenomenological analysis like dealing with such forces entails.¹²⁴ Further to this, the thesis' analysis is split into two phases. Firstly, case studies will be explored independently of one another to identify the primary characteristics of each campaign, looking at the efficacy of the strategies and tactics implemented in the context of their respective outcomes. The second phase of the analysis will bring these findings together with reference to modern conduct so as to examine shared experiences, different practices, and relative success to identify possible implications for future conduct. These will be articulated into thematic lessons based around the lessons and principles of small wars conduct identified throughout the case studies. This brings us back to the benefits of an in-depth case study approach that we discussed earlier. In particular, its capacity for contextualised comparison and its value in terms of identifying patterns and causal relationships between case studies.¹²⁵

The use of the qualifier 'success' necessitates a discussion as to what is meant by the term in the context of this analysis. The answer to this is fairly simple, but it is rooted in the understanding that (despite Callwell's recognition of their distinct character) a 'small war' is still a war.¹²⁶ Starting from the beginning, Clausewitz defines war as "an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will".¹²⁷ He goes on to specify that, if the imposition of that will is the object of war, the act of rendering the enemy powerless by disarming them is thus the aim of warfare in that it allows the exertion of control over the foe to that end. So long as the enemy remains armed, he remains out of one's control. In this context, that control over the enemy becomes an intermediate qualifier of success, an assertion also made by Wylie.¹²⁸ However, we must remember that the act of force that is war ultimately serves a political purpose. Indeed it is for that political purpose that control

¹²³ Clausewitz, *On War*, 87-89.

¹²⁴ George & Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 18-19.

¹²⁵ Locke & Thelen, 'Problems of Equivalence in Comparative Politics: Apples and Oranges, Again', 11; George & Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 19, 21.

¹²⁶ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 23.

¹²⁷ Clausewitz, *On War*, 75-77.

¹²⁸ J. C. Wylie, *Military Strategy: A General Theory of Power Control* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 91.

is sought to influence the enemy into compliance.¹²⁹ Callwell recognises this too in his statement that the objective in small wars is determined by the “circumstances which have led up to the campaign” and that “military operations are always undertaken with some end in view”.¹³⁰ While intermediate success can be established by the exertion of control over the enemy, longer term success markers must take these ends into account. Therefore, in each of the case studies this thesis will undertake, the primary indicator of success must be the extent to which the Romans achieved the specific policy objectives that are expressed or indicated by the lead up to the war.

A further consideration for our analysis is the place of moral judgement. In its small wars conduct, the Roman war machine developed a not-undeserved reputation for bouts of brutality, the examples of which fly in the face of modern bounds of acceptability. However, it is important to avoid abstract moral judgements of Roman actions as (while ethically valid) they might distort our analysis of the intent and efficacy of such strategies within their historical context. This amoral approach is vital to the discipline of strategic analysis of military history in terms of maintaining objectivity. However, these sensibilities are less easy to put aside for the second phase of the thesis’ analysis, which brings in modern conduct as a comparative tool to suggest future conduct. While one may be tempted to alter proffered results accordingly to match modern norms, this would be mere window dressing and leave the conclusions unrepresentative of the evidence. That being said, we should also remember that ethical concerns are increasingly important in the planning and execution of strategy due to the necessity of legitimacy.¹³¹ Indeed, certain aggressive actions might prove detrimental in the long run, despite any short-term benefits. Ultimately, what is important is making measured assessments as to the contribution of the use of force in relation to the attainment of one’s policy objectives, which must remain one’s strategic lodestar.¹³²

¹²⁹ Clausewitz, *On War*, 87.

¹³⁰ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 34.

¹³¹ C. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 73-74.

¹³² D. Lonsdale, *Alexander the Great: Lessons in Strategy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 3.

Lastly, we must also consider the accusation of ‘presentism’ in the use of historical contexts as tools of modern strategic learning. In addition to being seen as less relevant by virtue of its antiquity (an opinion voiced even by Clausewitz),¹³³ a common criticism of studies using historical conflicts to inform strategic theory today is that they are guilty of ‘presentism’, a historiographical fallacy relating to the anachronistic projection of present-day concepts and ideas onto the past. In a strategic context, this often happens when parallels are made between contemporary theory and historical practice, such as if one were to comment on Julius Caesar’s grasp of operational art. The argument being that he could not have behaved in such a way because the concept as we know it had not yet been conceived. However, Beatrice Heuser asserts in *Strategy Before the Word* and *Strategy Before Clausewitz* that historical leaders (both political and military) have shown that they still practiced strategy and displayed an awareness of military and strategic concepts recognisable to us today, even though they did not have a word for it like we do now or conceive of it in the same way.¹³⁴ Not only does this vindicate the primary assertion of the historical school of strategic thought, it validates the theoretical and pedagogical premise upon which this investigation is based: that the study and analysis of historical strategic practice has value to the modern practitioner.

With these methodological considerations addressed, we can move on to our case studies.

¹³³ Clausewitz, *On War*, 173.

¹³⁴ B. Heuser, ‘Strategy Before the Word: Ancient Wisdom for the Modern World’, *The RUSI Journal*, 155, 1 (2010), 36-43; B. Heuser, *Strategy Before Clausewitz: Linking Warfare and Statecraft, 1400-1830* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 1-31.

Chapter 2: The Lusitanian War (155 BC – 139 BC)

With their domination of the Italian Peninsula seemingly secure by around the middle of the third century BC, despite the efforts of Pyrrhus of Epirus,¹³⁵ Rome looked to new lands across the Mediterranean. As Pyrrhus himself apocryphally predicted, the first of these extra-peninsular forays was into Sicily.¹³⁶ This brought them into conflict with the Carthaginians, whose maritime culture and subsequent naval dominance allowed them to establish themselves across much of the western Mediterranean.¹³⁷ Though the First Punic War was decided by battles at sea, including potentially *the* largest naval engagement in history, the protracted fighting in hilly Sicily was significant for two reasons.¹³⁸ Firstly, Hamilcar Barca's tenure as commander in Sicily in the final years of the war saw his small Carthaginian force tie down significantly larger consular armies through his canny use of stratagems and *ruses de guerre*.¹³⁹ Inflicting a steady stream of casualties on the legions but refusing to be drawn into a pitched battle, Hamilcar was able to severely disrupt Roman lines of communication across Sicily and severely slow Roman progress in a war that continually drained their money and manpower.¹⁴⁰ It was this inability to overcome Hamilcar on land that forced Rome's last-ditch naval gambit that won them the war in 241 BC.¹⁴¹ His ability to wage this style of unconventional warfare was enabled not just by the terrain of Sicily, but also no doubt by the presence of mercenaries from the Iberian Peninsula in his army, and the First Punic War likely marks the first time the Romans faced these fierce fighters.

This link between the natives of the Iberian Peninsula and irregular warfare seems obvious. Indeed, the term used to describe these methods (guerrilla warfare) uses the diminutive form of the Spanish word *guerra* (war) to evoke the asymmetry inherent to such conflicts. This has its roots in the resistance to Napoleonic French occupation of Spain during the Peninsular War.¹⁴² According to de la Pisa, the operations of

¹³⁵ Plutarch, *Pyrrhus*. Translated from Greek by B. Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920), 13.1-26.1.

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, 23.6.

¹³⁷ N. Bagnall, *The Punic Wars: Rome, Carthage and the Struggle for the Mediterranean* (London: Pimlico, 1999), 7-8.

¹³⁸ G. K. Tipps, 'The Battle of Ecnomus', *Historia*, 34, 4 (1985), 432-465.

¹³⁹ Polybius, *Histories*. Translated from Greek by E. S. Shuckburgh (London: Macmillan and Co., 1889), 1.56-1.59.

¹⁴⁰ Bagnall, *The Punic Wars*, 91, 94.

¹⁴¹ Polybius, *Histories*, 1.59-1.62.

¹⁴² B. Singh & K.W. Mei, 'Guerrilla Warfare', *India Quarterly*. 21, 3 (July 1965), 285-310:285.

the guerrillas formed a vital third pillar of the anti-French war effort, supporting those of the Spanish and Anglo-Portuguese armies by disrupting French lines of communication, raiding isolated outposts, and ambushing patrols. This created an irregular secondary threat that forced the French to divert much of their forces to their reserves rather than frontline operations.¹⁴³ Although Corneli traces the principles and techniques they used as far back as Sun Tzu,¹⁴⁴ the guerrilla warfare in Spain differed in its scale and the strategic impact it had on the battle for control of the Peninsula. This mass effort to retake their country was aided in no small part by the character of the inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula. As de la Pisa points out, a long history of warfare had forged a people fiercely proud of their independence, and who had the historic culture of military skill and courage to defend it.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ J. de la Pisa, *Napoleon's Nightmare: Guerrilla Warfare in Spain (1808-1814) - The French Army's Failed Counterinsurgency Effort*. MMS Thesis (USMC Command and Staff College, April 2011). Available at: <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA600639.pdf> [Accessed 10/1/2024], 12-14.

¹⁴⁴ A. Corneli, 'Sun Tzu and the Indirect Strategy', *Rivista di Studi Politici Internazionali*, 54, 3 (215) (July-September 1987), 419-445.

¹⁴⁵ de la Pisa, *Napoleon's Nightmare*, 9-12.



The Iberian Peninsula's topography was also significant. As one can see in *Figure 1.1*, its uneven relief is characterised by interlocking mountain ranges, river valleys, high plateaus, and isolated lowlands. The vast plateau of the *Meseta Central* occupies roughly 75% of the Peninsula's landmass and is home to the sources of most of its rivers. Its primary feature is the *Sistema Central* mountain range that separates it into northern and southern subregions, the former being smaller but higher in elevation. Surrounding this central plateau are further mountain ranges: the *Cordillera Cantábrica* to the north, the *Sistema Ibérico* to the north-east, and the *Sierra Morena* to the south. Although the *Cordilleras Béticas* stretch across the south-east, the southern

¹⁴⁶ Nations Online Project, *Topographic Map of the Iberian Peninsula* (2024). Available online: <https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/Iberian-Peninsula-topographic-map.htm> [Accessed 10/1/2024].

half of the Peninsula is much lower. This features one of the two primary lowland regions, the so-called 'Andalusian Plain' which extends from the valley of the *Río Guadalquivir* around the Gulf of Cádiz and is one of the Peninsula's more fertile areas. Its pair is the basin of the *Río Ebro* in the north-east, which lies just south of the Pyrenees Mountains in the extreme north. This range forms a physical barrier that separates the Peninsula from the rest of Europe apart from two small coastal paths on either side.¹⁴⁷

While there were routes through the Peninsula's maze of mountain valleys that allowed travel, none of these were easy paths. On top of this, natural barriers often meant some places only had a single access route, impeding the concentration and manoeuvring of large armies.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, very few of the Peninsula's rivers are easily navigable, likely forcing circuitous routes using the coastal plains.¹⁴⁹ As Gray identifies, geography is one of the core dimensions of strategy, meaning that the topographic conditions of the Iberian Peninsula will have a serious impact on the conduct of warfare and strategy in that context.¹⁵⁰ That *Hispania* (the Roman name for the Iberian Peninsula) was not fully pacified under Roman control until 19 BC, roughly 200 years after they gained their first foothold there, gives some indication as to the difficulties the legions faced in dealing with local resistance in these conditions. This war against the Lusitani, described by Strabo as the Peninsula's greatest nation, would see the legions frustrated for the best part of two decades.¹⁵¹

This chapter will examine this group and their struggle with Rome, exploring their use of both conventional strategies and guerrilla methods to inflict many defeats on the legions deployed against them. With this consistent Lusitanian success, particularly under the leadership of Viriathus, the circumstances of Rome's ultimate victory warrant study. Indeed, it came after 16 years of inconclusive but vicious fighting in a conflict referred to by Polybius as the "Fiery War".¹⁵² In answering this question we will identify that the Lusitanian War highlights the necessity of military intelligence in the pursuit of an irregular enemy, the

¹⁴⁷ D. Varga, *The Roman Wars in Spain: The Military Confrontation with Guerrilla Warfare* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2015), 11-13.

¹⁴⁸ de la Pisa, *Napoleon's Nightmare*, 13.

¹⁴⁹ Varga, *The Roman Wars in Spain*, 14-15.

¹⁵⁰ Gray, *Modern Strategy*, 16.

¹⁵¹ Strabo, *Geography*. Translated from Greek by H.C. Hamilton & W. Falconer (London: George Bell & Sons, 1903), 3.3.3.

¹⁵² Polybius, *Histories*, 35.1.

importance of understanding the enemy's centre(s) of gravity and how they should be exploited, and the need for the greater power to adapt its pre-established operational methods to the situation on the ground.

The Peninsula's Inhabitants

At the beginning of the third century BC, the Iberian Peninsula was home to a somewhat chaotic mix of cultures and ethnic groups. As *Figure 1.2* shows, external actors had already established presences on the Peninsula. Several Phoenician and Punic colonies existed along the southern coast, as well as a pocket of Greek colonisation in the north-east. With regards to the Peninsula's 'native' inhabitants, they are typically divided into three primary ethno-linguistic groups: the Iberians, the Celts, and the Celtiberians.¹⁵³ Other groups such as the Turdetani, believed by ancient historians to have been the successors of the semi-mythical Tartessian culture;¹⁵⁴ and Aquitanian tribes, considered by some to be the precursors of the Basques,¹⁵⁵ are also present but are of limited relevance to this study. Generally speaking, society on the Iberian Peninsula was organised in terms of the *gentilitatus* (clan) and the *gens* (tribe). The clan was the most common social unit and referred to a group connected by blood and who followed a common set of religious and legal practices. Each commonly controlled a fortified hilltop village, referred to as a *castro*, and its nearby surroundings.¹⁵⁶ Several clans were then linked together as part of a more complex 'tribal' grouping, these *genses* were often further grouped to create a rough confederation referred to as a *populus*.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Appian, *Wars in Spain*. Translated from Greek by H. White (New York, NY: Macmillan Co., 1899), 1.

¹⁵⁴ Strabo, *Geography*, 3.2.13-3.2.14; Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 2.

¹⁵⁵ R. L. Trask, *The History of Basque* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1997), 9-11.

¹⁵⁶ A. J. Lorrio & G. R. Zapatero, 'The Celts in Iberia: An Overview', *e-Keltoi: Journal of Interdisciplinary Celtic Studies*, 6 (2005), 167-254:221-229. Available online: <https://dc.uwm.edu/ekeltoi/vol6/iss1/4/> [Accessed 10/1/2024].

¹⁵⁷ R. Trevino, *Rome's Enemies 4: Spanish Armies* (London: Osprey, 1986), 3.

In the north (specifically the region surrounding the Galician Massif and the *Cordillera Cantábrica*) were the more purely Celtic peoples, identified by Strabo as the Callaeci, Astures, and Cantabri.¹⁵⁹ Due to topographical barriers and their distance from the Mediterranean, they remained more culturally and politically static, with little evolution beyond the basic clan *castro*.¹⁶⁰ In addition to being the last region of the Peninsula to be pacified by Rome, these peoples would prove to be among the hardest to Romanise.¹⁶¹ The Iberians (in the ethno-linguistic sense) were located along the eastern coastline of the Peninsula that would experience outside colonisation. This resulted in a Greco-Phoenician influence on their culture, most notably their tendency to build grid-planned cities as well as the typical *castros*.¹⁶² Their society was also highly stratified, with cities ruled by kings and featuring distinct classes of nobles, merchants, free citizens, slaves, and a working class. These characteristics likely expedited the later process of Romanisation considerably.¹⁶³ By the middle of the third century BC, some of these kingdoms controlled significant populations across many cities and the *castros* that supported them.¹⁶⁴

Between these two groups, in the area covering the *Meseta Central* and much of modern-day Portugal, can be found the so-called 'Celtiberians'. As the name suggests, these peoples represented a fusion of both Celtic and Iberian cultures, although this manifested itself in different ways for different tribes.¹⁶⁵ Considerable confusion is caused by the varied use of the term in the sources as either an ethnonym for those who spoke the Celtiberian language (a variety of Celtic), a demonym for the inhabitants of this central region (not all of whom spoke Celtiberian), or to refer to a particular alliance of Celtiberian-speaking peoples in the area. This last group seems to have been a more explicitly linked confederation of tribes referred to as the Celtiberi; generally considered to include the Arevaci,

¹⁵⁹ Strabo, *Geography*, 3.3.7.

¹⁶⁰ Trevino, *Spanish Armies*, 1.

¹⁶¹ Strabo, *Geography*, 3.3.8.

¹⁶² Varga, *The Roman Wars in Spain*, 21-22.

¹⁶³ Trevino, *Spanish Armies*, 3.

¹⁶⁴ F. Quesada Sanz, 'Iberians as Enemies', in Y. Le Bohec (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Roman Army: Volume II* (Oxford: Wiley, 2015), 505-508:506.

¹⁶⁵ Trevino, *Spanish Armies*, 1-2.

Lusones, Belli, Titti, and Pelendones. Other tribes frequently labelled 'Celtiberian' include the Carpetani, Olcades, Lobetani, and Vaccaeii. However, some of these appear to have been other *populi* in their own right.¹⁶⁶ As with the rest of the Peninsula, the most common unit of Celtiberian society was the *castro*. However, perhaps influenced by the more urban Iberians, some Celtiberian settlements developed into city-like urban communities akin to those on the eastern coast. Referred to as *oppida*, these walled cities acted as regional centres or tribal capitals, and exerted control over all respective *castros* and their associated clans. In this way, the clan and *castro* were superseded as the basic political unit of the Celtiberians by the *oppidum*¹⁶⁷. Led by chiefs or more complex socio-political institutions like public assemblies and noble/elder councils (or some combination of the two), the *oppida* began conducting their own policy independent of the others, albeit still through a broadly tribal lens.¹⁶⁸

Also occasionally labelled as 'Celtiberian' are those who inhabited the region between the Tagus and Douro rivers: the Vettones and the Lusitani, the subjects of this chapter. These peoples appear to have spoken a distinct, possibly pre-Celtic, Indo-European language referred to now as 'Lusitanian'. That being said, they are also believed to have displayed several characteristics associated with Celtic and Celtiberian cultures, suggesting some level of cultural .¹⁶⁹ Like the Celts in the north, the Lusitani were not a single political entity but a loose association of ethnically-linked tribes, thought to be around 300 in number. Each tribe controlled their own territory and was essentially independent, but cooperation in the face of external threats was not uncommon.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Lorrio & Zapatero, 'The Celts in Iberia: An Overview', 179-183.

¹⁶⁷ M. Almagro-Gorbea, 'From Hillforts to *Oppida* in 'Celtic' Iberia', in B. Cunliffe & S. J. Keay (eds.), *Proceedings of the British Academy (Volume 86): Social Complexity and the Development of Towns in Iberia, From the Copper Age to the Second Century AD* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 175-207.

¹⁶⁸ Lorrio & Zapatero, 'The Celts in Iberia: An Overview', 209-210.

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 186.

¹⁷⁰ Varga, *The Roman Wars in Spain*, 18.

Cooperation

These *gentilitates*, *genses*, and *populi* did not coexist entirely peacefully, and warfare between them was endemic. Indeed, despite the regional prevalence of confederations, Strabo describes working together with a unity of purpose as part of large coalitions as being largely contrary to their nature.¹⁷¹ That is not to say that there was no cooperation between the different communities though. In fact, central to both the socio-political and military organisation of the Peninsula was a complex institution of clientship. A common practice, particularly among the warrior class, was for individuals to make a *devotio* to their superior. This arrangement, not unlike the Roman system of patronage, swore that man and his family into the service of the other. This service was one of mutual obligation and usually included a military component, with the warrior swearing to defend his patron with his life in exchange for protection and material compensation.¹⁷² This was not exclusively between individuals within the same community, but could bind whole tribes and *populi* either together or subordinate them to a single leader (as would happen with the Lusitanian tribes and Viriathus).¹⁷³ Groups could also be bound together through the *hospitium*, a pact between social units wherein members of one side are considered to have the same rights and obligations as if they were a member of the other. These obligations would likely have functioned as a kind of alliance and appear to have been fairly common, particularly between those who had pre-existing kinship, indicated by the rarity of fighting between members of the same tribe and/or confederation.¹⁷⁴ Nevertheless, there does seem to be some truth to Strabo's comments. Varga describes how a lack of "pan-Hispanic patriotism" resulted in poor coordination between allies and precluded the formation of the grand coalitions necessary for resisting Rome.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ Strabo, *Geography*, 3.4.5.

¹⁷² *ibid.*, 3.4.18.

¹⁷³ Lorrio & Zapatero, 'The Celts in Iberia: An Overview', 210; Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 61-62.

¹⁷⁴ Trevino, *Spanish Armies*, 4-5.

¹⁷⁵ Varga, *The Roman Wars in Spain*, 126.

Hispanic Warriors and Warfare

As was common in the ancient world, military forces on the Iberian Peninsula were organised around the social units that already existed within society and commanded by the same leaders that led society in daily life. For example, each clan would have a body of warriors that they could call upon to fight for their *castro*, generally the men engaged in *devotio* with the clan chief. Leaders of larger social units like the *oppida*, *gens*, and *populus* could subsequently call upon the warriors of more and more clans through that hierarchical network of military clientship. Among the Lusitani and the Celtic peoples, this client network was the extent of their military manpower. However, Quesada suggests that the Celtiberians and Iberians likely also utilised a timocratic civic militia when fielding a larger force was necessary, with the warrior class serving as a more experienced nucleus. It should be clarified that none of these soldiers were professionals, as even the warrior class that made up these military clients engaged in other economic activities in times of peace.¹⁷⁶

Though Hispanic forces contained the basic elements one expects to find in a classical army (skirmishers, infantry, and cavalry), they were utilised in different ways. Namely, the lines between skirmisher and infantry, and between infantry and cavalry were blurred. Their dedicated skirmishers fought as unarmoured infantry and wielded slings or javelins alongside a small buckler called a *caetra*.¹⁷⁷ This panoply was more complex than it seems, with different slings for long- or close-range targets and a variety of javelins including more traditional throwing spears like the *falarica* and heavier, all-iron spears referred to as *soliferra*.¹⁷⁸ Hispanic skirmishers, particularly slingers from the Balearic Islands, developed a fearsome reputation in their service as mercenaries.¹⁷⁹ However, Quesada points

¹⁷⁶ F. Quesada Sanz, 'Military Developments in the 'Late Iberian' Culture (c. 237-c. 195 BC): Mediterranean Influences in the 'Far West' via the Carthaginian Military', in N. Sekunda & A. Noguera (eds.), *Hellenistic Warfare I. Proceedings Conference Torun (Poland), October 2003* (Valencia: Fundacion Libertas, 2011), 207-257:233-235.

¹⁷⁷ F. Quesada Sanz, 'Not So Different: Individual Fighting Techniques and Small Unit Tactics of Roman and Iberian Armies Within the Framework of Warfare in the Hellenistic Age', *Pallas*, 70 (2006), 245-263:251.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ Bagnall, *The Punic Wars*, 8; Trevino, *Spanish Armies*, 40-41.

out that ancient sources rarely acknowledge *psiloi* (the Greek label for specialist skirmishing troops), suggesting that these were a relatively minor part of Hispanic armies.¹⁸⁰

This lack of dedicated skirmishers was mitigated by a core of dual-purpose infantry that could engage in both skirmishing *and* fight as line infantry. According to the sources, this infantry consisted of two types, named for the shield they carried: *caetrati*, who carried the *caetra*; and *scutati*, who carried a flat oval *scutum*. Aside from the shield, both were equipped in largely the same fashion, wearing either a leather cap or bronze helmet, greaves, and torso armour. The exact materials depended on the means of the individual, but could range from linen or hardened leather to metal plate, scale, or mail.¹⁸¹ In terms of weapons, each carried a spear, at least one *soliferrum*, and a sword. Generally, Iberian warriors tended to wield *falcata* (similar to the Greek *kopis*) and fight as *scutati* while the Celts and Celtiberians favoured straight swords and *caetra*, but there was little standardisation and thus plenty of overlap.¹⁸² For example, Varga reports that the Lusitani used the *caetra* alongside the *falcata*.¹⁸³ The *caetrati* and *scutati* were effectively indigenous analogues to the *peltasts* and *thureophoroi* respectively. They were well-equipped enough to be able to hold their own when fighting in the line in pitched battle, but light enough that they could operate in rough terrain and be used to either counter light infantry or skirmish themselves.¹⁸⁴ The backbone of any Hispanic force, the flexibility they offered was vital in the varied geography of the Iberian Peninsula, and meant that they could fight effectively in a variety of ways wherever they needed to.

The Iberian Peninsula's large population of fast, well-sized wild horses and subsequent developments in horsemanship meant that cavalry featured prominently in Hispanic forces, both at home and when serving as mercenaries. In some cases, mounted troops constituted as much as a

¹⁸⁰ Quesada Sanz, 'Iberians as Enemies', 507.

¹⁸¹ Trevino, *Spanish Armies*, 33-34.

¹⁸² Quesada Sanz, 'Not So Different', 251.

¹⁸³ Varga, *The Roman Wars in Spain*, 114.

¹⁸⁴ T. Livius, *The History of Rome*. Translated from Latin by F. G. Moore (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949), 28.33.

quarter of their given strength.¹⁸⁵ Although they carried out the traditional peripheral functions of light cavalry (e.g., scouting and screening), the Hispanics again deviated from the norm.¹⁸⁶ Equipped in the same fashion as their infantry, Hispanic horsemen appear to have routinely operated as ‘dragoons’, often dismounting to fight on foot or carrying an extra man who would do so.¹⁸⁷ In fact, their reins featured a picket line to allow them to be tethered in battle, and horses were trained to kneel and remain still and silent on command.¹⁸⁸ The latter will also have been particularly useful when conducting guerrilla actions like ambushes, a common task for them given the skill of Celtiberian and Lusitanian cavalry in mountain fighting.¹⁸⁹ Although they are recorded as being more than capable of fighting as conventional cavalry, their true value is in the versatility their wide skillset and panoply gives them.¹⁹⁰

As strategic cultural theory tells us, the unique socio-cultural characteristics of any group influences their military thinking, and this is obviously true of the Iberian Peninsula as with anywhere else.¹⁹¹ Diodorus describes an old tradition that existed in Hispania whereby poorer young men would “form into bands of considerable size and then descend upon Iberia and collect wealth from their pillaging” as a rite of passage.¹⁹² This institution was tantamount to socially accepted banditry, and goes some way to explaining the way of war of the Iberian Peninsula, which was almost exclusively depredatory in nature. When fighting each other, the overall objective was not destruction or even enslavement of one’s opponent, but simply to strip them of anything valuable (cattle, harvests, useful goods, etc.) as quickly as possible. Quesada notes that even the razing of their lands was reportedly done half-heartedly. It took until around the third century BC for political domination through force to

¹⁸⁵ Trevino, *Spanish Armies*, 39.

¹⁸⁶ Varga, *The Roman Wars in Spain*, 117.

¹⁸⁷ Livy, *The History of Rome*, 29.2; Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, Translated from Greek by C. H. Oldfather et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933-1967), 5.33; Strabo, *Geography*, 3.4.18.

¹⁸⁸ Trevino, *Spanish Armies*, 40.

¹⁸⁹ Livy, *The History of Rome*, 21.57.

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*, 23.26.

¹⁹¹ Gray, *Modern Strategy*, 129-151.

¹⁹² Diodorus, *Library of History*, 5.34.

become common. Furthermore, intense fighting was avoided where possible. Therefore, while war was endemic, it was typically highly seasonal, of low intensity, and with limited mortality.¹⁹³

Historians both modern and ancient are quick to emphasise the irregular operational art and tactics of Hispanic forces, styling them as daring guerrilla warriors adept at hit-and-run skirmishing and *ruses de guerre*.¹⁹⁴ However, Quesada insists that this is an exaggeration and only accurately represents the methods of those peoples with less-developed military institutions, such as the Celts of the north-west or the Lusitani.¹⁹⁵ As we will see in our investigation of the Lusitanian War, the picture painted by Strabo and Diodorus of the Lusitani as archetypal Hispanic guerrillas was an accurate one.¹⁹⁶ In comparison, the ability of the more developed Iberians and Celtiberians to field larger forces meant that they preferred to fight conventionally. Indeed, pitched battles were not the exception but the rule in native warfare, seeing opposing armies forming up into ordered battle lines and organised into tribal contingents fighting under military standards.¹⁹⁷ The Carthaginians trusting Hispanic mercenaries with holding key positions in the battle line suggests that fighting in close order against the legions was something these troops were considered more than capable of.¹⁹⁸ This does not mean that the Iberians and Celtiberians did not or could not fight in an irregular fashion though. In fact, not only was there a precedent for the use of surprise attacks,¹⁹⁹ groups across the Peninsula later took to emulating Lusitanian tactics after they met with success.²⁰⁰ This apparent late adoption of guerrilla warfare elsewhere raises the question of whether the Lusitani themselves, who appear to have already had some connections to the Celtiberians, used these methods to begin with; or whether they were adopted in direct response to the asymmetric nature of conflict with the Roman military machine.

¹⁹³ Quesada Sanz, 'Military Developments in the 'Late Iberian' Culture (c. 237-c. 195 BC)', 233.

¹⁹⁴ Strabo, *Geography*, 3.4.15; Bagnall, *The Punic Wars*, 9.

¹⁹⁵ Quesada Sanz, 'Iberians as Enemies', 505, 507.

¹⁹⁶ Diodorus, *Library of History*, 5.34; Strabo, *Geography*, 3.3.6.

¹⁹⁷ Quesada Sanz, 'Military Developments in the 'Late Iberian' Culture (c. 237-c. 195 BC)', 235; Livy, *The History of Rome*, 29.2.

¹⁹⁸ Polybius, *Histories*, 3.113; Livy, *The History of Rome*, 28.2; Diodorus, *Library of History*, 5.33.

¹⁹⁹ Quesada Sanz, 'Military Developments in the 'Late Iberian' Culture (c. 237-c. 195 BC)', 231, 233.

²⁰⁰ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 71-73.

Foreign Domination

Rome's Hispanic Ulcer

The Phoenicians are believed to have had a presence on the Iberian Peninsula as early as the 11th century BC, establishing holdings that were inherited and expanded by Carthage following their rise to prominence in later centuries. However, the Peninsula ceased to be Carthage's backyard and instead became Rome's following the latter's victory there under Scipio Africanus during the Second Punic War.²⁰¹ This came as something of a shock to some of the native tribes, even those who actively sided with Rome, who seem to have thought that the Romans would leave after ousting the Carthaginians. This disillusionment, coupled with a rumour of Scipio's imminent death from sickness, kindled the first sparks of anti-Roman rebellion. Believing Scipio incapacitated, the Iberian chieftains Indibilis and Mandonius led a number of Iberian tribes in the north-east to rebel and attack the Roman-aligned Suesetani and Sedetani (see *Figure 1.2*). Marching north, Scipio drew the rebels into a battle on open ground and destroyed their army, forcing them to submit to Roman authority once more.²⁰² Scipio was sceptical of the unpredictable loyalties of the locals and elected to maintain a legionary presence in Hispania to exert more direct control.²⁰³ This precaution soon proved prescient when Indibilis attempted another revolt in 205 BC following Scipio's return to Rome, but was again defeated in battle by the Roman garrison and Rome's local allies.²⁰⁴

As shown in *Figure 1.3*, Rome was eventually able to establish control over formerly Carthaginian Hispania, as well as beginning to expand inland from the beachhead of allied Greek colonies in the north (see *Figure 1.2*). However, even with the Carthaginians gone, the Romans there experienced little respite. As the Barcids had found, the local tribes were unruly, forcing the Romans

²⁰¹ Varga, *The Roman Wars in Spain*, 25-26; T. Livius, *Periochae*. Translated from Latin by J. Lendering (Livius.org, 2020), 26.7-28.4.

²⁰² Polybius, *Histories*, 11.32-11.33; Livy, *The History of Rome*, 28.24, 28.31-28.34.

²⁰³ Varga, *The Roman Wars in Spain*, 47-48.

²⁰⁴ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 38.

to keep four legions in Hispania on a permanent basis to maintain order.²⁰⁵ By 197 BC, after several years of uncertain status and leadership, the situation stabilised and Rome's holdings were formally consolidated into the empire as two new *provinciae*: *Hispania Citerior* (Nearer Spain) and *Hispania Ulterior* (Further Spain).²⁰⁶ As per *Figure 1.3*, the border between them was placed roughly between the major settlements of Carthago Nova and Baria (see *Figure 1.2*). Each province was administered by a *praetor*, who would command a Roman army of 8,000 infantry and 400 cavalry.²⁰⁷

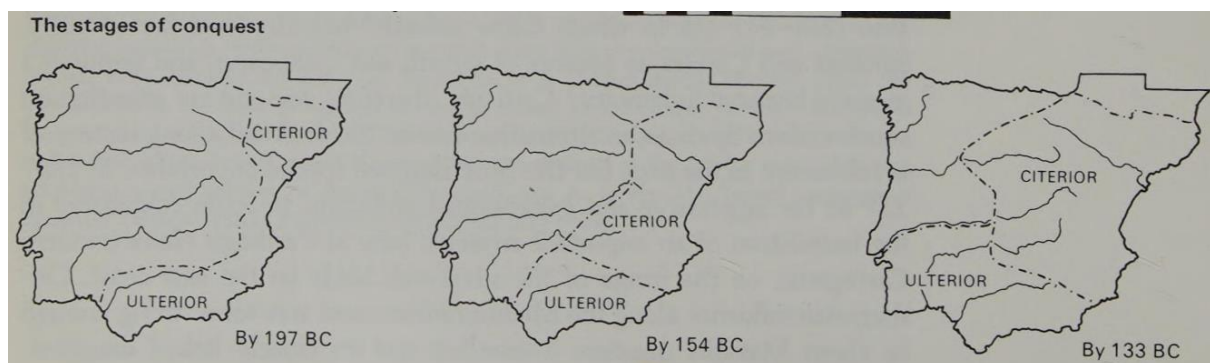


Figure 1.3: Stages of the Roman conquest of Hispania (197 BC-133 BC), with Roman provincial boundaries shown²⁰⁸

Despite this sizeable Roman presence, by the end of the year much of Hispania Ulterior was in rebellion. Fighting had also spread into Hispania Citerior, where the Roman forces had been routed and the praetor killed, prompting the dispatch of a consular army in 195 BC under Cato the Elder to restore order.²⁰⁹ In order to both sustain themselves and exact vengeance, Cato's legions pillaged the lands of revolting tribes as they marched across Hispania. Though many surrendered upon the arrival of the legions, plenty did not or simply returned to arms when the legions moved on. When resisted, Roman forces aggressively forced battle or besieged *oppida*. Tribes were brutally smashed one by one, their warriors slaughtered, prisoners executed, and people enslaved. In many cases, to dissuade them from future resistance, fortified settlements were also coerced into demolishing their own walls on

²⁰⁵ Bagnall, *The Punic Wars*, 216.

²⁰⁶ Varga, *The Roman Wars in Spain*, 49.

²⁰⁷ Livy, *The History of Rome*, 32.28.

²⁰⁸ S. J. Keay, *Roman Spain* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 26.

²⁰⁹ Livy, *The History of Rome*, 33.21-33.25, 33.43.

pain of enslavement.²¹⁰ Cato declared the Roman territories sufficiently pacified by the end of the year, returning to Rome with his consular army after instituting reforms to improve the province's profitability of the province.²¹¹

However, Cato's brutal campaign embittered many tribes under Roman control and stoked fears of Roman expansionism amongst as yet independent peoples. Furthermore, his provincial reforms resulted in many members of the Hispanic warrior class losing their traditional place in society, driving them to banditry and rebellion.²¹² The praetors subsequently faced near constant low-level warfare in the form of skirmishes, raids, and smaller pitched battles for the next decade. Though generally considered relatively minor by the Romans, these operations were numerous and consistently attrited Roman forces, with Hispania Citerior's praetor for 193 BC suffering around 50% losses during his tenure.²¹³ Incursions by large Lusitanian and Celtiberian warbands were particularly common, but Rome also had to conduct expeditionary campaigns against the Oretani, Vaccaeii, Vettones, Carpetani, and Turdetani, as well as quelling revolts within their provincial borders. Despite suffering some significant defeats, Rome's ability to replenish losses meant that they were able to weather these and gradually make steady progress.²¹⁴

This period of prolonged warfare culminated in 181 BC with the First Celtiberian War, which saw the Celtiberi reportedly mobilise an unprecedented force of around 35,000 men. After dispersing this army in battle in Carpetania, Hispania Citerior's praetor ravaged their lands, picking each settlement off piecemeal. Perhaps thinking the Romans distracted, the Lusitani raided Hispania Ulterior, but were driven out by the provincial garrison. Disaster was avoided yet again when Roman forces from Hispania Citerior fought off a Celtiberian ambush at the Manlian Pass while withdrawing to rendezvous with the new praetor, Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus. In 179 BC, Gracchus and his

²¹⁰ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 39-41.

²¹¹ Livy, *The History of Rome*, 34.8-34.21, 34.42-34.43.

²¹² L. Silva, *Viriathus and the Lusitanian Resistance to Rome* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2013), 42.

²¹³ Livy, *The History of Rome*, 35.1.

²¹⁴ Varga, *The Roman Wars in Spain*, 53-54; Livy, *The History of Rome*, 35.1-40.16.

colleague in Hispania Ulterior initiated a joint operation to crush the resistance. Gracchus would invade Celtiberia directly, while his colleague marched from the south through Lusitania and Vaccaeian territory to meet him there (see *Figure 1.2*). This campaign saw more than 100 settlements surrender to the advancing Romans, a process accelerated by the defection of influential Celtiberian nobles in the face of Roman success.²¹⁵

While earlier praetors relied solely upon the memory and threat of the use of force, Gracchus worked to build their freshly-taught compliance into long-term obedience through the redistribution of land to poorer groups, as well as the use of *devotio* and the cultivation of mutually respectful personal relationships with tribal leaders.²¹⁶ These treaties of friendship provided Rome with a steady supply of Hispanic auxiliaries and grain to feed their garrisons while affording the tribes a respectful amount of autonomy, including the right to fortify their existing settlements. After decades of constant violence, the Iberian Peninsula Gracchus left behind experienced an unprecedented 24-year period of relative peace.²¹⁷ This change is demonstrated by the fact that, in 171 BC, Hispanic complaints against greedy Roman governance were expressed not through revolt but by a peaceful appeal to the Senate.²¹⁸

²¹⁵ Livy, *The History of Rome*, 40.30-40.34, 40.39-40.50.

²¹⁶ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 43-44.

²¹⁷ Varga, *The Roman Wars in Spain*, 55-56.

²¹⁸ Livy, *The History of Rome*, 43.2.

The War of Fire

The First Raids & Galba's Campaign

The Gracchan peace saw Roman geopolitical influence spread further inland to include around half the Peninsula (see *Figure 1.3*), but finally broke in 155 BC. According to Appian, a Lusitanian host led by the chief Punicus began raiding some of their Roman-allied neighbours. Roman attempts to protect their subjects and eject Punicus' raiders resulted in defeats for successive praetors at the cost of as many as 6,000 Roman casualties. The Lusitanian campaign only gained momentum after this as, not only did this open Roman territory to them, the Vettones subsequently rallied to their banner too. This Luso-Vettonic alliance was thus able to advance deep into Hispania Ulterior, raiding as far as the old Phoenician lands on the Peninsula's southern Mediterranean coast. Appian gives some insight into how this might have been achieved in his description of Caesarus' (the Lusitanian chieftain who replaced Punicus after his death in battle) defeat of Lucius Mummius, the new praetor sent to restore order. According to Appian, after initially being "put to flight", Caesarus' forces rallied and turned on the pursuing Romans, inflicting heavy casualties and forcing Mummius to retreat.²¹⁹

Like Mummius, Appian appears to have believed this rout to have been genuine, perhaps due to Roman prejudices about barbarian armies being unable or unwilling to resist the legions in pitched battles. However, the repeated occurrence of similar scenarios suggests that this was in fact a deliberate Lusitanian hit-and-run strategy, the intention being to draw the legions into ambushes or create exploitable disorder within their tight battle line.²²⁰ Although the Romans saw *concursare* (the Latin label given to this kind of fighting) as indicative of cowardice and poor battle planning, Varga points out that manoeuvring large forces in this way requires significant discipline and tactical planning.²²¹ Regardless of Rome's opinions of such methods, these defeats likely seriously undermined

²¹⁹ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 56

²²⁰ *ibid.*, 58, 62, 67.

²²¹ Quesada Sanz, 'Military Developments in the 'Late Iberian' Culture (c. 237-c. 195 BC)', 208; Varga, *The Roman Wars in Spain*, 127-128.

Roman authority on the Peninsula. Caesar's reported flaunting of captured Roman standards across the country undoubtedly exacerbated this.

The eruption of the Second Celtiberian War around this time seemingly supports this. Possibly emboldened by apparent Roman weakness, a group of Celtiberian tribes (including the Belli, Titti, and Arevaci) to begin taking actions the Romans saw as in breach of the Gracchan agreements. Roman forces dispatched in response were dogged constantly by the Celtiberians, who simply gave ground to the legions instead of meeting them in the field. Soon overextended in unfamiliar territory, the legions suffered a multitude of ambushes, guerrilla attacks on their baggage, and attacks on supply depots.²²² The campaign ground to a halt as these attacks bled the army's strength and morale, with the situation becoming so bad that citizens back in Rome even began to avoid military service.²²³ Given the previously discussed commonalities in Hispanic military art, these events likely mirrored those in the south, and explain why the Lusitani were able to run relatively rampant during the first couple of years of their incursion.

Returning to Hispania Ulterior, one is likely to notice that Roman actions against the Lusitani up until now are almost exclusively reactive in nature. This ceded all initiative to the raiders, a mistake that was compounded by the inefficacy of these reactions. Subsequently, by 153 BC, the remnants of the province's forces could only watch from within their protective camps as more bands joined those already pillaging Roman holdings. One warband, after sacking the territory of the allied Cunei, penetrated as far south as the Strait of Gibraltar. However, by focusing on pillaging over completing the defeat of the enemy, the Lusitani lost the initiative themselves. Having drilled his men back to confidence, Mummius broke out of his camp and was able to reconsolidate his forces. Being spread out to raid as wide as possible, and likely believing the legions combat ineffective, Lusitanian columns were isolated and could be methodically picked off by Mummius' army. With a secure base thus

²²² Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 44-47.

²²³ Polybius, *Histories*, 35.1-35.4; P. Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*. Translated from Latin by I. W. Raymond (New York, NY: Columbia University Press), 4.21.1.

established in the south, the legions marched north. Rather than trying to scour the province of the Lusitanian warbands, Marcus Atilius (the new praetor for 152 BC) kept the initiative by instead marching on Lusitania itself. Most of Lusitania's warriors were pillaging the territory of Rome and her allies, leaving their own lands vulnerable and enabling Atilius to capture the major city of Oxthracae. By taking the fight to the Lusitani and showing them just how easily their homes could be attacked, he was able to compel the tribes that constituted the Luso-Vettonic coalition to sue for peace with Rome and cease their incursions.²²⁴

This peace with the Lusitanians was clearly in the Roman strategic interest, both immediately and in terms of wider grand strategy. As Goldworthy points out, a stable Hispania (i.e., without war) was both politically and economically desirable for Rome, as they could extract more from and devote less to the provinces.²²⁵ Furthermore, the Lusitani had shown an ability to inflict heavy casualties on the legions, making further war a costly endeavour. Nevertheless, it was the hawkish new Roman governors of Hispania, consul Lucius Licinius Lucullus (Citerior) and praetor Servius Sulpicius Galba (Ulterior), who upset the peace.²²⁶ In contravention of Roman law, Lucullus invaded the territory of the Vaccaeii, a tribe who had not attacked Rome and against whom the Senate had not declared war. The damage this did to Rome's already tenuous in-theatre authority and legitimacy was exacerbated by brutal excesses against the city of Cauca *after* its surrender.²²⁷ Roman sources often decry the Hispanic tendency to disingenuously make peace only to immediately break the agreement. However, it was seemingly not until after Lucullus' invasion that the Lusitani rebelled again, suggesting contributed to stirring up anti-Roman sentiment amongst the tribes.

This renewed conflict in the south began in 151 BC with Lusitanian bands raiding the territory of Roman allies and laying siege to their settlements. Hispania Ulterior's garrison proved unprepared for this consequence of Lucullus' operations, pointing to a clear failure in communication and strategic

²²⁴ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 57-58.

²²⁵ A. Goldworthy, *Roman Warfare* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2019), 84-85.

²²⁶ Varga, *The Roman Wars in Spain*, 59.

²²⁷ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 51-52.

planning across the different theatres. Recognising the importance of defending their subjects in relation to their authority, Galba hastily organised a counteroffensive to relieve them. However, his forces were far from the front and had to be force-marched over long distances to arrive in a timely fashion. Upon catching up with the main bulk of the Lusitanian forces, Galba immediately ordered an attack. The Lusitani appear to have again utilised *conkursare*, drawing the already tired and disorderly legions out before turning and picking them apart in surprise attacks. Galba was forced to withdraw to the city of Conistorgis in the territory of the Cunei (see *Figure 1.2*) after suffering heavy losses.²²⁸ As before, Roman operations against the Lusitani were both wholly reactive *and* unsuccessful. This left the raiders able to pillage both Roman subjects and Roman territory proper at will. Not only did this economically benefit the Lusitanians at the expense of the Romans, it undermined Roman military and political authority by showing that the legions could not ensure the security it promised to those who sided with them. It is likely in recognition of this loss of face that the Romans took the course they did in the next campaign season.

Despite his efforts, Lucullus' campaign against the Vaccae had resulted in relatively little successful conquest or plunder. Furthermore, his forces were suffering the effects of constant hit-and-run attacks on his foraging parties. He therefore withdrew southwards to winter quarters in Turdetania.²²⁹ Galba's operational failure soon became apparent, with bands of Lusitanian raiders infesting in Hispania Ulterior and threatening Lucullus' own province. His first move in 150 BC was to divide his army into more manoeuvrable columns that could better react to Lusitanian tactics, targeting the larger enemy concentrations first. This proved successful, destroying many warbands outright and enabling the rest to be bottled up and captured by the Roman columns. The situation in Hispania thus stabilised for the time being, Lucullus and Galba were afforded some breathing space. However, instead of remaining in the province to simply guard against new incursions, they launched a bold joint offensive that would keep the initiative in Rome's favour. Replicating Marcus Atilius' successful strategy

²²⁸ Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 4.21.3; Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 58.

²²⁹ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 53-55.

of targeting Lusitania itself, Galba invaded from the lands of the Cunei and Lucullus from Turdetania. Aside from involving a second army, this operation differed from Atilius' in its application of force. While Atilius intended to win a symbolic victory by capturing an important city, 150 BC's invasion was wholly punitive. As the legions advanced, the razing of Lusitanian land was accompanied by the systematic slaughter of both combatants and civilian populations. Not only was this depopulation strategy a clear attempt to force a capitulation by directly attacking their civilian population, it also served to drain Lusitanian manpower to deter future resistance. Though brutal, this population-centric strategy (although not one we would recognise today) worked, and Lusitanian peace envoys soon came flooding in.²³⁰

However, Galba intended to "avenge treachery with treachery".²³¹ Seemingly accepting Lusitanian capitulation, he offered fertile lands to surrendering tribes to ameliorate the poverty they blamed for forcing them to revolt. Trusting Galba's word, many Lusitani assembled, gathering in separate locations as per his instructions. Galba then sprung his trap, methodically circumvallating each assembly with a ditch before having his men kill all the able-bodied males and taking the rest to be sold into slavery.²³² Combined with the large-scale depopulation, this massacre will have been calculated to deter not just future Lusitanian resistance, but to show others across the Peninsula pondering revolt the potential cost of such a course. This displays a clear understanding of the moral dimension of warfare, and how the strategic application of the power to hurt can exploit it.²³³ Though the conflict with the Lusitani did seemingly temporarily subside following Galba's massacre,²³⁴ Landess asserts that it cemented the Hispanic perception of the Romans as untrustworthy, thereby strengthening their resolve to resist the Roman occupation.²³⁵

²³⁰ *ibid.*, 59.

²³¹ *ibid.*, 60.

²³² Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 4.22.10; Trevino, *Spanish Armies*, 12.

²³³ T. C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (London: Yale University Press, 1966), 1-34.

²³⁴ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 61.

²³⁵ A. C. Landess, *From Intervention, To Insurgency, To Peace: How the Roman Approach to Interacting with the Tribes in Iberia Almost Lost the Province*. Hons Thesis (Baylor University, April 2021). Available online:

The Rise of Viriathus

Though hostilities resumed sometime around 148 BC, the assembled Lusitanian forces reportedly only numbered around 10,000, suggesting that Lucullus and Galba's depopulation campaign had worked to some extent. Furthermore, Appian describes them as being survivors of Galba's massacre, implying that there was little stomach for fresh war outside of those enraged at the massacre of their kin. Despite their limited strength, Lusitanian warbands were able to penetrate into Hispania Ulterior as far as Ursone (see *Figure 1.4*).²³⁶ It was there, however, that Roman forces under praetor Gaius Vetilius were able to trap them. Perhaps emulating the earlier methods of Lucullus, Vetilius' forces began picking off each of the Lusitanian raiding parties in detail and corralling them so that they could be encircled. Trapped, the Lusitani offered to lay down their arms and swear loyalty to Rome in exchange for land. This deal was nearly struck when a Lusitanian chieftain reminded his fellows of Rome's past treachery and promised he would deliver the trapped army from defeat. Swayed by his conviction, the Lusitani hailed him as their leader.²³⁷ This chieftain was Viriathus, and his ascendancy marked the moment that the 'War of Fire' truly began in earnest.

Judging by the descriptions of Diodorus and Dio, Viriathus was about as steeped in the military culture of the Lusitani as it was possible to get, having abandoned his life as a shepherd for one of the roving bandit. However, his attributed virtues gained him a reputation as an excellent leader as well as a great warrior, and he evolved into a figure more akin to "a chieftain, rather than a thief and a robber".²³⁸ He therefore excelled at the kind of irregular fighting that brigandage entailed, skills he did not hesitate to put into practice. Viriathus instructed the Lusitani to form up ready for battle but, at his signal, to scatter in every direction and rendezvous at the city of Tribola to the south. To prevent

<https://baylor-ir.tdl.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/0b74c79c-565c-48aa-947c-770b8352a9c7/content>
[Accessed 10/1/2024], 39-41.

²³⁶ Trevino, *Spanish Armies*, 13.

²³⁷ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 61; S. P. Kershaw, *Barbarians: Rebellion & Resistance to the Roman Empire* (London: Robinson, 2020), 141.

²³⁸ Diodorus, *Library of History*, 33.1; Cassius Dio, *Roman History*. Translated from Greek by E. Cary (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914-1927), 22.73.

the Romans simply pursuing these isolated columns, he stayed behind with 1,000 cavalry and carried out a diversionary *concursare* operation, staging hit-and-run attacks to drag the legions across the countryside while his forces escaped. With superior knowledge of the roads and terrain, as well as better horses and a lighter operational footprint, his more mobile rearguard was able to outmanoeuvre the legions and link up with his forces at Tribola. Not only did this save the army, it ensured their loyalty to him in the future, giving the Lusitani hope and beginning his transformation into the lynchpin of the Lusitanian resistance. Moreover, word of his feat prompted other tribes to send men to join his host.²³⁹

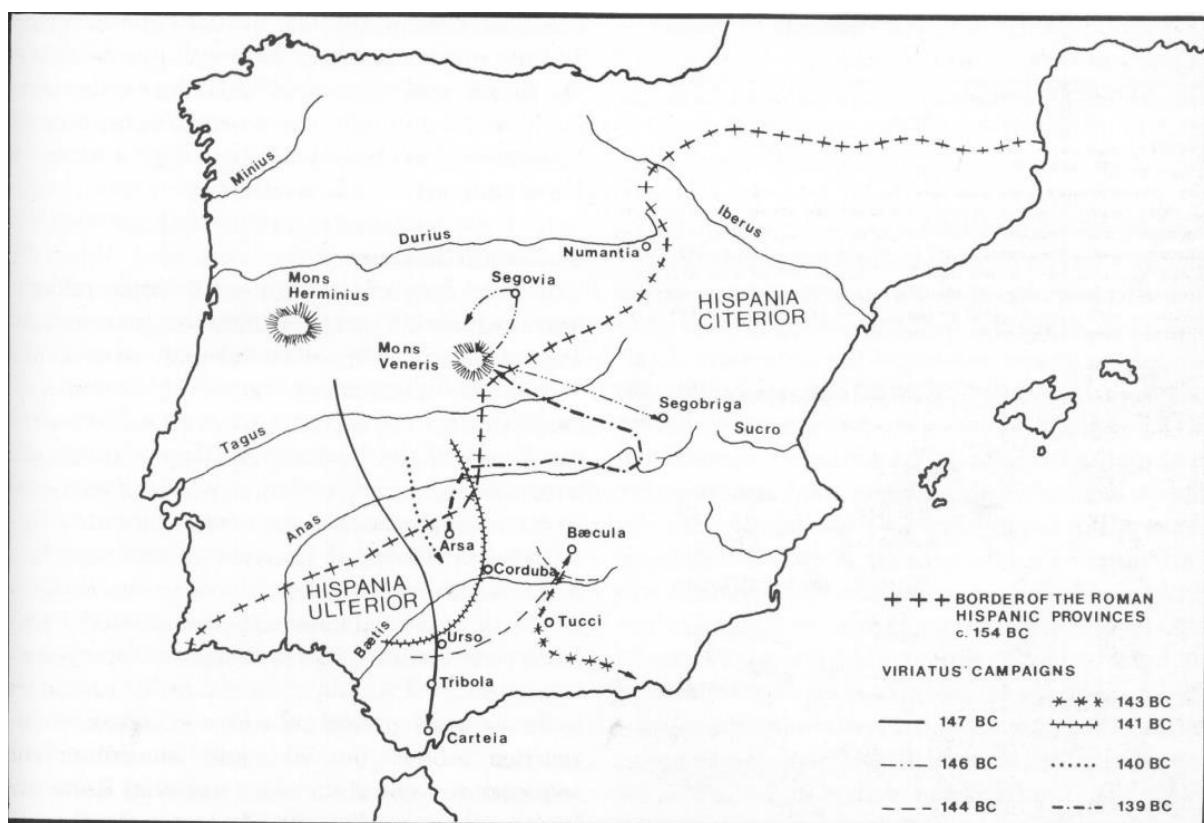


Figure 1.4: Map of the campaigns of Viriathus²⁴⁰

Vetilius marched after them, but fell victim to more of Viriathus' *ruses de guerre* in the mountain passes of the Barbesula River valley. Believing they were pushing the skirmishing Lusitani back, flank attacks by concealed ambushers devastated the legions. Appian reports that as many as

²³⁹ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 62.

²⁴⁰ Trevino, *Spanish Armies*, 13.

4,000 Romans were killed or captured, with Vetilius himself among the dead. This would not be the last time that the Romans fell for *conkursare*, suggesting not only a failure to adapt but also poor tactical and strategic intelligence-gathering. One expects that, even with the Lusitanians' concealment skills, a force large enough to inflict such significant casualties would have been detected by concerted scouting efforts. Given that a route to Tribola had been chosen that offered the perfect terrain for the enemy to engage in their preferred method of attack, the lack of attention paid to scouting seems a monumental oversight. The Roman survivors fell back to the southernmost city of Carteia in a march that was reportedly particularly difficult and left them very demoralised, suggesting that they were harried further by Lusitanian pursuers. Perhaps hoping to relieve pressure on Carteia, Rome sought aid from the Celtiberian Belli and Titti. Given the importance of maintaining the appearance of strength and authority, being willing to cede the provision of security in Hispania Ulterior to these tribes is indicative of Roman desperation. This allied column was nonetheless also destroyed by Viriathus, who slew the collaborators to set an example of his own.²⁴¹

Ongoing wars in Greece and North Africa meant that reinforcements from Italy would not be immediately forthcoming, leaving the beleaguered legions little option but to shut themselves up in Carteia. Viriathus' forces thus ran rampant, plundering the province and infesting its road network to disrupt Roman lines of supply, communication, and trade.²⁴² By the time the new praetor, Gaius Plautius, and his army arrived in 146 BC, the Lusitani had moved on from Hispania Ulterior and were ravaging Carpetanian lands in Hispania Citerior. Plautius marched his 11,000-strong army northwards to disrupt this, but the hit-and-run posture of Viriathus' army proved too much for his unwieldy force to pin down. Hoping to catch the Lusitani with a more manoeuvrable force, Plautius detached a 4,000-strong column from his army to pursue Viriathus. However, this force was also lured on and smashed in a surprise attack that caused heavy casualties. Plautius subsequently returned to chasing Viriathus

²⁴¹ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 63.

²⁴² Kershaw, *Barbarians*, 142; Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 5.4.1.

with his whole army, following him across the Tagus towards Lusitania. Avoiding the legions, Viriathus positioned his forces on the tree-covered slopes of Mount Veneris (see *Figure 1.4*).²⁴³ When Plautius arrived, he immediately launched an impetuous attack. This was imprudent for two reasons. Firstly, he had allowed his enemy to dictate where the battle would be fought. Secondly, Viriathus had chosen the ground not just for its defensible elevated position but because the terrain favoured the skills and tactics of the Lusitani. As a result, the Roman attack was a disaster. Plautius' army suffered massive losses and retreated to winter quarters halfway through the campaign season.²⁴⁴ The praetor's failure was such that he was exiled by the Senate upon his return to Rome.²⁴⁵

Operating out of Mount Veneris, Viriathus continued his predations of Roman allies in the region. Trevino suggests that he also travelled to the lands of other tribes around this time to try and foster alliances with the Celtiberians.²⁴⁶ Given the impending revolt of several tribes of the Celtiberi, an occurrence which Appian gives Viriathus credit for, this is indeed a possibility.²⁴⁷ Some communities remained loyal to Rome though (or at the very least opposed to Viriathus). Frontinus describes the ruses the Lusitani used to defeat the Segobrigenses, as well as the defiance of the Segovienses.²⁴⁸ Silva asserts that, in addition to punishing collaboration, these were intended to display Viriathus' strength and thus win him further support.²⁴⁹ With Roman 'protection' being made a mockery of, Hispania Citerior's praetor marched out to drive off Viriathus. However, he made the mistake of following the Lusitani into the mountains, and his army was picked apart by hit-and-run attacks on his column and baggage. This major loss of a "large and well-equipped army" was exacerbated by the political implications. On top of failing yet once more to protect Roman allies, the subsequent flaunting of

²⁴³ Kershaw, *Barbarians*, 142-143; Trevino, *Spanish Armies*, 14.

²⁴⁴ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 64.

²⁴⁵ Diodorus, *Library of History*, 33.2.

²⁴⁶ Trevino, *Spanish Armies*, 14.

²⁴⁷ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 66.

²⁴⁸ S. J. Frontinus, *Stratagems*. Translated from Latin by C. E. Bennett (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), 3.10.6, 3.11.4, 4.5.22.

²⁴⁹ Silva, *Viriathus and the Lusitanian Resistance to Rome*, 146.

captured legionary devices again publicised the potential weakness of the legions: the cornerstone of Rome's authority.²⁵⁰

Rome Awakens to the Threat

Victory against Carthage and the Greeks in 146 BC meant that the Romans could finally focus on restoring order in Hispania in 145 BC. By this point, the Lusitani had had the run of the countryside for the last three years. The consul Quintus Fabius Maximus Aemilianus (brother of the famous Scipio Aemilianus) was sent to Hispania Ulterior and set up in the city of Ursone with a force of 15,000 infantry and 2,000 cavalry.²⁵¹ Though the size of Maximus' force suggests an escalation, most of his men were raw recruits. The early stages of his command saw his army fall victim to the same Lusitanian tactics as his predecessors: hit-and-run attacks on patrols and foraging parties, followed by a vicious repulsion of relief columns. These constant attacks and losses sapped the confidence as well as the strength of Maximus' army. Recognising his tenuous situation, Maximus refused to be drawn into battle by Viriathus' continuous attacks and instead focused on keeping the settlements in his immediate area of operations secure, drilling his men relentlessly all the while.²⁵² This long-term approach was enabled by the attributes of the legions. As Kershaw points out, though Viriathus possessed the strategic advantages of local knowledge and mobility, keeping his warriors in the field was a challenge due to their non-professional nature and issues of supply. On the other hand, while the legions struggled to fight the Lusitani in the manner they would like, their well-organised and logistically-sophisticated military system meant that time was (relatively speaking) on their side.²⁵³

Maximus was not wholly passive though, and gradually began to conduct small-scale operations of his own. In addition to sending out skirmishing parties to harass the Lusitani, he also began practicing greater proactive force protection by placing pickets ahead of his foragers and leading

²⁵⁰ Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 5.4.1-5.4.2.

²⁵¹ Silva, *Viriathus and the Lusitanian Resistance to Rome*, 150-151.

²⁵² Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 65.

²⁵³ Kershaw, *Barbarians*, 144-145.

a flying column of cavalry that could quickly react to any attacks in the region. Consequently, he avoided making the same costly mistakes as his predecessors that in part fuelled Viriathus' war, and by 144 BC his army was ready to go on the offensive. It bears mentioning that no disastrous ambushes are reported, suggesting that this did not preclude the abandonment of his cautious, disciplined approach to the campaign. Though Appian alludes to considerable Roman losses, the legions reportedly broke the back of Lusitanian strength in the south, sacking two cities which Viriathus had used as bases and forcing him to withdraw.²⁵⁴ The Romans then turned the tables on the Lusitani by harassing them as they retreated northwards to Baecula. However, Maximus failed to decisively defeat or capture Viriathus, and the end of the campaign season forced the consul to withdraw to winter quarters in Cordoba to see out his term.²⁵⁵ While winter campaigning would obviously have represented a significant challenge, this halt just as the Romans were gaining momentum merely allowed Viriathus to regroup and regain his strength.

²⁵⁴ M. T. Cicero, *De Officiis*. Translated from Latin by W. Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913), 2.40.

²⁵⁵ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 65; Trevino, *Spanish Armies*, 15.

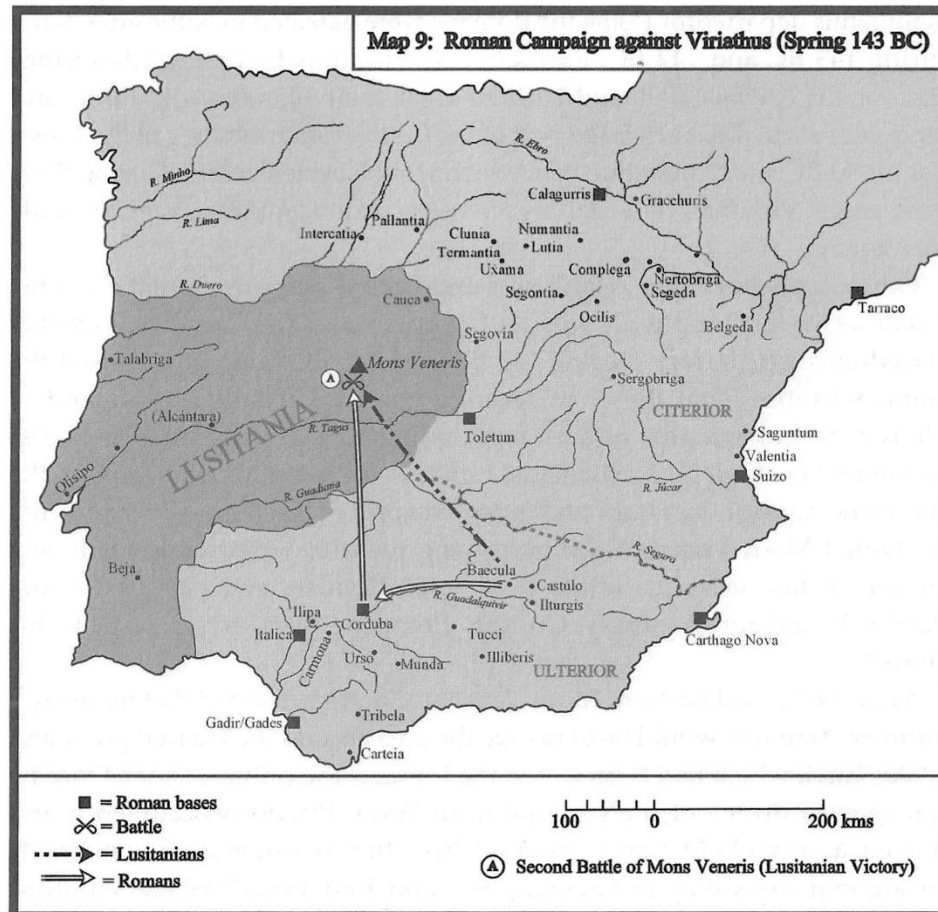


Figure 1.5: Roman campaign against Viriathus (Spring 143 BC)²⁵⁶

It was during this lull that the seeds of rebellion Appian credits Viriathus with laying bore fruit, with the Arevaci, Belli, and Titti of the Celtiberian confederation revolting in Hispania Citerior. What would later become known as the Numantine War would again divert considerable Roman attention from Viriathus, ensuring that Citerior's praetor was indisposed and could not support his southern counterpart as had happened before.²⁵⁷ The inexperience of Hispania Ulterior's praetor for 143 BC, Quintus Pompeius Aulus, worsened the situation. When he renewed the Roman offensive against Viriathus, he fell into the same old traps, being drawn deeper and deeper into rough and unfriendly territory by a 'withdrawing' Viriathus (see Figure 1.5). Like Plautius in 146 BC, he heedlessly crossed the Tagus and led his army right to Viriathus' mountain stronghold at Mount Veneris, whereupon the

²⁵⁶ Silva, *Viriathus and the Lusitanian Resistance to Rome*, 155.

²⁵⁷ *ibid.*; Kershaw, *Barbarians*, 145.

Lusitani turned and drove the praetor off with heavy casualties. Having lost both a large portion of his army and his confidence, Quintus kept his army in winter quarters at Corduba for the rest of the year. The allied Hispanic forces to whom the praetor left the active defence of the province fared no better. Viriathus soon reversed the gains made by Maximus, capturing the city of Itucci and using it as a base from which to devastate the lands of the Bastetani (see Figure 1.6).²⁵⁸

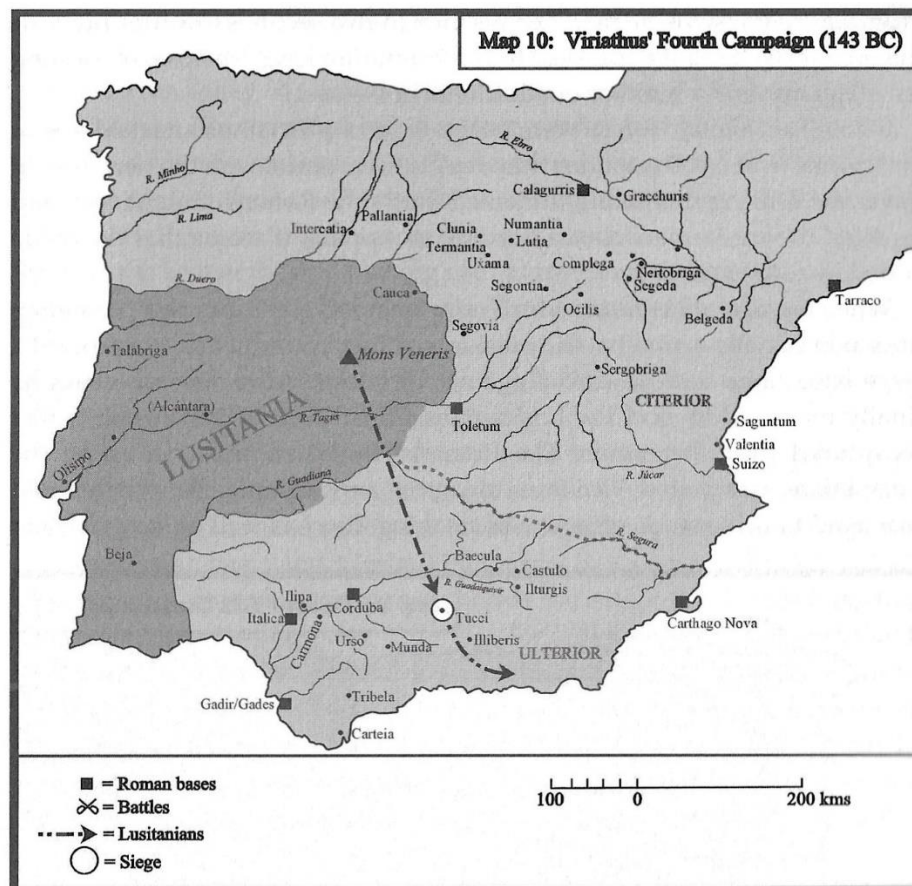


Figure 1.6: Viriathus' fourth campaign (143 BC)²⁵⁹

By the end of 143 BC, Silva reports that Viriathus had built “a small ‘empire’” in which he could operate freely that stretched from the Peninsula’s west coast across the *Meseta Central* and most of Baeturia (see Figure 1.1 & Figure 1.2).²⁶⁰ The new year saw command in Hispania Ulterior pass to Quintus Fabius Maximus Servilianus, a relative by adoption of the earlier Maximus. As a consul,

²⁵⁸ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 66; Kershaw, *Barbarians*, 145-146.

²⁵⁹ Silva, *Viriathus and the Lusitanian Resistance to Rome*, 157.

²⁶⁰ *ibid.*, 156.

Servilianus brought with him two full legions, some *socii*, and even requested allied reinforcements from Numidia. Numbering nearly 20,000 men (not including the requested Numidians), Servilianus' reinforcements represented a major commitment of manpower to the theatre. This large deployment was replicated in similarly beset Hispania Citerior, displaying a recognition that overwhelming force was needed to decisively end Hispanic resistance.

Servilianus led his forces westwards from their likely landing point at Rome's eastern stronghold of Carthago Nova, with the intended objective being to seize the initiative and eject Lusitanian forces from Itucci. On the march, he divided his army into separate columns so that they were both lighter and could spread out to cover more ground.²⁶¹ However, Viriathus sought to prevent Servilianus gaining the initiative by countering this thrust.²⁶² Using his local knowledge and network of informants, Viriathus was able to intercept at least one of these columns with a force of 6,000 near Baecula. Unfortunately for Viriathus, he failed to check its advance due to the size of the force and his apparent inability to draw these disciplined troops into an ambush. Servilianus' columns subsequently rendezvoused near Itucci and, joined by horsemen and elephants from Numidia, were able to eject Viriathus from the city. Possibly caught up in their success, the legions temporarily abandoned their caution while pursuing the Lusitani and fell victim to an ambush near the Guadiana River. The army was subsequently forced to retreat back to Itucci, harassed constantly by Lusitanian skirmishers and cavalry.²⁶³

Despite this setback, the size of Servilianus' army enabled him to weather his losses without becoming combat ineffective and keep the pressure on the Lusitani. Owing to the aforementioned issues of gradual attrition and his degenerating supply picture, Viriathus was forced to withdraw his remaining forces from Baeturia and return to Lusitania to reconsolidate his strength.²⁶⁴ Having

²⁶¹ *ibid.*, 158.

²⁶² A. Beaufre, *An Introduction to Strategy: With Particular Reference to the Problems of Defence, Politics, Economics, and Diplomacy in the Nuclear Age*. Translated from French by R. H. Barry (London: Faber & Faber, 1965), 22.

²⁶³ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 67.

²⁶⁴ Kershaw, *Barbarians*, 144-145.

experienced the consequences of overzealously chasing Viriathus, Servilianus shifted from an enemy-centric approach that focused on decisively defeating Viriathus to a more population-centric one. Instead of chasing the main Lusitanian host into their heartland (where they would hold several advantages over his force), he elected to stay in his province and properly secure it. Those settlements and communities that had supported Viriathus and his anti-Roman cause were targeted, denying the Lusitani potential sanctuaries and sources of supplies or manpower. Though occasionally harassed by Lusitanian guerrillas, the legions retook several key population centres across the south that had formerly collaborated with Viriathus, ejecting their Lusitanian garrisons and plundering the territory in retaliation.²⁶⁵ While Appian says many settlements were spared, brutal examples were made. Captured guerrillas and Roman subjects who had aided Viriathus had their hands cut off, hundreds of local leaders and chiefs were executed, and several thousand were sold into slavery.²⁶⁶ Valerius Maximus reports Servilianus' population-centric campaign was deliberately vicious so as to instil a fear of revolt among the populace.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 68.

²⁶⁶ Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 5.4.12.; Silva, *Viriathus and the Lusitanian Resistance to Rome*, 159.

²⁶⁷ Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Deeds and Sayings*. Translated from Latin by D. R. S. Bailey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 2.7.11.

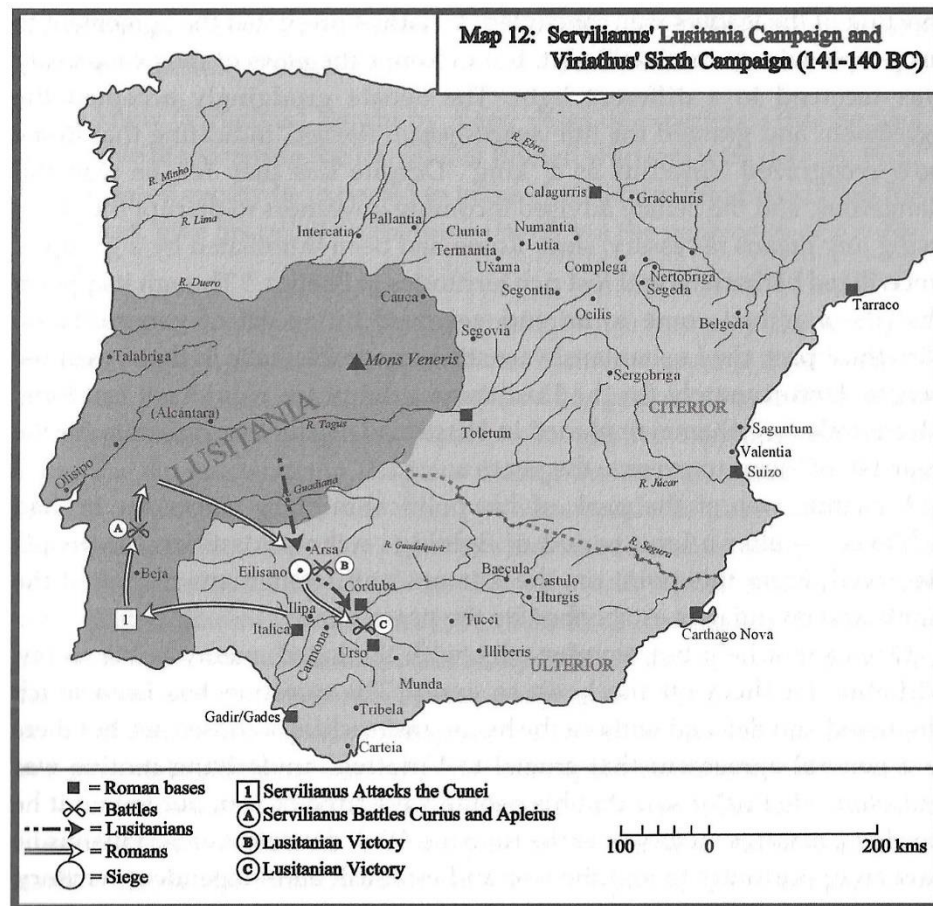


Figure 1.7: Servilianus' Lusitania campaign and Viriathus' sixth campaign (141-140 BC)²⁶⁸

With his now-shortened lines of communication in the south less at risk from guerrillas, Servilianus could act more aggressively. After further stripping Viriathus of support by re-subjugating the Cunei (see Figure 1.7), Servilianus (minus garrisons left behind to ensure the continued loyalty of the tribes) invaded Lusitania proper in 140 BC in an attempt to force Viriathus to fight on Roman terms.²⁶⁹ Viriathus studiously avoided the legions, reinforcing the severity of his diminished strength and supporting Silva's hypothesis that his attempts to refill his depleted ranks had not gone well.²⁷⁰ While one could credit Servilianus' reprisals with engendering an unwillingness to oppose Rome, the Iberian Peninsula was not lacking anti-Roman sentiment. The Celtiberi still fiercely resisted the legions

²⁶⁸ Silva, *Viriathus and the Lusitanian Resistance to Rome*, 161.

²⁶⁹ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 68.

²⁷⁰ Silva, *Viriathus and the Lusitanian Resistance to Rome*, 160.

in the north, and Servilianus had encountered other independent warbands in his southern operations.²⁷¹ It was not that the natives lacked a desire to fight the Romans, there was simply declining interest in Viriathus' movement, displaying again the apparent truth behind Strabo's prejudicial reflections on a lack of Hispanic unity. As we know, 'the enemy gets a vote' in strategy, providing friction or countering one's plans entirely. Here one sees the flipside of this dynamic, with Viriathus' *inability* to create a broad, Pan-Hispanic, anti-Roman coalition providing the Romans with the breathing space to let their more developed military institutions and 'staying power' have strategic effect.

Failing to chase down Viriathus but unwilling to be dragged deeper into Lusitania like his unfortunate predecessors, Servilianus withdrew south and laid siege to the town of Erisana (see *Figure 1.7*). Whether this was simply Servilianus reverting to his previous strategy or a deliberate attempt to draw Viriathus out by attacking one of his few remaining sanctuaries in the region is unclear, but Viriathus did indeed rush to the settlement's defence.²⁷² Having somehow infiltrated the city with a small force, Viriathus launched a surprise attack on the legionary detachments working on the trenches the next morning.²⁷³ Servilianus attempted to counterattack but was driven off, presumably when the larger Lusitanian reserve arrived to support Viriathus' sally. Hounded in their disorderly retreat by Viriathus' cavalry and fast-moving infantry, the legions were driven into some cliffs and surrounded.²⁷⁴

In exchange for sparing the trapped Romans, Viriathus demanded the complete withdrawal of Roman forces from Lusitanian territory (both traditional and those parts of northwest Baetica still occupied). Interestingly, he also demanded that the independent Lusitani be declared *amici populi*

²⁷¹ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 68, 76-78.

²⁷² Silva, *Viriathus and the Lusitanian Resistance to Rome*, 160.

²⁷³ Trevino, *Spanish Armies*, 16.

²⁷⁴ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 69.

Romani.²⁷⁵ Servilianus had little choice but to accept, seemingly bringing the Viriathic War to an end.²⁷⁶

Silva summarises the debate over why the anti-Roman Viriathus would propose such lenient terms nicely, attributing it to a recognition that he could no longer sustain the war due to his losses, failing support on the Peninsula, and growing war-weariness amongst his followers.²⁷⁷ While these cannot be wholly attributed to a single cause, Servilianus' recent strategy and the dogged momentum of the Roman military machine over the preceding years of fighting were undoubtedly key factors.

The Death of Viriathus and the End of the War

Despite initially ratifying the treaty, its implications troubled the Senate greatly. Firstly, it left Viriathus' new Lusitanian 'nation' in charge of a good deal of lucrative territory.²⁷⁸ Worse still, it undermined Rome's martial authority on the Iberian Peninsula and gave the Hispanic tribes an example of successful resistance to point to. This could encourage others to try their luck. Having already been forced to shamefully agree to peace 'on equal terms' with barbarians, this was more than they were willing to accept, and their subsequent actions suggest that they resolved to sabotage the peace or had never intended to follow it in the first place.²⁷⁹

Servilianus was replaced at the end of 140 BC by his brother Quintus Servilius Caepio, who immediately began lobbying the Senate to dismiss the treaty. Caepio is described by Cassius Dio as a particularly harsh and unscrupulous individual, but it is likely that his natural hawkishness was magnified by a desire to avenge the dishonour done to his family.²⁸⁰ Either by prearrangement or through the weight of Caepio's argument, the Senate authorised provocations (likely taking the form of increasingly open low-intensity operations) to goad the Lusitani into breaking the agreement.²⁸¹ Though Appian implies that Viriathus initially resisted these provocations (possibly in the vain hope

²⁷⁵ Trevino, *Spanish Armies*, 16.

²⁷⁶ Livy, *Periochae*, 54; Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 69.

²⁷⁷ Silva, *Viriathus and the Lusitanian Resistance to Rome*, 161-165.

²⁷⁸ *ibid.*, 162-163.

²⁷⁹ Livy, *Periochae*, 54.

²⁸⁰ Dio, *Roman History*, 22.78.

²⁸¹ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 70; Trevino, *Spanish Armies*, 16.

that the Senate would rein Caepio in), fighting broke out and the Romans officially declared war.²⁸² Similar events were taking place in Hispania Citerior, where Marcus Popillius Laenas' fresh operations against the Lusones reignited the Numantine War. The Romans had seized the initiative by resuming hostilities of their own accord and clearly against the wishes of the tribes. Caepio subsequently made rapid advances as he marched north from Corduba, catching Viriathus off-balance and ejecting the Lusitanians from Baeturia in short order.²⁸³

Viriathus withdrew northeast into Carpetania, dissuading pursuit with a scorched-earth policy and avoiding battle with his usual *ruses de guerre*. Instead of following, Caepio marched a large force into Lusitania itself via the lands of Viriathus' allied Vettones, razing the farmlands and *castros* they came across.²⁸⁴ As he moved north, he laid down a large military road between the headwaters of the Guadiana and Tagus rivers, placing outposts along its length. He also established a large camp in the vicinity of modern Cáceres (see *Figure 1.8*) called *Castra Servilia*, which served as an important regional headquarters.²⁸⁵ As well as giving the legions a point of ingress for future projection into Lusitania from the south, the outposts within Lusitania served as both a defensive means of keeping an eye on the area and a latent threat to the locals to ensure compliance.²⁸⁶ Having cowed the Vettones with his punitive campaign, Caepio undertook an expedition further north to do the same to the Callaeci.²⁸⁷ Silva and Keay rightly identify this as a deliberate strategy to both isolate Viriathus from what remained of his support network and trap him between new Roman zones of control in Lusitania and Hispania Citerior.²⁸⁸

This was accompanied by a consolidation of the major ports and their surrounding territories on the west coast, establishing *Castra Caepiana* near the Celtici *oppidum* of Cempsibriga and the port

²⁸² Silva, *Viriathus and the Lusitanian Resistance to Rome*, 167.

²⁸³ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 70, 79.

²⁸⁴ Landess, *From Intervention, To Insurgency, To Peace*, 43; Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 70.

²⁸⁵ Keay, *Roman Spain*, 34.

²⁸⁶ Silva, *Viriathus and the Lusitanian Resistance to Rome*, 168.

²⁸⁷ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 70.

²⁸⁸ Silva, *Viriathus and the Lusitanian Resistance to Rome*, 170; Keay, *Roman Spain*, 35.

of *Turris Caepionis* near the city of Gadir (see Figure 1.8).²⁸⁹ Like *Castra Servilia*, *Caepiana* could be used to stage operations as well as keeping the locals compliant. Furthermore, the garrisoned road linking the two served as a protective cordon against any future incursions into Roman Baeturia. More importantly, Caepio could now bring reinforcements and supplies directly into the west. This negated the need for these to travel across the interior from Carthago Nova, easing protracted operations considerably.²⁹⁰

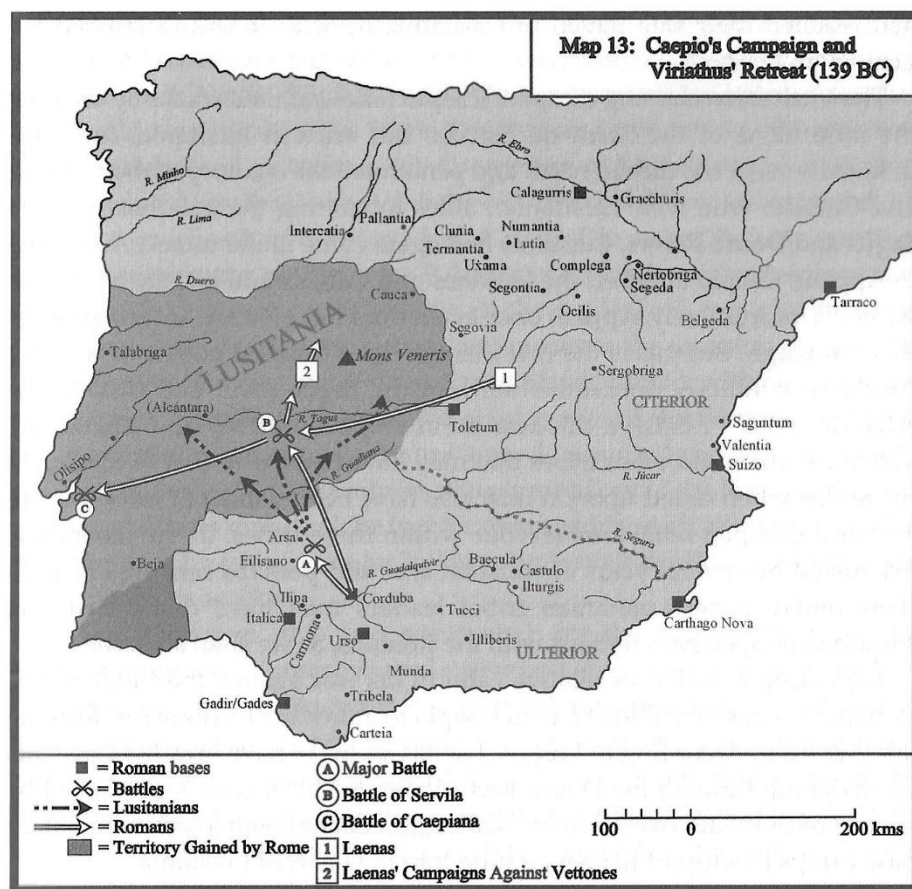


Figure 1.8: Caepio's campaign and Viriathus' retreat (139 BC)²⁹¹

Cut off from both Lusitanian reinforcements and allied support, and with Caepio wreaking havoc deep within Lusitania, Viriathus was in dire straits. The arrival of Laenas' army from Hispania

²⁸⁹ *ibid.*, 34.

²⁹⁰ Silva, *Viriathus and the Lusitanian Resistance to Rome*, 168-169.

²⁹¹ *ibid.*, 169.

Citerior as part of a planned pincer with Caepio only added to this, and Diodorus suggests that his declining fortunes were beginning to erode his authority amongst his remaining followers.²⁹² His position tenuous and people war-weary, Viriathus approached Laenas to negotiate.²⁹³ Although Laenas' initial demand of the delivery of rebel leaders for punishment was met, Viriathus and his followers would not agree to disarm.²⁹⁴ After these talks fell through, Viriathus withdrew to Mount Veneris, sending envoys to Caepio in the hopes of receiving better terms.²⁹⁵ This deputation consisted of three trusted comrades who Diodorus claims hailed from the Turdetanian city of Ursone: Audax, Ditalcus, and Minurus.²⁹⁶ Viriathus' significance to anti-Roman resistance made him an extremely valuable target. However, the Lusitani occupied a strong defensive position. Caepio therefore opted for a subtler approach, reportedly convincing the deputies to assassinate Viriathus with promises of wealth and security (though Silva suggests they were likely coerced).²⁹⁷ Either way, it is telling that this betrayal should come from Viriathus' non-Lusitanian followers, again pointing to Hispanic division. The three conspirators returned to Veneris and killed Viriathus as he slept, fleeing before anyone realised. Interestingly, they were allegedly denied their reward by the Romans, who cynically looked down on the betrayal they themselves had orchestrated.²⁹⁸

Though Viriathus' successor, Tautalus, attempted a retaliatory counteroffensive against the Roman-controlled eastern coast (proving that some desire to fight Rome remained), Viriathus' death heralded the end of coordinated Lusitanian resistance.²⁹⁹ Tautalus proved less capable a general than Viriathus, resulting in the swift blunting of his offensive by Caepio. Furthermore, he lacked the charisma that had enabled Viriathus to keep his forces fighting for years on end even in defeat, and war exhaustion forced him to surrender. After accepting Tautalus' *deditio*, Caepio distributed sufficient

²⁹² Diodorus, *Library of History*, 33.21; Trevino, *Spanish Armies*, 16.

²⁹³ Diodorus, *Library of History*, 33.19

²⁹⁴ Dio, *Roman History*, 22.75.

²⁹⁵ Silva, *Viriathus and the Lusitanian Resistance to Rome*, 171.

²⁹⁶ Diodorus, *Library of History*, 33.21.

²⁹⁷ Silva, *Viriathus and the Lusitanian Resistance to Rome*, 175.

²⁹⁸ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 74; Diodorus, *Library of History*, 33.21; Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 5.14.

²⁹⁹ Landess, *From Intervention, To Insurgency, To Peace*, 43; Keay, *Roman Spain*, 35.

fertile lands to the disarmed Lusitanians that they would no longer need to engage in brigandage.³⁰⁰ Some were resettled locally, while others were deported to other parts of Hispania to prevent another united Lusitanian struggle.³⁰¹ With these twin acts of treachery and conciliation, the Lusitanian War was finally brought to an end. Lusitania was established as a kind of buffer state between Roman territory south of the Guadiana River and the hostile northern tribes beyond the Duero (see *Figure 1.2* & *Figure 1.3*).³⁰² A brutal punitive campaign by Caepio's successor, Decimus Junius Brutus, against the last few remaining holdouts in 138 BC saw further land accessions and deportations.³⁰³

Despite this, the Lusitani continued to be a source of trouble in Hispania. Numerous revolts took place over the following century, including one in 61 BC that was put down by none other than Julius Caesar (then governor of Hispania Ulterior). Prior to this, they had also elevated the proscribed *populares* general Quintus Sertorius to lead a revolt against Sulla's Roman government. Echoing the Viriathic War, Sertorius used guerrilla warfare to best the generals sent against him from Rome before his assassination by a disgruntled (and less capable) Roman subordinate.³⁰⁴ It was not until the completion of the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula and the provincial reforms under Augustus that things began to quiet down.

By the time of the Augustan Settlement, the gradual process of Romanisation (expedited by significant colonisation) had seen first the metropolitan elites and then eventually the Hispanic lower classes adopt Roman culture. However, these institutions did not mesh well with Lusitanian decentralisation, and the chiefs simply used their new wealth and power to wage inter-tribal wars. The settlement reorganised Hispania's two provinces into three, one of which was *Provincia Lusitania*, establishing 'Lusitanian' borders to prevent further conflict. This was soon followed by the forcible resettlement of Lusitani from their hill-top settlements into proper Roman towns situated in lowlands.

³⁰⁰ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 75.

³⁰¹ Trevino, *Spanish Armies*, 16.

³⁰² Keay, *Roman Spain*, 35.

³⁰³ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 71-73.

³⁰⁴ Silva, *Viriathus and the Lusitanian Resistance to Rome*, 179-194.

In addition to allowing the Roman state to exert greater control over the Lusitani, this forced urbanisation accelerated the Romanisation of both contemporaries and future 'Luso-Roman' generations. The Iberian Peninsula appears to have been almost completely Romanised by the first century AD, with the Lusitani gaining citizenship in 73 AD, and no further native unrest is recorded.³⁰⁵ So complete was Hispania's pacification and assimilation that it even provided Rome with two of the so-called 'Five Good Emperors': Trajan and Hadrian.³⁰⁶ It might have taken around 200 years, but Rome had finally staunched its Hispanic ulcer.

³⁰⁵ Silva, *Viriathus and the Lusitanian Resistance to Rome*, 195-223.

³⁰⁶ M. Beard, *SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome* (London: Profile Books, 2016), 401.

Analysis

The Lusitanian War was just one of the conflicts in which Rome became embroiled during its long, grinding conquest of the Iberian Peninsula. Nevertheless, it stands out as one of the most impactful during this middle Republican period that also saw warfare against the great states of the eastern Mediterranean and near constant campaigning in Northern Italy. While the Roman state was never directly threatened, the fighting in Hispania was so fierce that the famously dutiful Romans shrank from volunteering to military tribuneship and avoided the levy for fear of being sent there. Polybius is quick to distinguish the fighting on the Iberian Peninsula from what he clearly considers to be the norm in warfare, meaning wars decided by one or two large battles that are themselves won by decisive charges (like in Asia or Greece). Warfare on the Iberian Peninsula, however, was characterised by a constant stream of engagements that were ended more often by the onset of night than one side's victory.³⁰⁷ That Polybius, a long-time hostage-cum-advisor of Scipio Aemilianus who likely accompanied him during the general's own campaigns in Hispania, recognised the distinction suggests that his Roman contemporaries might have done too. Our investigation of Roman conduct shows us that this understanding was hard-learned and far from universal, but was indeed present. For our analysis though, we must ascertain the extent to which the Lusitanian War fits our small war criteria.

While the panoply of a Roman legionary of this period and a Hispanic warrior were outwardly similar,³⁰⁸ the asymmetry present within the Lusitanian War is highly pronounced. Although Roman legionaries were still citizen levies,³⁰⁹ the wars of the third century BC and their subsequent impacts prompted further evolutions. Population decline and the collapse of the propertied middle class saw the property requirements for the levy increasingly lowered to meet demand. In times of emergency these might also be ignored entirely.³¹⁰ As these problems developed, the citizen conscripts also

³⁰⁷ Polybius, *Histories*, 35.1, 35.4

³⁰⁸ Quesada Sanz, 'Not So Different', 251.

³⁰⁹ Goldsworthy, *Roman Warfare*, 26-31.

³¹⁰ A. Santosuosso, *Storming the Heavens: Soldiers, Emperors, and Civilians in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Routledge, 2018), 10-11.

became increasingly supplemented by volunteers, even men from the *proletarii*.³¹¹ These poorer volunteers sought to make the army their career due to the promise of regular income and loot, likely making them more motivated soldiers. Furthermore, their lack of property made them more suitable than conscripts for the long-term overseas deployments increasingly required of the legions. This extended service afforded them time to develop their capabilities and better adapt to local tactical and operational conditions. This development marks the beginning of the professionalisation of the legions.

Although some more urbanised Iberian and Celtiberian tribes utilised timocratic civil militias if more manpower than their 'warrior class' could provide was required, the military institutions of the Lusitani retained a more traditional character.³¹² Like most legionaries, Lusitanian warriors engaged in other economic activity during peacetime. However, many of those who came to fight in the conflict will likely have come from the roving bands of brigands described by Diodorus.³¹³ Combined with their art of war and Roman pretensions of authority in the region, this contributed to their being labelled 'bandits' by the latter, implicitly framing them as unlawful combatants.³¹⁴ While the legions were organised into formal sub-units and different classes of infantry,³¹⁵ there is no evidence to suggest Lusitanian forces had any real organisation beyond basic tribal affiliation or bands following a particular leader. This relative lack of organisation is somewhat misleading, however. Though Lusitanian warriors were not necessarily as well-drilled as legionaries needed to be to carry out the manoeuvres required by the manipular system, they were not wholly undisciplined. In fact, *concurrere*'s rolling sequence of attack, feigned retreat, and regroup required timely responses to orders from warriors and significant planning and command ability from Lusitanian leaders to work properly.³¹⁶ As Callwell identifies in the

³¹¹ Livy, *The History of Rome*, 42.34.

³¹² Quesada Sanz, 'Iberians as Enemies', 505.

³¹³ Diodorus, *Library of History*, 5.34.

³¹⁴ Strabo, *Geography*, 3.4.5, 3.4.15, 4.4.2; Livy, *Periochae*, 52.

³¹⁵ Santosuosso, *Storming the Heavens*, 18-19.

³¹⁶ Varga, *The Roman Wars in Spain*, 128.

case of the Zulu Impi though, competency should not necessarily be equated with 'regularity', and the Lusitanian warriors are clearly irregular in nature relative to Roman legionaries.³¹⁷

Roman tactical doctrine relied heavily on discipline and teamwork to make tactical manoeuvres without losing formation cohesion. As a result, legionaries had to be well-trained, or the manipule-based *triplex acies* battle formation would fall apart very quickly. This drilling and training began as soon as the troops were levied and continued throughout their service on campaign, producing soldiers with a level of technical competence few other civilisations at the time could match. With their army designed and trained around the requirements of large-unit fighting, Roman doctrine focused on bringing the enemy to such conventional engagements (ideally in open ground).³¹⁸ This was so that their superior discipline, training, and combat 'system' could be properly brought to bear on as much of the enemy as possible. The intent was to thereby smash the enemy's ability to resist Rome's will, an approach that presaged later thought by Clausewitz.³¹⁹

As discussed earlier, conventional fighting like this *was* in fact the norm on the Iberian Peninsula too, and Hispanic auxiliaries were routinely used in 'line' functions to fight conventionally.³²⁰ Though Lusitanian forces could and did engage the Romans in pitched battles, they only really did so intentionally when the tactical picture was overwhelmingly in their favour, such as in mountainous terrain where they had the upper hand (e.g., Mount Veneris).³²¹ Otherwise, they endeavoured to avoid being forced into such engagements where the legions' superior training and discipline would have the most impact. Instead, they preferred to carry out ambushes and *ruses de guerre* against Roman forces that leveraged the disparities in mobility, local knowledge, and terrain familiarity between combatants. Roman scouts, foragers, baggage trains, supply columns, and isolated garrisons were attacked in hit-and-run raids. These aimed to inflict casualties and hamper wider Roman operations

³¹⁷ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 30.

³¹⁸ Goldsworthy, *Roman Warfare*, 34-43.

³¹⁹ Clausewitz, *On War*, 90-91.

³²⁰ Quesada Sanz, 'Iberians as Enemies', 506.

³²¹ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 64, 66.

without exposing the limited forces of the Lusitani to much danger, as well as baiting the legions into further ambushes or overextending themselves.

The initial Lusitanian strategy was largely depredatory in nature, consisting of warbands entering into Roman and allied territory for the purposes of economic enrichment to remedy their relative poverty.³²² The Lusitani were not seeking to contest *ownership* of ground and so did not need to seek battle. Meanwhile, the Romans needed to destroy the warbands pillaging their territory as it eroded not only their provincial economic base but also their authority with the local allies who supported their control and neutral parties who could yet be swayed either way. For the Lusitani, victory in battle simply eased subsequent pillaging. Raiding's prevalence in Lusitanian culture and Hispanic intertribal warfare ensured that it remained central to the Lusitanian war effort. However, as the war transitioned into one of resistance rather than enrichment under Viriathus, it became a way of supporting the campaign rather than the sole reason for it.

Viriathus' strategy had two core pillars: the attrition of Roman forces, and inciting rebellion and defection among other Hispanic tribes. Viriathus' strategy was highly kinetic, though he still endeavoured to avoid the pitched battles the Romans favoured. By engaging the legions using irregular methods, the Lusitani were able to inflict a constant stream of Roman casualties without taking debilitating losses themselves. Whether it was a steady trickle from small-scale raids and ambushes on patrols, or a deluge as larger forces were caught out by *conkursare* and smashed, Roman losses would have both short- and long-term impacts. Particularly heavy defeats would likely render Roman territory largely defenceless for at least the rest of the governor's term, allowing Viriathus to extend his control both at swordpoint and by showing the local tribes that Roman protection was unreliable. Furthermore, it damaged Rome's all-important image as an unassailable military power, and Viriathus clearly believed that victories over the Romans and their allies would convince some to desert and the neutral majority to support his fight. Viriathus also utilised threat and coercion in these efforts, but

³²² *ibid.*, 56-60.

the intent was the same: to deny the Romans the local support that they needed to operate on the Iberian Peninsula.

The cumulative effects of years of steady attrition would not only sap manpower reserves but also demoralise both the legions in-theatre and the Roman citizen body. This aimed to exhaust the Romans to such an extent that they would be forced to either end the conflict or withdraw entirely. This is a common strategy used by guerrilla enemies, requiring them only to stay in the fight and keep inflicting casualties until the enemy is worn out and gives up.³²³ This is another reason for Viriathus' conservative approach, as he had to protect his smaller forces so that his long-term strategy of attrition could play itself out. His willingness to treat with the Romans supports this, showing his strategy was not to 'win' outright but to force the Romans to the table. Polybius relates how mounting casualties in Hispania did begin to effect Roman willingness to wage the war,³²⁴ and Viriathus did (albeit temporarily) succeed in forcing a favourable treaty out of the Romans.³²⁵ However, despite his victories, he failed to gain the support of many other communities or even consolidate control over occupied territory. This precluded Rome's permanent expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula.³²⁶

We must also look at the context of and politics behind the Lusitanian War to ascertain where these fit into Callwell's typology. Roman forces in Hispania had been dealing with Lusitanian raids since around 193 BC, and the first incursions of 155 BC differed very little in character.³²⁷ As such, Roman campaign aims were simply to restore order to Hispania Ulterior by wiping out the warbands ravaging the country. This is a fairly cut-and-dry example of Callwell's second class of small war: campaigns for the suppression of lawlessness and/or insurrection.³²⁸ This aspect of the war as an internal policing action is backed up by the fact that most operations did indeed take place within Roman territory.

³²³ Deriglazova, *Great Powers, Small Wars*, xvii-xviii; D. Jordan et al., *Understanding Modern Warfare*, 305, 312-313, 346.

³²⁴ Polybius, *Histories*, 35.4.

³²⁵ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 69-70.

³²⁶ Varga, *Roman Wars in Spain*, 134.

³²⁷ Silva, *Viriathus and the Lusitanian Resistance to Rome*, 41-42.

³²⁸ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 26.

Further credence is also afforded by how the Romans perceived the Lusitanians and their guerrilla warfare, branding them *latrones* (bandits) engaged in *latrocinium* (banditry/brigandage).³²⁹ This was in contrast to 'legitimate' *hostes* (enemies) against whom the Romans might fight a 'proper' *bellum* (war), complete with formal declarations according to the laws of the *bellum iustum*. Grünewald points out that some sources do occasionally buck this trend, describing Viriathus as a 'commander' leading 'an army' and making references to *Viriathi bello*. However, when taken together with the denunciations of defeated Roman commanders, this can be explained as an attempt to excuse his success specifically by elevating him above the standards of usual Lusitanian *latrones*.³³⁰ Though the Romans came to respect Viriathus as a general, the Lusitanian War remained one of a 'legitimate authority' (i.e., Rome) simply eradicating criminal gangs (albeit ones often thousands strong) who had invaded their territory to loot and pillage. It is this perception of the Lusitani as *latrones* rather than 'legal' enemies that endured.

Nevertheless, Callwell's description of the second class raises two issues: his insistence that they are internal campaigns, and the fact that this therefore precludes them resulting in conquest or annexation.³³¹ Though most of the fighting took place within Hispania Ulterior, significant phases of the conflict occurred outside Rome's provincial borders. The expedition of Marcus Atilius in 152 BC, the depopulation of Lusitania by Galba and Lucullus in 150 BC, the ill-fated marches on Mount Veneris in Vettonia in 146 and 143 BC, and the advances into Lusitania in 140 and 139 BC all point to Rome not policing its own territory but invading that of others. The establishment of Roman footholds throughout Lusitania by Caepio and the subsequent expansion of Roman control therein does appear to support this notion that the Lusitanian War was instead a war of conquest that the Romans simply happened to get the worst of for a while.

³²⁹ T. Grünewald, *Bandits in the Roman Empire: Myth and Reality* (London: Routledge, 2004), 37-41.

³³⁰ *ibid.*, 41-45.

³³¹ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 26.

However, this misses the strategic intent of these expeditions. Annexation would only have left the Romans with enemies in their hinterlands and a large amount of rebellious new territory to try and control on top of everything they were struggling with already. Instead, these expeditions attacked the enemy's base directly, impeding both their ability and will to fight further. Atilius' expedition sought to show the Lusitani that they could not attack Rome without expecting to suffer themselves. That the cessation of hostilities appears to have been all he demanded in their subsequent surrender supports this.³³² When the Lusitani broke the treaty and raided Hispania Ulterior a second time, Galba and Lucullus invaded Lusitania not to annex it but to punish the Lusitanians for their rebelliousness. Depopulation was both part of this punishment but also a way of reducing their available manpower should they revolt again.³³³ Mount Veneris had become a vital safe haven for Viriathus and his forces, and appears to have been serving as a staging area for incursions into Hispania Ulterior.³³⁴ As such, the clearance of Viriathic forces from Mount Veneris (and Vettonia as a whole) sought to eliminate a serious threat to Roman holdings. The same goes for Caepio's invasions of Lusitania, which isolated Viriathus and his forces from their support infrastructure. This then enabled Caepio to neutralise these actors, and by extension the threat Lusitania posed to Roman territory. These campaigns thus relate instead to Callwell's third category of small wars, which includes campaigns to punish an enemy for an injury and those whose objective is to overthrow a dangerous military power or establish order in foreign territory. Furthermore, Callwell notes that these campaigns also often result in annexations or develop into those of conquest,³³⁵ as was eventually the case in the Lusitanian War when the Romans expanded into the region to both establish it as a buffer state and ensure that the Lusitani remained under control.³³⁶

³³² Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 58.

³³³ *ibid.*, 59.

³³⁴ *ibid.*, 64, 66.

³³⁵ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 27-28.

³³⁶ Keay, *Roman Spain*, 35.

To sum up, the Lusitanian War featured an organised and increasingly professionalised army which was designed and trained to fight conventionally facing off against warriors who (though similarly equipped and not incapable of conventional fighting) preferred to operate as guerrillas. The legions had the wealth and power of a burgeoning Mediterranean empire supporting them, a developed logistical system to sustain them, and were a more disciplined and organised fighting force. Nevertheless, the Lusitani were able to inflict many considerable defeats on them through these unconventional methods and keep them on the back foot for around a decade by leveraging their superior knowledge of the geography and mountain fighting. In this way Rome's wars on the Iberian Peninsula during this period bear some resemblance to Clausewitz's depiction of 'people's war'.³³⁷ The colonial policing aspect and expeditionary, threat-toppling nature of the campaigns align well with our understanding of small wars informed by both Clausewitz and the modern consensus. That the Romans themselves recognised this war as *latrocinium*, something distinct from 'conventional' *bellum*, is particularly compelling.³³⁸ As such, the Lusitanian War should be thought of as a small war and the lessons it provides are therefore relevant.

Lessons From the Lusitanian War

The Lusitanian War, much like the others of Rome's gradual conquest of the Iberian Peninsula, was a protracted affair with a number of complete reversals in fortune (often in quick succession). Whether it was an example of a successful campaign on the part of the Romans can be argued either way. According to the sources, the Romans suffered tens of thousands of casualties in the major engagements alone. Although losses reported in sources like these are often inflated, the numbers become more believable when one factors in the casualties doubtless suffered over the 16 years in smaller actions not considered significant enough for annalists to mention. As a result of these Roman defeats, the Lusitani were able to run rampant across Hispania Ulterior for much of the war and even occupied significant portions of the province for long stretches. The Romans even had to accept a truce

³³⁷ Clausewitz, *On War*, 479-481.

³³⁸ Grünewald, *Bandits in the Roman Empire*, 37-41.

(albeit one quickly repudiated the next year) that gave up these occupied territories to Viriathus. Furthermore, though Caepio was indeed waging a successful offensive at the time and had Viriathus seeking terms, there is something to the criticism that Rome's victory over the Lusitani came not from military victory but by political machinations and treachery.

As we are continually reminded by theory, war is a political act. Therefore, the extent to which one's political objectives are achieved is a significant indicator of success. In the case of the Lusitanian War, Roman political objectives are clear: to maintain control of their territories in Hispania so that they can continue to exploit their wealth. As always though, there remained the objective to expand their territory should an opportunity present itself. Despite (extended) periods of poor fortune, the Romans brought an end to Lusitanian raiding, restoring order to Hispania Ulterior and recovering lost territory. Additionally, they established the beginnings of Roman control over Lusitania itself. With these results (exceeding the campaign's initial intentions), one struggles to dismiss the campaign as a failure simply because the path to victory was not easy. Callwell identifies that small wars of the second class and those against guerrillas generally tend to be protracted conflicts that give the regular troops particular trouble. This difficulty is exacerbated further in regions with rough, wooded landscapes that are conducive to these methods.³³⁹

Roman difficulties can thus be thought of as in keeping with this expectation, rather than an indicator of strategic failure. In 'Counterinsurgency's Impossible Trilemma', Zambarnardi writes that states dealing with insurgencies juggle three goals: force protection, distinguishing combatants from non-combatants, and the physical destruction of the enemy. However, he asserts that it is impossible for all three to be achieved simultaneously, and states must sacrifice one pillar of this dynamic depending on the perceived importance each. Already less than discriminatory in their application of

³³⁹ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 26-27, 31-32.

violence, Roman losses might thus be read as an accepted blood price of its own troops paid to ensure that the Lusitani were defeated.³⁴⁰

Although the ultimate attainment of their political objectives indicates that the campaigns were at least somewhat successful, a war does not *need* to be clearly successful or even perfectly run to serve as a source of learning, as the following analysis will show.

Military Intelligence

The efficacy of the application of power can be severely hamstrung if it is not directed properly. This is a problem which can often (outside of simple friction) be a result of intelligence failure to varying degrees. Despite the professionalisation that was beginning to take place within the Roman army, the legions (and the Roman state as a whole for that matter) lacked any organised intelligence infrastructure at this stage in their evolution.³⁴¹ This created a cascading set of issues that shows the importance of effective intelligence systems for the successful prosecution of small wars.

The intelligence-gathering forces of the legions around the time of the Lusitanian War were men referred to as *exploratores* and *speculatores*, units of cavalry or infantry (or some mixed combination of the two) who operated ahead of the main force to varying extents. The exact distinction between the two is vague, but appears to have been relative to the character of their operations, with the latter operating in a more covert manner than the more numerous former. For example, units of *exploratores* might scout ahead of even the *procursatores* of the advance guard to locate the enemy or reconnoitre the terrain to help a commander prepare for battle, while a small team of *speculatores* might range deep into enemy territory (potentially disguised as civilians or deserters) to gather intelligence that might influence the conduct of a whole campaign.³⁴² However,

³⁴⁰ L. Zambarnardi, 'Counterinsurgency's Impossible Trilemma', *The Washington Quarterly*, 33, 3 (2010), 21-34.

³⁴¹ Varga, *The Roman Wars in Spain*, 119.

³⁴² F. Russell, 'Finding the Enemy: Military Intelligence', in B. Campbell & L. A. Tritle (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Warfare in the Classical World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 474-492: 474-487; S. Elliott, *Roman Special Forces: Speculatores, Exploratores, Protectores and Areani in the Service of Rome* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2023), 57-64, 69.

these were not (yet) fixed units of specialists, but rather ad hoc groupings of soldiers seconded from other formations organised to carry out specific missions.³⁴³ The lack of formal units dedicated to the collection of military intelligence meant that the extent to which intelligence-gathering missions were done was wholly dependent on the Roman commander.

The political nature of military command during the Roman Republic meant that these men often had little or no military experience, and so may not know to think of considerations like intelligence. Indeed, Russell points out that commanders who displayed sufficient ability to properly collect and use high-quality tactical and strategic intelligence are the exception rather than the norm.³⁴⁴ As a result, Roman forces fell victim to many ambushes better reconnaissance would have located and made rash decisions that better intelligence would have shown to be inadvisable. Callwell states that the enemy already enjoy several advantages in terms of intelligence over the regulars. As natives, they know the topography, travel routes across the country, where one can find provisions to replenish supplies, and have a ready-made intelligence network to ensure they know the location and intent of the regular army most of the time.³⁴⁵ In neglecting military intelligence-gathering, the regulars only hamstringing themselves by ensuring that they remain at a disadvantage in this regard.

Part of the reason why this deficiency persisted was the fact that much of the legions' intelligence in Hispania came from the local population (e.g., collaborators, auxiliaries, captured fighters, deserters, or just ordinary people).³⁴⁶ However, Callwell points out that relying on this kind of intelligence has risks of its own. If given at all, offered intelligence may be inaccurate or outright wrong (particularly in the case of sources without a grasp of military affairs), or may be offered treacherously as a means of deception. Any of these could result in the aforementioned symptoms of intelligence

³⁴³ Varga, *The Roman Wars in Spain*, 119.

³⁴⁴ Russell, 'Finding the Enemy: Military Intelligence', 477.

³⁴⁵ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 53-54.

³⁴⁶ Varga, *The Roman Wars in Spain*, 119.

failure.³⁴⁷ Therefore, military intelligence-gathering missions remain necessary, even if to simply verify what other sources say.

Another fatal flaw that existed within the Roman politico-military system of the time is the stunted nature of Rome's intelligence cycle. The characteristics of the Roman chain of command meant that all intelligence of serious tactical or strategic importance flowed directly into the commander in question alone. As with its collection in the first place, its path beyond that point was entirely dependent on his whims. Given the difficulties of communication over long distances in the ancient world, contact between a commander and the Senate was limited. Thanks to the absence of other organised information pipelines, the Senate's awareness of the situation often extended only to what he reported to them. Furthermore, since it is unlikely that this correspondence contained detailed intelligence briefings, the Senate were often not in possession of the complete picture on the ground. Since military governors were elected from the Senate, incoming commanders might be entering their province effectively blind to the tactical and strategic realities of the campaign they were tasked with running.³⁴⁸ Furthermore, the outgoing praetor would take both his staff (often bound to him through patronage) and the useful intelligence relationships he had developed while in office with him when he left, depriving his successor of them and effectively beginning the whole cycle over again. These flaws in what passes for the dissemination phase of Rome's intelligence cycle go some way to explaining how successive commanders kept making the same mistakes as their predecessors, as well as impairing the legions' ability to adapt in the long-run.

During Rome's wars on the Iberian Peninsula, and during the Lusitanian War in particular, these deficiencies in military intelligence and its surrounding processes massively impeded the Roman war effort. The lack of dedicated military intelligence-gathering forces resulted in reconnaissance often being neglected, leading to the legions regularly walking into ambushes and traps that played into the

³⁴⁷ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 49-50.

³⁴⁸ Varga, *The Roman Wars in Spain*, 119-120.

Lusitanian strategy of guerrilla methods to bleed them out. Not only this, it ceded the tactical initiative to the enemy in that it allowed the Lusitani to engage the Romans almost exclusively on their own terms, playing into their strategy further. This failing is even worse when one considers that if one's strategy is to root out and destroy enemy forces (as was the case with the legions in the Lusitanian War), one must first locate them in order to bring the requisite military power to bear. The continuation of this problem in the passing of military intelligence up the chain of command only exacerbates this. By neglecting their own intelligence-gathering, the Romans gave up the chance to mitigate pre-existing irregular advantages with regards to military intelligence, and their operational efficacy suffered as a result.

Adaptation

Polybius highlights the intensity of the operational character of the wars in Hispania as being distinct from the 'big' wars the Romans had fought in the Eastern Mediterranean.³⁴⁹ Despite having faced irregular Hispanic fighters in Sicily during the First Punic War, the legions did not display any evidence of lessons learned from that experience in the Lusitanian War. As a result, the Roman war effort was littered with cookie-cutter defeats to the same tactics after commanders followed near identical approaches to their unsuccessful predecessors. This indicates a clear inability to learn from and adapt to the new operational norms that cost them dearly.

The best example of this is the Roman response (or lack thereof) to Lusitanian *ruses de guerre*. As mentioned above, the Romans had faced Hispanic warriors and dealt with their unconventional stratagems during the First and Second Punic Wars.³⁵⁰ Since the First Punic War took place over 100 years before 155 BC, the Romans can be forgiven for not being immediately familiar with the Lusitanians and their tactics based on this particular experience. However, it becomes less acceptable as the war progressed. The defeat of Mummius in 155 BC is the first that can be clearly identified as

³⁴⁹ Polybius, *Histories*, 35.1.

³⁵⁰ Bagnall, *The Punic Wars*, 9, 93-95; Polybius, *Histories*, 1.56-1.57; Livy, *The History of Rome*, 21.57.

resulting from Lusitanian stratagems, but it would not be the last by any means. As explained earlier, a common tactic of the Lusitani was to follow a charge with a feigned retreat, often repeatedly. *Concursare* prevented the Lusitanians getting bogged down fighting the legions while they were in their organised formations and could work most effectively, as well as offering warriors routine periods of respite from flat out fighting. Its primary purpose though was to goad the enemy into pursuing the 'fleeing' Lusitanians. Thinking the battle won, the legions would often become disordered in their pursuit. The Lusitanians would then turn and attack again to great effect due to their superior agility over legionaries in one-on-one combat.³⁵¹

This hit-and-run strategy could also be used to lure Roman forces into ambushes, another method routinely employed to deadly effect by the Lusitanians, whose knowledge of the Iberian Peninsula's routes and terrain enabled such methods.³⁵² A good example of this comes from Frontinus' *Stratagems*, which relates a story of how Viriathus feigned retreat to lead Roman cavalry into swampy ground where they became stuck and were slaughtered.³⁵³ As was discussed in the section regarding military intelligence, the legions routinely neglected missions like scouting and forward reconnaissance. As a result, Roman forces under successive commanders continued to blunder into large-scale Lusitanian ambushes and surprise attacks right up until the final stages of the war. This is to say nothing of the endemic ambushes on Roman supply lines by Lusitanian guerrillas that ate away at both their manpower and their ability to operate on campaign.³⁵⁴ The same goes for *conkursare*, which continued to fool the legions and their commanders. Roman chauvinism fed a perception of Hispanic warriors as enemies who did not have the stomach for stand-up fights and would break against the legions like other barbarians.³⁵⁵ As such, the Romans believed the Lusitanian 'retreats' genuine and give chase, only to later comment on how shocking the subsequent 'rally' was.

³⁵¹ Silva, *Viriathus and the Lusitanian Resistance to Rome*, 82-83.

³⁵² Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 63; Silva, *Viriathus and the Lusitanian Resistance to Rome*, 80-82.

³⁵³ Frontinus, *Stratagems*, 2.5.7.

³⁵⁴ Varga, *The Roman Wars in Spain*, 138-139.

³⁵⁵ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 51.

These tactics resulted in Roman commanders having to call a premature end to their operations in 147 BC, 146 BC, and 143 BC due to their army being crippled.³⁵⁶ An early knockout like this meant that the commander and his forces would not be actively 'in the fight' long enough to properly understand and incorporate the lessons on an individual level that should have been learnt from this experience. This problem was then further compounded by the short-term, revolving door-esque nature of Roman command. Even with sufficient time to adapt, the issues relating to the Roman intelligence cycle again rear their ugly head, preventing any individual learning and adaptation that might take place under a longer-serving or more conscious commander from developing into lasting institutional changes. This is best shown by the events of 145-143 BC, which saw Maximus Aemilianus adapt his operational approach over two terms in response to an early defeat and make great headway. However, his progress was promptly undone when his successor was defeated after pursuing Viriathus into the same mountains in which the Lusitani had defeated Maximus' predecessor.³⁵⁷ This shows that though certain more competent commanders might have displayed an ability to adapt to new operational norms and been successful as a result, this individual learning did not translate into learning across the legions as a whole due to institutional-level failures in the military intelligence and learning cycles.

The polymorphous character of warfare is stressed across the study of strategy and military theory, and one cannot simply apply a single operational method to any given conflict and expect blanket success. Instead, one must adapt to the situation on the ground. Failure to do so risks dragging the war out unnecessarily, if not losing it altogether. The former was the case with the Romans in the Lusitanian War, where an inability to learn from their tactical and operational mistakes prevented them from gaining the upper hand against the Lusitani. The regular ambushes did not prompt a re-evaluation of the importance of tactical military intelligence-gathering in response to the clear threat they posed. Likewise, the defeats as 'retreating' Lusitani 'rallied' mid-chase did not precipitate a realisation that

³⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 56-67.

³⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 65-66.

they might be a deliberate manoeuvre and to avoid careless pursuit. Both of these tactics played into Viriathus' strategy of inflicting casualties on the legions at as little risk to his own forces as possible. Had the Romans addressed these failings early, the Lusitanian War might not have dragged on for 16 years and cost them quite so many men. It is telling that when the Romans finally *did* win the war, they did not do so on the battlefield through tactical victories but by neutralising Viriathus strategically.

Centres of Gravity

This variable character goes deeper than surface-level tactical and operational considerations though. Although in warfare the fundamental principles are constant in that it remains a struggle between two forces to remove the other's capacity to resist its will,³⁵⁸ the way that force is directed needs to be tailored to the requirements of the conflict. Central to this process is the identification and targeting of the enemy's 'centre(s) of gravity' and exploitation of their 'critical vulnerabilities'. Though the legions struggled on the tactical and operational level, the strategies they adopted at various stages of the war indicates that the Romans understood how the Lusitanians could be neutralised.

Clausewitz was the first to use the term 'centre of gravity' in the study of strategy, describing it as a point within the enemy's strength that acts as "the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends" and which "presents the most effective target for a blow" in that it would precipitate enemy collapse.³⁵⁹ Although his exact meaning has been debated by contemporary theorists due to his own inconsistent use of the term, sufficient commonalities can be found across the various theories for our purposes. In short, a warring state's centre of gravity is a focal point (there can be several across the levels of war) which underpins or drives their capacity to achieve their political/military objective(s) or will to fight. Its neutralisation would thus have subsequently have significant and wide-reaching effects thereon.³⁶⁰ Again, there is something of a divergence between

³⁵⁸ Clausewitz, *On War*, 75-77.

³⁵⁹ Clausewitz, *On War*, 485, 595-596.

³⁶⁰ E. L. Meyer, 'The Centre of Gravity Concept: Contemporary Theories, Comparison, and Implications', *Defence Studies*, 22, 3 (2022), 327-353.

theories that see the concept as primarily effects-based (as in Clausewitz's original definition) or capabilities-based (like in modern US doctrine). The latter embraces the enabling role of centres of gravity rather than the impact of their degradation.³⁶¹ However, Strange emphasises that centres of gravity are entities (either physical or moral) that "cause things to happen by virtue of their military power" rather than mere characteristics and capabilities, though they must obviously have these or they would not be centres of gravity.³⁶² In the case of the Lusitanian war effort, the centres of gravity shifted as the conflict progressed and power became increasingly centralised both under and behind Viriathus. However, the Romans were able to recognise this and adjust their strategy accordingly.

The decentralised nature of the Lusitani was on full display during the first raids, with Hispania Ulterior being invaded by multiple separate warbands. Several Lusitanian leaders are mentioned as leading their own independent incursions, and the defeat of any one of these bands does not appear to have deterred the others from their operations or halted the invasion.³⁶³ This suggests that (while possibly operational centres of gravity) they were not the 'primary' centre of gravity upon which everything depended that Clausewitz envisioned. With hostilities continuing, the legions instead attacked Lusitania itself. Marcus Atilius' limited strike on Oxthraeae led to a rapid (albeit ultimately only temporary) cessation of hostilities, displaying the importance of Lusitania and its population as a centre of gravity. As such, when the Lusitani reneged on the truce, the Romans took the strategy to the next level, escalating the violence inflicted in both breadth and scale in a depopulation campaign.

A state's population are one of the fundamental elements of war laid out in Clausewitz's trinity, providing it with bodies to put into the fight (if they are sufficiently galvanised) or to simply put to work supporting the nation.³⁶⁴ One cannot sustain warfare for long without the first, while the

³⁶¹ A. J. Echevarria, *Clausewitz and Contemporary War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 186; A. J. Echevarria, 'Clausewitz's Center of Gravity: It's Not What We Thought', *Naval War College Review*, 56, 1 (Winter 2003), 108-123.

³⁶² J. L. Strange, *Centers of Gravity & Critical Vulnerabilities: Building on the Clausewitzian Foundation So That We Can All Speak the Same Language*, 2nd edition (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps War College, 2005), 47-48.

³⁶³ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 56-57.

³⁶⁴ Clausewitz, *On War*, 89.

second (particularly in agricultural tribal societies) underpins the survival of the whole even outside of war. The Roman strategy therefore targeted the population as a 'physical' centre of gravity that fed the Lusitanian war effort. More than being simply a physical mass though, the population represent the moral strength and will of a nation. Valerius Maximus attributes Servilianus' brutal conduct to a desire to eradicate the will of the Lusitani to both continue the fight now and support potential future warfare, without which the Lusitanian war effort could not function for the above reasons.³⁶⁵ In this way, the Lusitanian population was both a physical and moral centre of gravity, and by degrading it the Romans successfully brought an end to the first Lusitanian raids.

When Viriathus rose to the forefront of the Lusitanian war effort in the second phase of the conflict, *he* became the new centre of gravity. This transformation was accelerated and made all the more significant as his exploits mounted and fame grew, with him becoming both the architect and embodying the spirit of Lusitanian resistance. Though separate Lusitanian warbands continued to operate apart from his host, the military strength of the Lusitanians centralised under him as warriors from across both Lusitania and the Iberian Peninsula as a whole flocked to his banner. Subsequently, his army became *the* physical centre of gravity for the Lusitanian war effort. This was not lost on the legions, who (albeit without much success) became fixated on striking a decisive blow against Viriathus and his army, because its loss would eradicate so much of the enemy's strength. This is clear from the campaign posture of the legions in every season, who were constantly trying to engage his force in some way to reduce this key centre of gravity.

As mentioned above though, Viriathus was more than just the man in charge of this physical centre of gravity. His clear military acumen allowed him to lead the Lusitani to victory after victory, giving him great value in a purely military sense, but this was only part of it. His true value came as a leader and figurehead for Lusitanian resistance to Rome, drawing in fighters by his martial reputation and inspiring others to take up the anti-Roman fight by his example. Furthermore, his charismatic

³⁶⁵ Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Deeds and Sayings*, 2.7.11.

leadership enabled him to keep his army of seasonal warriors in the field for years on end, even after suffering setbacks.³⁶⁶ That he was able to effectively unite the plethora of Lusitanian tribes under his leadership and keep them all working towards the same end is a testament to his leadership. The Romans recognised the importance of Viriathus as both a vital symbol behind which the Lusitani could rally and as an actual leader, and so he was as much a target as his physical army.³⁶⁷ When Caepio arranged Viriathus' assassination by Hispanic traitors, he was therefore surgically striking at what he perceived to be the lynchpin of Lusitanian resistance: its moral centre of gravity. While one might argue that Viriathus would have been useless without his army, one should remember that the army he led would likely not have existed in the state which arguably made it a physical centre of gravity in its own right without him. Sure enough, Viriathus' death was the decisive blow that signalled the end of the Lusitanian War in Rome's favour, as his successor had neither his military genius nor his ability to keep his army fighting. This lends further credence to his having been a moral centre of gravity.

Within Joe Strange's work on the theory on centres of gravity also lies the so-called 'CG-CC-CR-CV Concept'; the abbreviations standing for 'centres of gravity', 'critical capabilities', 'critical requirements', and 'critical vulnerabilities'. 'Critical capabilities' refer to the abilities which a centre of gravity needs to function, while 'critical requirements' are the "essential conditions, resources and means" that are required for this capability to function to its fullest. 'Critical vulnerabilities' therefore, are those requirements that are either deficient or vulnerable to interference from the enemy in such a way that it would achieve decisive results.³⁶⁸ The logic here being that if the critical requirements of centre of gravity's capabilities are not being adequately met or are neutralised entirely, then the centre of gravity will fail. This was something the Romans put into practice during the later stages of the war.

Clausewitz emphasises the importance of popular support in uprisings (like the Lusitanian war against Rome), stating that they are frequently a centre of gravity in such conflicts.³⁶⁹ This was

³⁶⁶ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 61-62, 71.

³⁶⁷ Strange, *Centers of Gravity & Critical Vulnerabilities*, 44.

³⁶⁸ *ibid.*, 43.

³⁶⁹ Clausewitz, *On War*, 596.

something that the Lusitanian leaders, including Viriathus, appear to have recognised from the outset. Efforts were therefore made throughout to galvanise anti-Roman sentiment into action both within the Lusitanian population and externally among the other Hispanic tribes. Roman trophies were paraded throughout the country by both Caesarus and Viriathus to show that resistance had a chance of success, and the latter went to the effort of inciting other tribes into revolt in the hopes that they would support the Lusitanian war effort.³⁷⁰ Strong allies are another factor which Strange highlights as a possible centre of gravity.³⁷¹ Unfortunately for Viriathus, Strabo's comments about the inability of the Hispanic tribes to work together appear to have had some merit.³⁷² Despite their common objectives and Viriathus' reported role in convincing the Celtiberi to revolt, there was little or no cooperation between the two. One might put this down to Roman operations from Hispania Citerior tying them down, but it persisted even during lulls in fighting. Even among the tribes and communities within Viriathus' own sphere, there were some whose loyalty Viriathus himself reportedly considered suspect.³⁷³ Though the neighbouring Vettones and possibly also the Callaeci rallied to the Lusitanian banner,³⁷⁴ even Viriathus' reputation was insufficient to overcome this individualistic tribalism and precipitate the Pan-Hispanic coalition that he recognised was necessary to defeat the Romans.³⁷⁵ Whether out of fear of Roman reprisals if unsuccessful or selfishness, this lack of external support for their war against Rome was the first critical vulnerability the Lusitani faced.

With external support not sufficiently materialising, Viriathus relied heavily on support from within Lusitania. This was a vulnerability the Romans were able to exploit to great effect. The aforementioned degradation of the centre of gravity back in that country had undoubtedly already reduced the resources it could mobilise to support Viriathus and his army, which Strange identifies as

³⁷⁰ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 56, 66; Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 5.4.4.

³⁷¹ Strange, *Centers of Gravity & Critical Vulnerabilities*, 15.

³⁷² Strabo, *Geography*, 3.4.5.

³⁷³ Diodorus, *Library of History*, 33.7.4.

³⁷⁴ Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 56, 70.

³⁷⁵ Silva, *Viriathus and the Lusitanian Resistance to Rome*, 157.

being one of the critical capabilities of the 'national will'. However, the Roman strategy aimed to neutralise the connection between the two centres of gravity altogether.³⁷⁶ Caepio's campaign saw Viriathus ejected from his support network in Baeturia, his remaining allies devastated, and a cordon of Roman outposts established throughout Lusitania. This denied Viriathus the means to receiving the reinforcements needed to reverse his change of fortune. Furthermore, trapped between two expanding Roman spheres, his ability to supply his forces was diminishing. It was this Roman exploitation of the critical vulnerabilities present within the Lusitanian nexus of centres of gravity that forced Viriathus to seek terms of surrender, a course of action that would in turn lead to his assassination.

In both instances, the Romans identified and went about trying to eliminate (to varying degrees of success) perceived Lusitanian centres of gravity so that their application of force would have the most strategic effect. This was further enabled by their canny recognition of critical vulnerabilities within this system. Though the legions enjoyed infrequent success on the battlefield, the Romans were able to achieve their strategic objectives thanks to their nuanced understanding of the sources of strength and driving forces of the Lusitanian war effort.

³⁷⁶ Strange, *Centers of Gravity & Critical Vulnerabilities*, 52-53.

Chapter 3: The Jugurthine War (111 BC – 106 BC)

As Viriathus was emerging onto the scene in Hispania, the Romans were establishing their first permanent foothold in Africa at the expense of the Iberian Peninsula's previous overlords: the Carthaginians. Though the treaty imposed at the end of the Second Punic War had stopped short of annexation or even the installation of a garrison, Roman terms were severe. In addition to an indemnity of 10,000 talents of silver, Carthage was forced to hand over all its elephants and almost all of their warships. Carthage was also forbidden from making war in Africa without Roman permission, and outright forbidden from doing so outside of Africa. This clear subordination to Rome was compounded by the restoration of territory to the Roman-allied Numidian king Massinissa.³⁷⁷ Over the next 50 years, Massinissa exploited both Carthaginian weakness and his friendship with Rome to eat away at Carthaginian territory in Africa.³⁷⁸

Carthage nevertheless eventually began to prosper economically again, and hawkish elements within the Roman Senate agitated for war to prevent a Carthaginian resurgence.³⁷⁹ As such, when Carthage raised an army in 151 BC to combat the latest of Massinissa's incursions, Rome prepared a punitive expedition. Although Carthage's illicit military action ended in a disastrous defeat at the hands of the Numidians at Oroscopa, a large Roman army nonetheless landed in Africa at Utica in late 149 BC.³⁸⁰ The Roman campaign was something of a debacle, but in 146 BC forces under Scipio Aemilianus finally breached the city and systematically put it to the torch as they fought through it over a period of six days.³⁸¹ With Carthage destroyed, so too ended the Carthaginian empire. What remained of their territory was annexed by Rome, becoming the province of Africa with Utica as the new regional capital.³⁸²

³⁷⁷ Polybius, *Histories*, 15.18.

³⁷⁸ Appian, *Punic Wars*. Translated from Greek by H. White (New York, NY: Macmillan Co., 1899), 67-69.

³⁷⁹ M. Duncan, *The Storm Before the Storm: The Beginning of the End of the Roman Republic* (New York, NY: PublicAffairs, 2017), 12; Appian, *Punic Wars*, 69.

³⁸⁰ Diodorus, *Library of History*, 32.1-32.6; Appian, *Punic Wars*, 70-75.

³⁸¹ Livy, *Periochae*, 51.

³⁸² Appian, *Punic Wars*, 127-135.

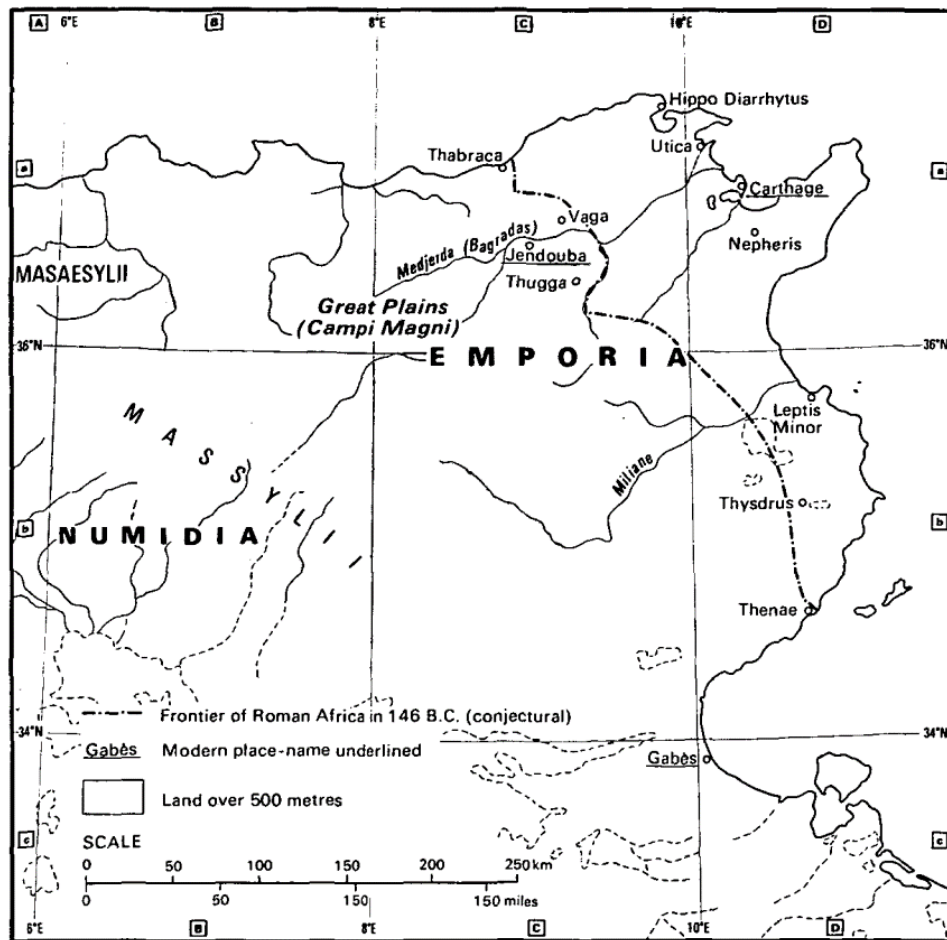


Figure 2.9: Map of North Africa at the time of the Third Punic War³⁸³

As per their threat-toppling strategic objectives in the Third Punic War, Rome was principally interested with simply preventing another power from rising to replace Carthage in North Africa. The Senate was therefore happy to allow their Numidian ally, Micipsa (son of the recently deceased Massinissa), to keep what formerly Carthaginian land he held.³⁸⁴ Appian describes Numidian territory at the death of Massinissa as stretching all the way from Mauretania in the West to Cyrenaica in the East (a distance of more than 1,500 kilometres).³⁸⁵ The Numidians had proven to be loyal allies since their defection from Carthage to Rome in 206 BC and would continue to do so under Micipsa, providing

³⁸³ W. V. Harris, 'Roman Expansion in the West', in A. E. Astin et al. (eds.), *The Cambridge Ancient History: Volume VIII: Rome and the Mediterranean to 133 BC*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 107-162:144.

³⁸⁴ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*. Translated from Latin by J. S. Watson (New York, NY: Harper & Bros., 1899), 5.

³⁸⁵ Appian, *Punic Wars*, 106.

Rome with a steady supply of grain and auxiliaries (including elephants).³⁸⁶ However, domestic turmoil in Numidia would upset this relationship as the second century BC neared its close, bringing Rome and its once-close African ally into conflict. This conflict, which dragged on for several years, endures in the histories principally for its political significance. Not only was the Roman war effort mired in corruption scandals (the *bête noire* of historians like Sallust), it also involved key figures who would come to play major roles in some of the crises of the late Republic: Marius and Sulla.³⁸⁷

However, despite its dismissal by academics like Levene as “a relatively minor episode...of Roman history”, the war in Numidia bears investigation for more than just its political significance.³⁸⁸ This chapter will show that Jugurtha, the eponymous Numidian king, waged a canny guerrilla campaign against Roman forces. The following strategic analysis will show that, after the initial leadership struggled to make headway in Numidia and suffered some significant defeats, later Roman commanders displayed an adroit understanding of some of the unique characteristics and requirements of small wars. In particular, the Roman campaigns highlight the importance of limiting enemy freedom of operation, the efficacy of attacking centres of gravity, application of sufficient force to small wars campaigns, the value of adaptation, and the fundamental requirement of political will to wage the campaign.

³⁸⁶ W. Horsted, *The Numidians: 300 BC – AD 300* (Oxford: Osprey, 2021), 4.

³⁸⁷ D. S. Levene, ‘Roman Historiography in the Late Republic’, in J. Marincola (ed.), *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography: Volume I* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 275-289:281; E. O’Gorman, ‘The Politics of Sallustian Style’, in J. Marincola (ed.), *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography: Volume II* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 379-384:382-384.

³⁸⁸ Levene, ‘Roman Historiography in the Late Republic’, 281.

Numidia and The Numidian Kingdom(s)

The region which the Romans referred to as 'Numidia' roughly correlates with the northern territories of modern-day Algeria (see *Figure 2.2*), although the Numidian kingdoms came to control parts of what are now eastern Morocco, western Tunisia, and Libya.³⁸⁹ Most of the population of this country has long been concentrated in the northern coastal region known as the Tell, which is more amenable to habitation thanks to its fertile lands and temperate climate. Outside of the narrow belt of plains and hills on the coast where most settlement has taken place and a strip of steppe-like plains referred to as the High Plateau, the territory is dominated by various chains of the Atlas Mountains. These mountains (the Tell Atlas, Saharan Atlas, and Aurès Mountains) act as immense natural barriers, making communication and transit extremely difficult for those who do not know the roads through the network of valleys and basins (and outright impossible in some places). The Aurès Mountains in particular, with their steep cliffs and long ridges, are a naturally defensible refuge which have seen use throughout the region's military history. Indeed, this history stretches all the way back to the Roman era.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁹ Appian, *Punic Wars*, 67-69, 106.

³⁹⁰ M. J. Deeb, 'The Society and Its Environment', in H. C. Metz (ed.), *Algeria: A Country Study*, 5th edition (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, 1994), 67-125:72-73.

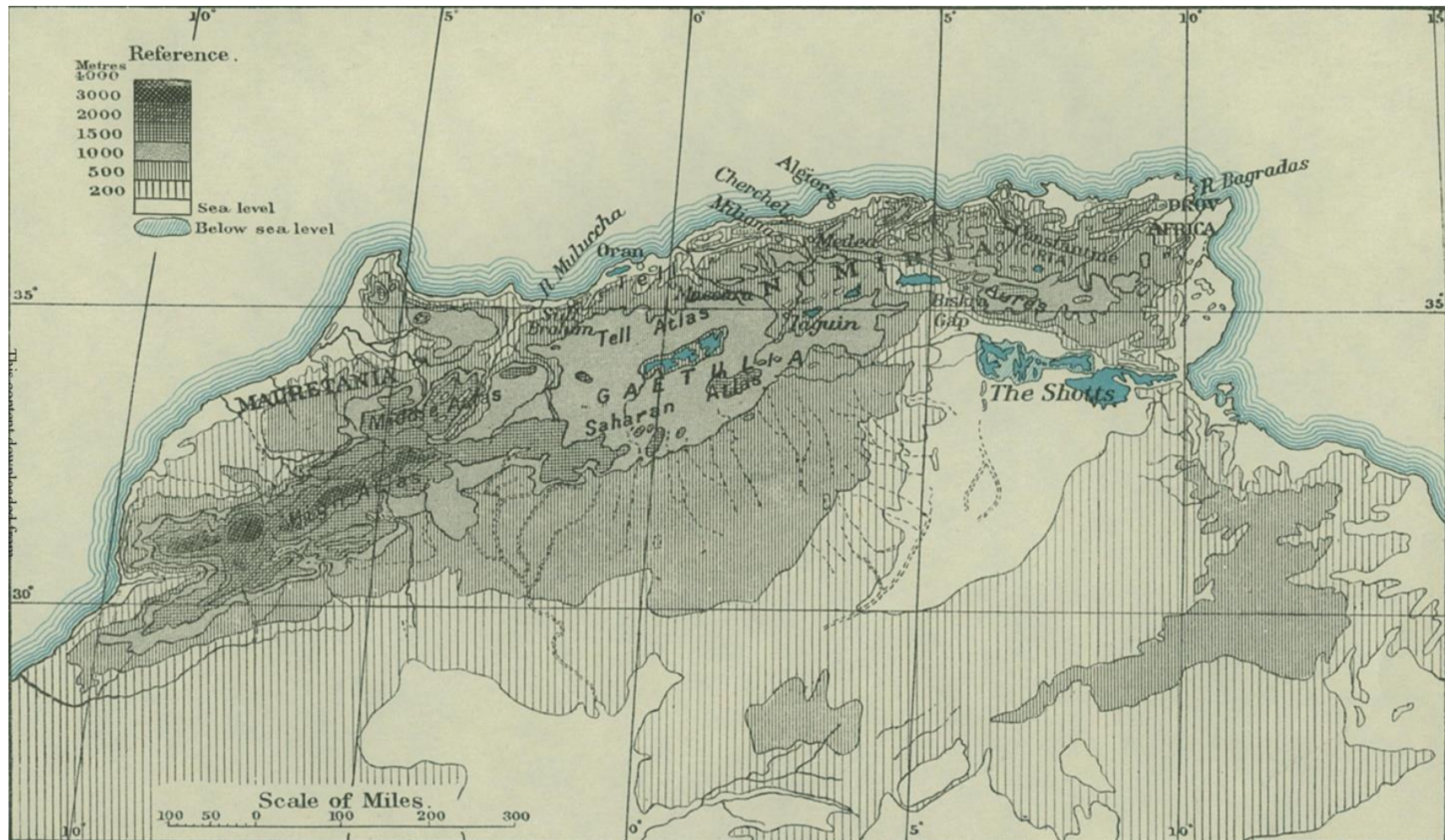


Figure 2.10: Map of Northwest Africa, including physical features and major settlements³⁹¹

³⁹¹ M. Holroyd, 'The Jugurthine War: Was Marius or Metellus the Real Victor?', *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 18 (1928), 1-20: Map 1.

Although Carthaginian influence resulted in Punic colonisation on the coast, Northwest Africa's largest ethnic group was the Berbers. Classical sources also refer to this group as 'Libyans', after the Greek name for North Africa.³⁹² Sources identify three major Berber groupings in the region: the Mauri, occupying the territory known as Mauretania (roughly corresponding to modern Morocco); the Gaetuli, living in the desert region south of the Atlas Mountains that is now part of Algeria; and the Numidians.³⁹³ By around 220 BC, two primary tribal groupings existed within Numidia: the Masaesyli and the Massylii. As *Figure 2.3* shows, the Masaesyli inhabited the west of the country, while the Massylii lived in the east amongst the mountains and plains on the Carthaginian border. These rival federations had coalesced over the third century BC from amongst the local tribes. Though both developed an institution of tribal kingship, they remained primitive and loosely organised due to the semi-nomadic tendencies of the Berber peoples.³⁹⁴ Despite their rivalry, both lay within Carthage's sphere of influence and routinely provided light cavalry to Punic armies by the time of the First Punic War.³⁹⁵ Bagnall suggests that Numidia's comparatively primitive organisation meant this relationship was more akin to that of protectorate status rather than an alliance between independent peers, a reading supported by the existence of Carthaginian fortresses within Numidian territory. Carthage then maintained this influence by playing the rival kingdoms off against one another.³⁹⁶

³⁹² A. Toth, 'Historical Setting', in H. C. Metz (ed.), *Algeria: A Country Study*, 5th edition (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, 1994), 1-65:3-7.

³⁹³ Strabo, *Geography*, 2.5.33; Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*. Translated from Latin by J. Bostock & H. T. Riley (London: Taylor & Francis, 1855), 5.1-5.4.

³⁹⁴ Bagnall, *The Punic Wars*, 270; Horsted, *The Numidians*, 3; Strabo, *Geography*, 2.5.33; Pliny, *The Natural History*, 5.2.

³⁹⁵ Polybius, *Histories*, 1.19.

³⁹⁶ Bagnall, *The Punic Wars*, 270.

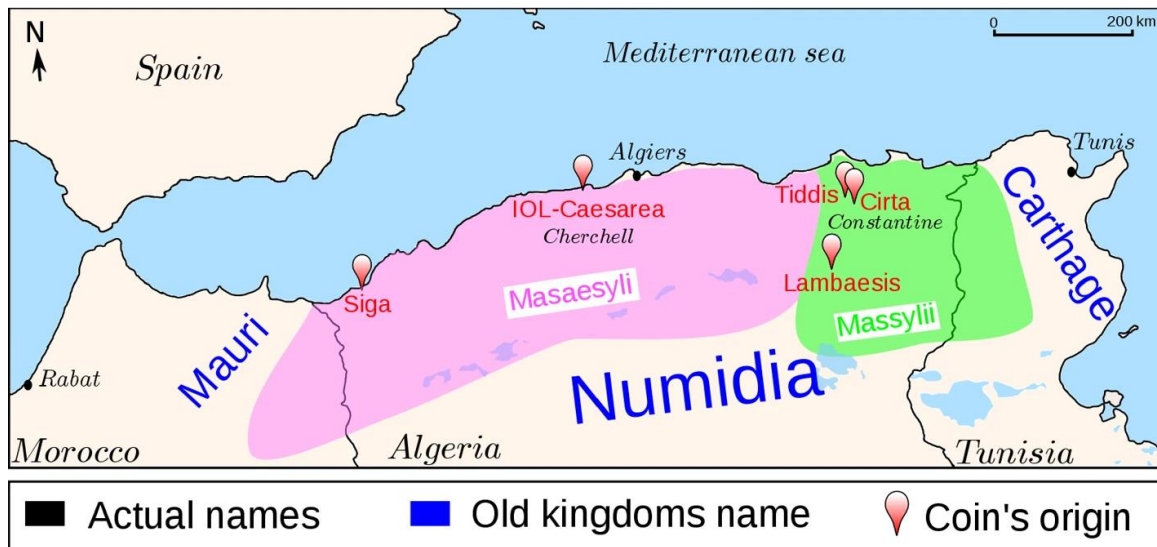


Figure 2.11: Map of the Numidian kingdoms circa 220 BC³⁹⁷

This dynamic persisted until the Second Punic War, when Rome formed an alliance with the Masaesyli in 213 BC that saw the kingdom revolt against Carthage with the help of Roman military advisors and trainers. This set up a sort of Numidian proxy war in which the Masaesyli were repulsed by a combined Numidian-Punic army under the Massylian prince, Massinissa.³⁹⁸ However, these allegiances proved somewhat fluid. By 206 BC, the Masaesyli had returned to the Carthaginian camp and Rome had instead gained the support of Massinissa, who had been serving ably as a cavalry commander for Carthage against the victorious Scipio Africanus.³⁹⁹ When Massinissa succeeded his father shortly after, Carthage induced the Masaesyli into invading Massylian territory so as to rid themselves of this nearby Roman ally. Although Massinissa's smaller army was defeated, the king began waging a guerrilla war out of the Aurès mountains against Carthage and the Masaesyli, ravaging Carthaginian territory and inflicting significant casualties in hit-and-run raids. When the legions landed in Africa in 204 BC, they helped Massinissa reclaim his kingdom and overran all of Numidia.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁷ L. Idjouadiene et al., 'XRF Analysis of Ancient Numidian Coins: A Comparison Between Different Kingdoms', *The European Physical Journal Plus*, 136, 512 (May 2021), 3. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1140/epjp/s13360-021-01458-0> [Accessed 10/1/2024].

³⁹⁸ Livy, *The History of Rome*, 24.48-24.49.

³⁹⁹ *ibid.*, 28.35, 29.23.

⁴⁰⁰ *ibid.*, 29.29-29.33, 30.9-30.17.

For his loyal service and role in Hannibal's defeat at Zama, Rome awarded Massinissa the lands of the Masaesyli, uniting Numidia under a single crown for the first time.⁴⁰¹ Under Massinissa and then his son Micipsa, Numidia experienced a period of stability that (with Roman patronage) allowed the kingdom to develop significantly. Although nomadic pastoralism remained an important part of Berber life, the kings encouraged settled agriculture and the adoption of Carthaginian farming techniques. This, combined with the wealth brought in from trade via formerly Carthaginian ports, gradually increased Numidia's urbanisation. Further territorial expansion following Massinissa's conflict with Carthage and the Third Punic War meant that Numidia, though still a staunch Roman ally, could arguably be considered a (regional) power in its own right.⁴⁰²

Numidian Warriors and Their Art

Rome's first recorded encounters with Numidian warriors come in Polybius' account of the First Punic Wars, where the Africans fought as part of the Carthaginian armies.⁴⁰³ Although they also fielded infantry and elephants both as auxiliaries and in independent ventures, Numidians were considered to be among the best cavalrymen in the entire Mediterranean.⁴⁰⁴ In many ways, Numidia's primary export was not grain but these horsemen, and Horsted argues that this cavalry was responsible for the protection and patronage the Numidians received from their more powerful neighbours.⁴⁰⁵

Numidian cavalry was unlike anything fielded in the Roman armies or even any of Carthage's other cavalry, which (though not exactly heavy cavalry) were intended to charge the enemy and fight in melee. Instead, Numidian cavalry operated as very light mounted skirmishers, the closest comparison being the Tarantine cavalry of Hellenistic armies.⁴⁰⁶ Operating in loose formations, Numidian horsemen would rapidly close with the enemy and throw volleys of javelins before wheeling

⁴⁰¹ *ibid.*, 30.44; Bagnall, *The Punic Wars*, 298.

⁴⁰² Horsted, *The Numidians*, 4.

⁴⁰³ Polybius, *Histories*, 1.19.

⁴⁰⁴ Livy, *The History of Rome*, 29.34.

⁴⁰⁵ Horsted, *The Numidians*, 6.

⁴⁰⁶ Asclepiodotus, *Tactics*. Translated from Greek by Illinois Greek Club (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1923), 1.3.

off again to avoid any counterattack, eschewing close combat altogether. This was in part due to the characteristics of Numidian mounts which, though possessing great speed and endurance, were comparatively small and so unsuited for more traditional mounted fighting roles. Their riders were also very lightly armed, wearing no armour save for a small round shield and generally carrying only javelins, emphasising their role as skirmishers not intending to engage in close combat.

On the battlefield, their hit-and-run tactics could be used to harass and disrupt less manoeuvrable enemy formations or lure them into isolated or less favourable positions, all while exposing the agile horsemen to relatively little risk.⁴⁰⁷ Their agility and stamina also made them well-suited to ranging missions such as special reconnaissance,⁴⁰⁸ raiding,⁴⁰⁹ and attacking enemy foraging parties.⁴¹⁰ Furthermore, due to experience of the Atlas Mountains, they were considered second to only Hispanic horsemen in operating over rough terrain.⁴¹¹ Because of these qualities, Numidian cavalry proved to be a decisive factor during the Punic Wars. This was initially to Rome's detriment, with the Berbers contributing to important Carthaginian victories and acting as strategic enablers in terms of intelligence and the maintenance of the initiative. However, the cavalry advantage they conferred shifted in Rome's favour as defections and gradual attrition took their toll.⁴¹²

Not all Numidian warriors were horsemen though.⁴¹³ As mentioned earlier, Rome initially sent centurions to train Masaeslyian infantry to fight and manoeuvre in formation.⁴¹⁴ Like their cavalry, Numidian foot soldiers were very lightly equipped. Unarmoured and wielding only javelins and an oval shield, their survivability stemmed from their superior mobility and their attacking from range. As such, they too made use of rolling attacks and retreats to harass enemy formations whilst staying out of

⁴⁰⁷ Polybius, *Histories*, 3.72, 3.116.

⁴⁰⁸ *ibid.*, 3.44; Livy, *The History of Rome*, 38.41.

⁴⁰⁹ Polybius, *Histories*, 1.31, 8.28; Frontinus, *Stratagems*, 1.5.16.

⁴¹⁰ Polybius, *Histories*, 3.112.

⁴¹¹ Livy, *The History of Rome*, 21.57.

⁴¹² Horsted, *The Numidians*, 6-10.

⁴¹³ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 7.

⁴¹⁴ Livy, *The History of Rome*, 24.48.

close combat.⁴¹⁵ So mobile was this light infantry that they sometimes operated in amongst the Numidian cavalry, keeping pace with them to unleash devastating combined arms attacks. Furthermore, despite their light armament, they could hold their own to some degree against heavy infantry and cavalry; using their javelins to kill the horses of Roman cavalymen and standing their ground against baited legionaries for long enough for their own cavalry to reengage.⁴¹⁶

Their general mobility (particularly in the case of their horsemen)⁴¹⁷ and the ease and speed with which they could engage and disengage allows the Numidians to disrupt and attrit the enemy on both the tactical and strategic levels for little cost to themselves. This made them well-suited to guerrilla warfare. As with Hispanic warriors, the Numidians' strategic culture had its roots in the requirements of the region's endemic low-intensity inter-tribal warfare. Using the horse to overcome Numidia's vastness, tribes would raid their neighbours to compete for grazing rights and access to water sources. However, Numidia's sparse population required them to conserve their manpower, lest they risk losses that would jeopardise tribal security. Skirmishing from range was thus adopted to reduce the risk to their fighters, a deliberate force protection measure that also played into guerrilla strategies.⁴¹⁸ Chief among these were surprise attacks and ambushes to catch the enemy off guard and therefore achieve greater effect.⁴¹⁹ Though their auxiliary service shows that they could take the field in pitched battles, the qualities and operational art of the Numidians represented a significant irregular challenge to conventionally-minded armies like the Romans. This is something the famous Gaius Julius Caesar experience firsthand during his own operations in Africa.⁴²⁰ It is somewhat poetic then that Caesar's uncle, Gaius Marius, would cement his reputation as one of the greatest Romans of his generation by subduing an unruly Numidian king who refused to be brought to heel.

⁴¹⁵ Horsted, *The Numidians*, 10.

⁴¹⁶ G. J. Caesar, *African War*. Translated from Latin by K. A. Raaflaub (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 2019), 14-15, 69-72.

⁴¹⁷ Livy, *The History of Rome*, 21.57.

⁴¹⁸ Horsted, *The Numidians*, 8.

⁴¹⁹ Caesar, *African War*, 17, 69.

⁴²⁰ *ibid.*, 7-78.

The Jugurthine War

Princely Quarrels

Micipsa's death in 118 BC brought an abrupt end to Numidia's prosperous era of peace and stability.⁴²¹ As his father Massinissa had done, Micipsa's will specified that kingship would pass jointly to his three heirs. However, while Micipsa and his brothers (Gulussa and Mastanabal) had cooperated until the untimely deaths of the latter two, the ambition of one of Micipsa's own heirs heralded chaos. Two of Micipsa's three heirs were his legitimate sons, Adherbal and Hiempsal. The other, Jugurtha, was the illegitimate son of Mastanabal. Despite being outside the normal succession, Jugurtha's physical strength, martial prowess, intelligence, and humility won him great esteem. As his popularity grew, Micipsa sent him with Numidian auxiliaries to fight for Rome in the Numantine War (possibly hoping he would be killed). Instead of dying, Jugurtha earned a reputation for bravery and wisdom that gained him the respect and friendship of many of the Romans he served with, including the famed Scipio Aemilianus himself. Swayed by the Roman endorsement, Micipsa instead adopted the young man as his third heir.⁴²²

According to Sallust, the relationship between the heirs was strained from the outset, owing to Hiempsal's contempt for Jugurtha's low birth and the latter's simmering ambition. By 117 BC, as the princes were ostensibly organising the division of jurisdictions and the state treasury, Jugurtha had already begun scheming to remove his 'brothers'. In the midst of these meetings, Jugurtha had Hiempsal murdered, sending shockwaves throughout Africa and dividing Numidia between those loyal to either Jugurtha or Adherbal.⁴²³ Though Adherbal's legitimacy meant Numidian society was behind him, Jugurtha's martial reputation won him the support of more of Numidia's best warriors. Jugurtha quickly seized several major settlements, compelling Adherbal to try and check the upstart's

⁴²¹ Livy, *Periochae*, 62.

⁴²² Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 5-10; Kershaw, *Barbarians*, 158-159; Duncan, *The Storm Before the Storm*, 88-89.

⁴²³ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 12.

momentum in the field.⁴²⁴ Though Adherbal's army was larger, Jugurtha's seasoned warriors came out on top, forcing the former to flee to Rome via the province of Africa.⁴²⁵ Fearing Rome's response to his takeover, Jugurtha dispatched envoys to the city with instructions to lavish gifts on old friends and persons of influence. His bribery bore fruit, and in 116 BC the Senate (lobbied by friendly Roman nobles) decided to 'compromise' by sending a commission to Numidia divide it between the two kings, awarding Jugurtha and Adherbal the western and eastern halves of the country respectively.⁴²⁶

Jugurtha's ambition was only briefly satisfied, however, and sometime around 113-112 BC he launched a raid into Adherbal's territory to provoke a conflict. When Adherbal did not bite, Jugurtha simply invaded, laying waste to Adherbal's territory as he advanced eastwards. The latter sent pleas for intervention to Rome, but was soon pushed back and besieged in his capital, Cirta (see *Figure 2.2*). With his allies in the Senate killing any talk of a military response, Jugurtha ignored Roman demands for him to withdraw, and Adherbal was eventually convinced to surrender by Cirta's influential Italian merchants. However, in clear defiance of Roman will, Jugurtha had his brother tortured to death. Furthermore, he had Adherbal's supporters (including the Italians) massacred; an act of brutality that would have immediate and serious consequences for Romano-Numidian relations.⁴²⁷

Roman 'Retaliation'

Though Sallust claims that Jugurtha's bribed politicians attempted further interference, the massacre of Roman citizens by an ostensible ally was a scandal the Senate could not ignore. The public outcry at their deaths was exacerbated by accusations of criminal mismanagement and bribery from *populares* politicians, as well as fears that Rome's grain supply (not to mention the business interests of many Roman *equites*) was under threat.⁴²⁸ The Senate therefore declared war on Jugurtha in 111 BC,

⁴²⁴ Duncan, *The Storm Before the Storm*, 89.

⁴²⁵ Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 5.15.3; Kershaw, *Barbarians*, 160-161.

⁴²⁶ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 13-16.

⁴²⁷ *ibid.*, 20-26; Diodorus, *Library of History*, 34/35.31.

⁴²⁸ Kershaw, *Barbarians*, 163.

appointing consul Lucius Calpurnius Bestia to lead the expedition to bring the errant king to justice.⁴²⁹ Sallust reports that this prompted some of the powerful coastal cities of Tripolitania, such as Leptis Magna, to break away from Numidian control and declare for Rome.⁴³⁰

Numidian envoys soon arrived in Rome to try and bribe Senators into cancelling the operation, but the Senate refused to even receive without first receiving Jugurtha's surrender. With no such surrender forthcoming, legions were raised and transported to Africa, whereupon a successful incursion was made into Numidia. Bestia began strongly, his expedition pushing deep into Numidia and capturing several towns.⁴³¹ However, the legions failed to inflict serious losses on the Numidians, whose light cavalry were able to outmanoeuvre Rome's heavy infantry on both the tactical and operational levels. The legions' progress subsequently slowed, possibly due to hit-and-run attacks on their main column and lines of communication by the mobile Numidians. As Kershaw identifies, this is the same operational problem the legions had faced against the Lusitani.⁴³²

With his campaign deteriorating into a long, difficult, and costly one, Bestia was amenable when Numidian envoys arrived and suggested (hefty bribes in hand) that it would be better for everyone if terms were reached. Plied by gold and promises of a quick 'victory', Bestia and his staff agreed (without Senatorial approval) a peace treaty with Jugurtha in which the Numidian would keep his kingdom in exchange for an indemnity of grain, horses, cattle, 30 elephants, and a relatively small amount of silver.⁴³³ These fresh tales of alleged corruption caused further outcry in Rome, and the *populares* arranged for Jugurtha to come to Rome to testify in an inquiry on the issue. However, a bribed tribune controversially exercised his veto before evidence incriminating Jugurtha or his Roman conspirators could be presented. This further scandal was soon joined by the revelation that Jugurtha had orchestrated the murder of one of Massinissa's remaining grandsons (a possible rival claimant to

⁴²⁹ Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 5.15.1.

⁴³⁰ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 77-78.

⁴³¹ *ibid.*, 27-28; Livy, *Periochae*, 64.

⁴³² Kershaw, *Barbarians*, 163.

⁴³³ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 29.

the throne) who had taken refuge in Rome after the fall of Cirta. The king was thus forced to flee back to Numidia, having dug himself a hole too great to buy or talk his way out of.⁴³⁴

The war was renewed in 110 BC after this latest transgression, and consul Spurius Postumius Albinus was assigned to Africa to assume command of the 40,000-strong army left there by Bestia.⁴³⁵ However, Albinus soon fell victim to the superior strategy of Jugurtha, who seemingly toyed with the unwieldy Roman army. The Numidian king would retreat from Albinus' advances and promise to surrender, only to turn his forces around and attack again before slipping away once more. With this campaign of evasion, delay, and trickery, Jugurtha turned what Albinus had hoped would be a quick campaign into a months-long, demoralising, and costly slog.⁴³⁶ In drawing the campaign out, Jugurtha clearly hoped that attrition of both physical strength and will would eventually compel the Romans to withdraw, a classic asymmetric strategy that recognised the relative strength of his position as the defensive party. Clausewitz discusses that the purpose of such a strategic defence is to reach a point where the defender gains an important advantage over the attacker and can strike back.⁴³⁷ If this was Jugurtha's intention, the advantage came when the cautious Albinus was obliged to return to Rome to preside over the year's elections, leaving his less cautious brother Aulus in command.

⁴³⁴ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 30-35; Diodorus, *Library of History*, 34/35.35; Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 5.15.3; Livy, *Periochae*, 64.

⁴³⁵ Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 5.15.6.

⁴³⁶ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 36.

⁴³⁷ Clausewitz, *On War*, 357-359, 370-371.



Figure 2.12: Map of 'Old Numidia' and the province of Africa⁴³⁸

⁴³⁸ Holroyd, 'The Jugurthine War', Map 2.

Electoral complications extended Aulus' temporary command as *propraetor* into 109 BC, leading the general to take an impulsive leap. Calling his legions out of their winter quarters in January, Aulus embarked on an audacious march against the town where Jugurtha was keeping a portion of the royal treasury at the time, believed to be either Suthul or Calama (possibly two different names for the same settlement).⁴³⁹ As one might expect with a march across the Tell Atlas in January, the weather fought the legions all the way, and Aulus had to set them on forced marches to keep pace for his advance. If Jugurtha's simultaneous arrival at the destination is anything to go by, this march was likely dogged the whole time by Numidian guerrillas. The logic behind Aulus' operational plan is clear. Seizure of the Numidian treasury would seriously undermine Jugurtha's ability to finance his war against Rome. Even if the treasury was not seized, this threat to Jugurtha's finances might force the elusive Numidian into a pitched battle. However, upon arriving amongst the mountains south of Hippo Regius (see *Figure 2.4*), Aulus discovered that the town would be nigh-on impossible to storm or besiege due to its position, fortifications, and the weather.⁴⁴⁰

Confident in the safety of his treasury, Jugurtha feigned concern to trick Aulus into overplaying his hand, making a show of retreating to lure on the legions. Thinking himself on the verge of victory, Aulus pursued Jugurtha into the south of the country. During this march, the Roman army was infiltrated by Numidian agents who began bribing officers, legionaries, and auxiliaries to desert or defect. As Roman discipline and cohesion broke down, Jugurtha struck, surrounding the Roman camp one night with a large force. The Romans were then forced from their camp and up a nearby hill when a bribed centurion opened his gate for the Numidians. At Jugurtha's mercy, Aulus was compelled to agree to humiliating terms of surrender to the Numidian king in order to save the Roman army, which limped back to Africa after passing under the yoke.⁴⁴¹ The Senate balked at the outrageous surrender

⁴³⁹ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 37; Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 5.15.6; G. T. Temple, 'Sketch of the Campaign of Kostantinah, in 1837', *The United Service Journal and Naval and Military Magazine*, 1 (1839), 27-39, 289-301, 459-471:35.

⁴⁴⁰ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 37.

⁴⁴¹ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 38; Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 5.15.6; Livy, *Periochae*, 64.

and refused to ratify it, dispatching Albinus back to Africa with reinforcements. The demoralised, exhausted, and disorganised army Albinus found there was in no state to take on campaign, however, and so he took no action.⁴⁴² Yet again, Jugurtha's characteristic mix of guerrilla warfare, trickery, and outright bribery had seen off the Roman military machine.

Metellus

These events caused yet more scandal in Rome, resulting in the condemnation and exile of some prominent figures from recent events (including Bestia and Albinus).⁴⁴³ As these unsuccessful generals were hauled in front of the so-called 'Mamilian Commission', the new consuls received their commands. Marcus Junius Silanus was assigned the war against the migrating Cimbri, who were threatening Gaul and northern Italy and were likely the reason why the Jugurthine War had been neglected by the Senate. Command in Numidia, meanwhile, fell to Quintus Caecilius Metellus. There was great hope in Rome for Metellus' command because he was seen as an incorruptible man of action who might be immune to the bribery that had thwarted previous campaigns.⁴⁴⁴ Furthermore, he seems to have recognised the nature and requirements of the war in Numidia and chosen for his senior staff men with relevant military experience rather than rank, including Publius Rutilius Rufus and Gaius Marius. These men, both of whom would go on to implement important military reforms, had served under Scipio Aemilianus in the Numantine War and so will likely have been familiar with the unique demands of guerrilla warfare.⁴⁴⁵

Though Metellus was to take command of what remained of Albinus' army, the consul elected to raise as many additional troops and auxiliaries as the Senate would permit, signalling an escalation and an understanding of the scale of the undertaking. Arriving in Africa, he found an army suffering from both rampant indiscipline and Numidian guerrilla attacks on its camp. After taking time to

⁴⁴² Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 39.

⁴⁴³ Kershaw, *Barbarians*, 166.

⁴⁴⁴ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 43.

⁴⁴⁵ Plutarch, *Marius*. Translated from Greek by B. Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920), 3, 6; Appian, *Wars in Spain*, 88; Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Deeds and Sayings*, 2.3.2.

integrate his fresh troops and drill the army back up to standard (including ensuring the army set up proper pickets on the march), the consul prepared to cross into Numidia.⁴⁴⁶ According to Sallust, Jugurtha feared Metellus' immunity to bribery and attempted to surrender to Metellus in exchange for his life and that of his family. However, the consul did not trust the offer and instead prevailed upon the king's envoys to betray their master to him.⁴⁴⁷ If taken at face value, this seems to be the beginning of the consistent hybrid approach adopted by Metellus.

This descriptor ("hybrid") is used in the context of 'hybrid warfare'. Competing perspectives (often distinguished by their relative modernity and respective technological context) make a universally accepted definition of this concept somewhat difficult to provide.⁴⁴⁸ For the purposes of this thesis, hybrid warfare will be defined as the use of both military and non-military instruments of state power for synergistic effect. With regards to the former, this might involve a mix of conventional and unconventional means, as well as overt and covert methods.⁴⁴⁹ In Metellus' case, the consul coupled the use of conventional force to defeat Jugurtha's forces militarily with a secondary plan to have the king killed or captured through a campaign of bribery and treachery.⁴⁵⁰

When Metellus' forces entered Numidia, his difference in approach became clear. Likely informed Marius and Rufus' experience, he marched with great caution, sending scouts to range across the country far ahead of his army to gather intelligence and ensure route security. Sallust claims Metellus assessed that the combination of the Numidians' superior knowledge of the country, art of war, and capacity for deception meant that Roman forces were under constant threat of attack. He therefore organised his army into discrete combined arms units while on the march. By supporting the heavy infantry with integrated auxiliary cavalry and light infantry, Metellus hoped to improve their

⁴⁴⁶ Eutropius, *An Abbreviated History of Rome from Its Beginning*. Translated from Latin by H. W. Bird (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), 4.27.

⁴⁴⁷ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 43-46; Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Deeds and Sayings*, 2.7.2.

⁴⁴⁸ I. Käihkö, 'The Evolution of Hybrid Warfare: Implications for Strategy and the Military Profession', *Parameters*, 51, 3 (Fall 2021), 115-127.

⁴⁴⁹ NATO, *Countering hybrid threats* (2024). Available online: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_156338.htm [Accessed 14/5/2024].

⁴⁵⁰ Frontinus, *Stratagems*, 1.8.8.

flexibility and ability to repel Numidian attacks and ambushes. The consul himself led a flying column of light infantry and skirmishers in the vanguard that could, in conjunction with a cavalry corps at the rear under Marius, serve as a reactive reserve in such scenarios. Despite (or perhaps because of) these precautions, Metellus' initial advance faced no resistance, with what settlements the legions encountered surrendering immediately. This included the wealthy walled border city of Vaga (see *Figure 2.5*), where a Roman garrison was placed. More peace envoys came from Jugurtha, but Metellus prevaricated as the Numidian once had and again sent them back with promises of reward for the king's murder or capture.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁵¹ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 46-47.

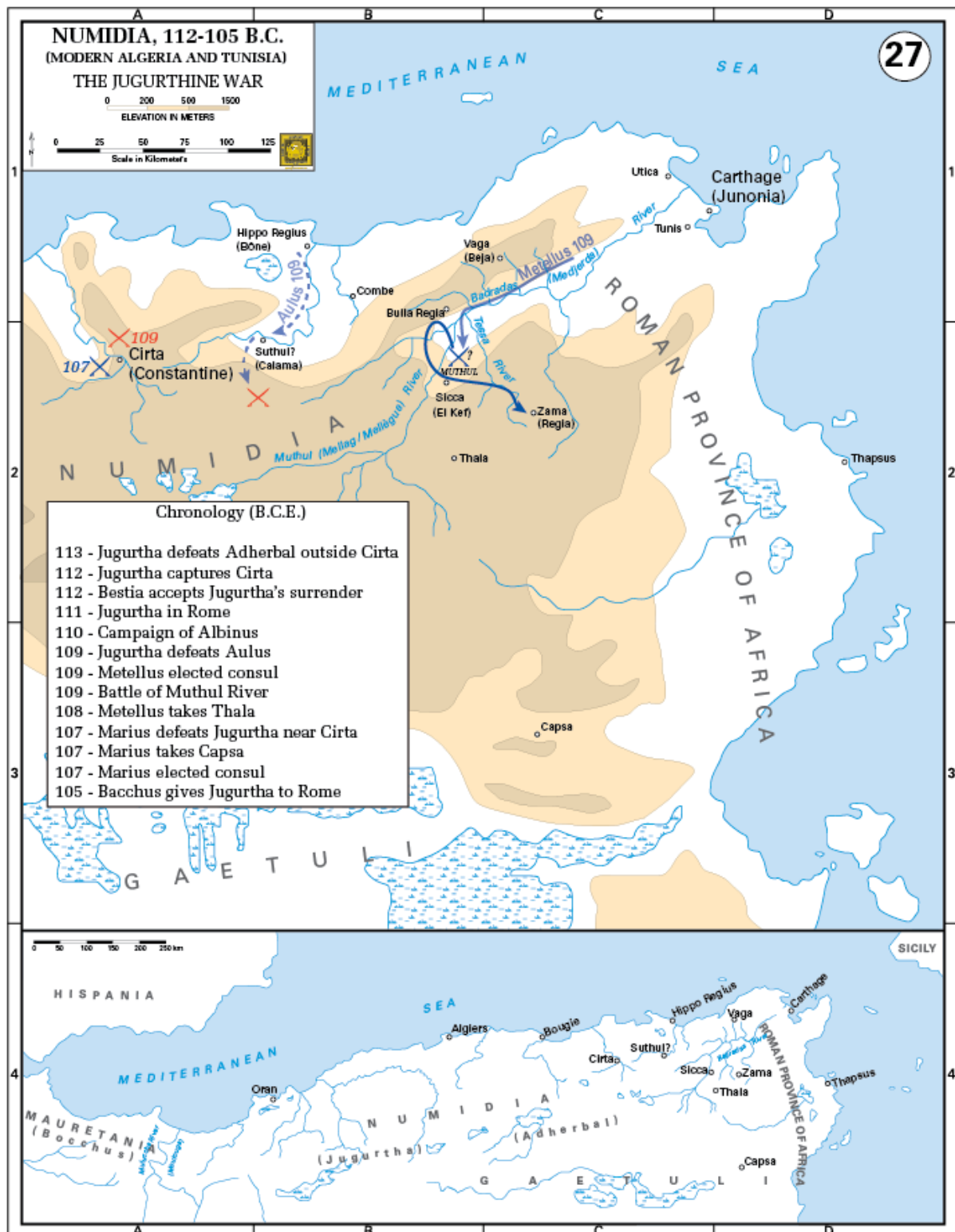


Figure 13: Map of Numidia and North Africa and the Campaigns of the Jugurthine War, 112-105 BC⁴⁵²

⁴⁵² F. Martini, *Numidia, 112-105 B.C.: The Jugurthine War* (United States Military Academy Department of History, 2014). Available online: https://s3.amazonaws.com/usma-media/inline-images/academics/academic_departments/history/AncientWar/27NumidiaNortharfrica-01.png [Accessed 10/1/2024].

Recognising his own hybrid delaying methods in Metellus' actions, Jugurtha broke off talks and began massing his forces for an attack. With his knowledge of both local geography and legionary operations, Jugurtha was able to predict Metellus would advance into the Numidian interior by following the Bagradas River west before turning south with either the Muthul or Tessa (see *Figure 2.5*). This would lead Metellus towards the major eastern cities of Sicca, Thala, and Zama Regia; important Jugurthine strongpoints in the southeastern plateau that would need to be taken if the area was to be secured. Utilising his forces' superior mobility, Jugurtha was able to keep ahead of Metellus' army, laying an ambush for them in the plains and foothills north of Sicca between the two tributaries. However, Metellus' forward scouts discovered the ambush, allowing him to prepare by mixing his skirmishers with his legionary infantry to give their formations some defence against ranged attacks. Furthermore, expecting the Numidians to try and stall his march with constant attacks on his flank until fatigue and thirst sapped Roman strength completely, he sent a contingent of light infantry and some cavalry under Rufus ahead to secure an encampment by the river.⁴⁵³

As the Romans descended onto the plain, Jugurtha pounced, cutting off their retreat with a detachment of infantry and ordering his line to attack the column. Even with Metellus' preparations, Numidian tactics and unfamiliarity with the terrain wrought havoc on Roman formations. However, the disciplined legions held out and were able to break the Numidian attack by counterattacking up the main hill the Numidians had been attacking from. Unable to resist Roman heavy infantry in amongst them, the Numidians were routed. Though the Romans had broken Jugurtha's army, they had suffered considerable losses while inflicting relatively little to the enemy, most of whom had escaped the defeat. Most importantly, Jugurtha himself remained at large to organise further resistance, retreating into the country's forests with his household elites to begin raising fresh forces.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵³ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 48-50.

⁴⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 50-54.

With his legions battered after the Battle of the Muthul and Jugurtha no closer to defeat, Metellus shifted his approach away from seeking more pitched battles. Having received the surrender of the city of Sicca, he instead toured this area between the Bagradas-Muthul valleys and the border with Roman Africa, capturing and destroying many of the towns and fortresses that dotted the region. Resistance was punished with massacres of the young male population to coerce both survivors and others nearby into compliance, as well as reducing the local manpower Jugurtha could draw on. In the former his actions bore some success, as Numidian towns began offering up hostages and supplies to the legions. As this advance progressed, Metellus left behind detachments to garrison these strongpoints. Although this obviously weakened his main force, these acted as a check on the population reneging on their submission and providing support or sanctuary to Jugurtha and his forces. Depriving Jugurtha of these strongpoints, which offered places of shelter and potential staging areas for operations, degraded ability of the Numidians to operate in the region. Conversely, securing them for Rome would improve the operational security of Metellus' army, as well as providing a local support network for the campaign.⁴⁵⁵ Lastly, since the Bagradas was one of the last natural obstacles between the Romans and the Numidian heartland, securing this area was a vital first step in the pacification of the whole kingdom.⁴⁵⁶

This last point becomes particularly salient with Jugurtha's response to Metellus' new operational character. Leaning into the irregular proficiencies of his men, Jugurtha left the main body of his nascent army to consolidate and took a body of select horsemen in pursuit of the legions. Augmenting the stealth afforded by their small numbers by travelling at night on little known roads, Jugurtha's horsemen assailed Roman forces with constant hit-and-run attacks on rearguards, isolated patrols, and stragglers. Forage was also destroyed and water sources spoiled ahead of the Roman advance. This represents a clear strategy to degrade Roman strength and slow their progress, as well as possibly goading the Roman commander into a misstep (as had happened repeatedly in Hispania).

⁴⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 54-56.

⁴⁵⁶ Holroyd, 'The Jugurthine War', 11.

Metellus' caution nevertheless held, refusing to be drawn into a disorderly pursuit by the Numidian raids. Furthermore, Roman foragers were always protected by both cavalry and infantry, and Roman columns always remained close enough to support one another if operating separately.⁴⁵⁷

With the Numidian horsemen allowing no opportunity to land a decisive blow against them, Metellus simply weathered their harrying as he advanced on Zama Regia to continue his pacification of the region. Described by Sallust as a key regional lynchpin, Metellus also hoped that the threat to the city would force Jugurtha to offer battle. Tipped off as to Metellus' plans by Roman deserters, Jugurtha was able to shore up both the morale and defences of the city before the legions arrived. The king then returned to the interior, carrying out a surprise attack on a supply column led by Marius at Sicca. Though caught off guard, Marius was able to drive off the ambushers and rendezvous with Metellus at Zama Regia, which was put to siege. However, the city resisted Roman assaults thanks to its fortifications and diversionary surprise attacks on the Roman camp by Jugurtha. With the end of the campaign season approaching, Metellus was forced to break off his stalling siege and withdraw to winter quarters, strengthening the garrisons across occupied Numidia to secure the Roman foothold for the next year's campaigning.⁴⁵⁸

The cessation of active campaigning during the winter leading into 108 BC allowed Metellus to focus on the more covert aspects of his strategy. Promising a pardon and the retention of his property, Metellus bribed Bomilcar (a trusted lieutenant of Jugurtha) to deliver up the Numidian king dead or alive. Bomilcar successfully convinced Jugurtha to send ambassadors to Metellus offering surrender, consenting to Metellus' demand of 200,000 pounds of silver, all of Jugurtha's elephants, a portion of his horses and arms, and the return of Roman deserters. However, as indicated by his arrangement with Bomilcar, Metellus recognised that Jugurtha was the centre of gravity for the Numidian war effort. Therefore, any end to hostilities would likely prove only temporary unless the

⁴⁵⁷ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 54-55.

⁴⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 56-61.

Numidian king was removed from power. His final demand was therefore that Jugurtha present himself in person. Fearing the implications of this, Jugurtha broke off talks and again fled into the Numidian interior to regroup, rearm, and organise his resistance campaign. Though victory was still not forthcoming, the Senate prorogued Metellus' command for the coming year.⁴⁵⁹

While he gathered his forces, Jugurtha resorted to covert means of undermining the Roman occupation, entreating his subjects in occupied settlements to revolt as well as attempting to bribe both Roman garrisons and their slaves. The inhabitants of Vaga heeded this call, erupting into revolt and massacring the city's unsuspecting Roman garrison during a festival. The garrison commander, a Latin by the name of Titus Turpilius Silanus, escaped to inform his patron Metellus in Roman Africa. Taking only a single legion and a large complement of Numidian cavalry, Metellus was able to reach Vaga before the news could spread and spur similar uprisings. With all his Numidian horsemen, Vaga's triumphant citizens mistook Metellus' arriving army for Jugurtha and opened the gates to greet him, whereupon the vengeful Romans cut them down and viciously sacked the city.⁴⁶⁰

The crisis managed, the question of Turpilius' survival was investigated, as there was suspicion of complicity in the plot so as to save himself. According to Plutarch, Marius successfully pushed to have Turpilius declared guilty and executed as part of his ongoing feud with Metellus, who had refused him leave to run in the upcoming consular elections. Sallust claims that the patrician Metellus chided the plebeian Marius for aspiring above his station, but it is just as likely that Metellus simply had not wanted to lose an experienced, capable, and popular officer like Marius.⁴⁶¹ Marius, however, had since taken every opportunity to raise his own standing at Metellus' expense, claiming the consul was prolonging the war to stay in power and that Jugurtha would be quickly defeated if *he* was in command.

⁴⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 61-62, 66.

⁴⁶⁰ *ibid.*, 66-69.

⁴⁶¹ *ibid.*, 64; Plutarch, *Marius*, 7; Diodorus, *Library of History*, 34/35.38; Duncan, *The Storm Before the Storm*, 109.

The Senate was soon awash with letters from equestrians in Africa and what remained of the pro-Roman Numidian royal family advocating for Marius to replace Metellus.⁴⁶²

While this was unfolding, Bomilcar's conspiratorial dealing with Metellus was exposed, resulting in his execution. Robbed of this means of ending the war by eliminating Jugurtha directly, Metellus immediately began preparing for a fresh offensive. These preparations included allowing the now uncooperative Marius to return to Rome for the elections.⁴⁶³ When the Roman campaign resumed, Jugurtha led his reconstituted army back into the field. Sallust describes him as increasingly paranoid after Bomilcar's treachery and Metellus' plots were revealed, resulting in constant shifts in direction and between attack and retreat, as well as a revolving door of officers. While paranoia might explain the latter, the others are more suggestive of efforts to avoid being pinned down by the legions and a return to guerrilla-style hit-and-run attacks respectively. Given Metellus' previous operations, the location of garrisoned cities which might be relied upon for support, and the previously discussed access afforded by the route, it is likely that the legions took the same route along the rivers as before (see *Figure 2.5*).⁴⁶⁴ Despite Jugurtha's attempts to avoid Metellus, he was cornered by the legions somewhere along their march and an encounter battle took place. Whether this was a planned ambush by Metellus is unclear, but the Numidians were caught unprepared and routed. However, they again suffered relatively few casualties thanks to the speed with which they were able to disengage and retreat.⁴⁶⁵

With his domestic support dwindling following these setbacks and his increasingly murderous paranoia, Jugurtha retreated to the city of Thala with his family and what remained of his army.⁴⁶⁶ Fortified and sitting atop the only source of water for nearly 50 miles, Thala held a large portion of

⁴⁶² Plutarch, *Marius*, 7-8; Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 63-65, 69; Velleius Paterculus, *Compendium of Roman History*. Translated from Latin by F. Shipley (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924), 2.11; Duncan, *The Storm Before the Storm*, 108-111.

⁴⁶³ Plutarch, *Marius*, 8.

⁴⁶⁴ Holroyd, 'The Jugurthine War', 11.

⁴⁶⁵ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 70-74; Livy, *Periochae*, 65; Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 5.15.7.

⁴⁶⁶ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 72, 74.

Jugurtha's treasury. When Metellus' intelligence-gathering efforts informed him of the king's location, he resolved to seize the initiative and strike a decisive blow while Jugurtha was still weak following this latest defeat. Informed of the difficulties the geography would pose in this and recognising that swiftness was vital, Metellus stripped his baggage train of all but the minimum provisions and as much water as could be carried and set off across the desert. Having thought that the difficult approach would preclude an attack, Thala's defenders were caught relatively unprepared by Metellus' arrival, and the city was taken after a 40-day long siege. However, it transpired that Jugurtha had escaped Metellus' grasp once again, having made off into the wilderness with his family and most of the treasure when the legions had emerged from the desert.⁴⁶⁷

Jugurtha's expulsion from the country enabled Metellus to march west and secure control of Cirta to serve as his new base of operations. Sallust mentions nothing of a siege, but Holroyd points out that Cirta's fortifications may not have been repaired after its sack by Jugurtha in 112 BC. With his court seemingly following him anyway, Jugurtha probably saw little value in leaving a serious garrison to defend a highly vulnerable city; Metellus may therefore have been able to simply walk in.⁴⁶⁸ Although this significant extension of his lines of communication put them at greater risk from guerrillas, seizing Cirta was a statement of military prestige and will have served to highlight Jugurtha's poor fortunes, reducing the domestic support the king might be able to call on for a return.⁴⁶⁹

Meanwhile, Jugurtha and his followers had made their way southwest to Gaetulia. The nomadic Gaetuli were, like the Numidians, highly capable light horsemen and so would suit Jugurtha's operational style. Using gold from the Thala treasury, Jugurtha enlisted a large number of Gaetulians to serve as the core of a new army and spent the next few months training the nomads up. During this time, he also formed an alliance with Mauretania's king, Bocchus, and when Jugurtha returned to Numidia the two joined forces before beginning to march east. When reports of this reached Cirta,

⁴⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 75-76.

⁴⁶⁸ Holroyd, 'The Jugurthine War', 6.

⁴⁶⁹ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 77, 81.

Metellus responded by fortifying his camp there and sending envoys to Bocchus discouraging him from associating himself with a doomed enemy of Rome.⁴⁷⁰ This cautious, hybrid approach was a prudent response to the Roman operational picture. After more than a year of campaigning, Metellus' army was likely considerably depleted. Sallust explicitly mentions heavy Roman losses in one of the two major battles fought, to which one must also add the attrition incurred by constant skirmishes and the general effects of extended campaigning in a hostile environment.⁴⁷¹ Furthermore, this part of Numidia had not been cleared like the eastern border region had, meaning a westward march risked further losses from guerrilla attacks. Metellus' strategy of using diplomacy to try and neutralise Bocchus therefore aimed to give his weakened army a more manageable fight.⁴⁷²

Sallust, meanwhile, attributes Metellus' 'lethargy' to bitterness at news of Marius' election as consul and the subsequent decision by the People's Assembly to overrule his prorogation and instead give Marius command in Numidia.⁴⁷³ Regardless of his reasoning, Metellus' diplomatic overtures failed to deter Bocchus, who allegedly felt sympathy for the Numidian's predicament and urged the Romans to seek a compromise with Jugurtha. This was obviously not something Rome would accept, and the conflict remained largely frozen for the remainder of Metellus' term.⁴⁷⁴

Florus, Velleius Paterculus, Eutropius, and Plutarch all claim that Metellus had all but won the war by the time of Marius taking command. However, the military picture does not support this.⁴⁷⁵ Firstly, Jugurtha remained at large. Secondly, though he had lost most of his domestic supporters and the best part of two armies, Jugurtha had since gained a powerful external ally in Bocchus and formed a new army of Gaetulians. Thirdly, though Metellus had eliminated many Jugurthine strongpoints in

⁴⁷⁰ *ibid.*, 80-83.

⁴⁷¹ Holroyd, 'The Jugurthine War', 12-13.

⁴⁷² *ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁷³ Duncan, *The Storm Before the Storm*, 113.

⁴⁷⁴ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 73, 82-83; Plutarch, *Marius*, 8-9.

⁴⁷⁵ Florus, *Epitome of Roman History*. Translated from Latin by E. S. Forster (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929), 1.36.13; Velleius Paterculus, *Compendium of Roman History*, 2.11; Eutropius, *An Abbreviated History of Rome from Its Beginning*, 4.27; Plutarch, *Marius*, 10.

the east, the rest of the country was as yet untouched by the legions. Furthermore, Jugurtha's later ability to raid Marius' forces in the east shows even that region was not completely secured.⁴⁷⁶ As long as Jugurtha and his forces had strongholds in Numidia to operate from and retreat to, the Romans had little hope of completely defeating him or even cornering him.⁴⁷⁷ Metellus had recognised this and might have delivered given sufficient time, but Rome (threatened by the Cimbri) desired a quick end to the conflict and looked to Marius to make good on his promises.

⁴⁷⁶ Holroyd, 'The Jugurthine War', 6.

⁴⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 12.

Marius

Upon his election to command in Numidia as one of 107 BC's consuls, Marius immediately began preparing for his campaign. It is clear that his primary concern was manpower. Despite Gracchan reform attempts, the socio-economic crisis afflicting the middle and lower classes of Roman society had arguably worsened. Furthermore, the *socii* were increasingly resistant to Roman manpower demands given their continued lack of citizenship. As a result, even with recent property requirement reductions, the pool of men eligible for military service was smaller than ever. This was further drained by losses already suffered in Numidia, as well as localised insurgencies in Hispania and recent defeats against the Cimbri.⁴⁷⁸ Again, the Cimbrian threat's relative proximity meant Marius' consular colleague was prioritised for reinforcements.

Though Marius' reputation attracted many officers and discharged veterans to form the experienced core of his new army, his levy fell short of the what he deemed necessary in Numidia. He therefore secured a complete exemption from the property requirements to recruit the so-called *capite censi* or *proletarii*. Lured by the prospect of wages, glory, and loot, the poor masses flocked to enlist under Marius, who equipped them with state funds. This development would have serious implications for the Roman military-political dynamic, but its immediate effect was that Marius was able to raise even more men than planned.⁴⁷⁹ That this measure (previously reserved only for the direst emergencies) was approved for Numidia not only disproves the claim that Metellus was on the brink of victory, but also indicates a recognition that victory in this relatively 'minor' theatre still required a significant application of resources.

⁴⁷⁸ Plutarch, *Marius*, 8; Livy, *Periochae*, 63, 65; Velleius Paterculus, *Compendium of Roman History*, 2.12; Diodorus, *Library of History*, 34/35.37.

⁴⁷⁹ Santosuosso, *Storming the Heavens*, 10-14; Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 84-86; Florus, *Epitome of Roman History*, 1.36.13.

Marius ferried his new army over to Numidia, leaving behind a young quaestor by the name of Lucius Cornelius Sulla to raise an additional force of *socii* cavalry.⁴⁸⁰ On top of improving Roman capacities in the operational and strategic roles of cavalry, this step was a direct response to the threat of the enemy's dangerous horsemen.⁴⁸¹ Marius' initial offensive into Numidia swept west towards Cirta, attacking any lightly-defended Numidian towns and fortresses they passed on their march (presumably demolishing the forts and stationing garrisons where necessary). These minor actions were more than a resumption of Metellus' strategy of eliminating potential Jugurthine strongpoints and expanding regions of Roman security, they also served to 'blood' his new army, embedding their training and improving their cohesion. More cynically, they provided Marius' troops with their first taste of the loot his recruitment campaigns had promised, buoying their morale and loyalty to him.⁴⁸²

The approach of the legions compelled Jugurtha and Bocchus to separate and withdraw into more naturally defensible ground, likely the surrounding mountains (see *Figure 2.4*). The Numidian king reportedly planned to revert to raids on Roman allies and guerrilla attacks on Roman forces when the legions grew complacent or spread themselves too thin. However, the experienced Marius practiced the same prudence that had served Metellus well (possibly having advised for it then), and Jugurtha's opportunity did not arise. Making extensive use of scouts to maintain contact with Jugurtha and gather intelligence, Marius (already familiar with Numidian methods) was able to predict and counter Jugurtha's actions. As a result, the legions were able to maintain the initiative, repeatedly intercepting Jugurthine raids on Roman-controlled territory. Though the Romans repeatedly defeated the Numido-Gaetulian army, forcing them to disperse and retreat, Jugurtha himself eluded Marius. However, Rome's improved strength and fortunes began to make Bocchus reconsider his position, professing his neutrality and desire for friendship with Rome.⁴⁸³

⁴⁸⁰ Plutarch, *Sulla*. Translated from Greek by B. Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), 3; Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 95.

⁴⁸¹ Holroyd, 'The Jugurthine War', 9.

⁴⁸² Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 86-87.

⁴⁸³ *ibid.*, 87-88.

Though that was promising, this skirmishing brought Marius little closer to victory. The consul therefore shifted approach. Marius planned to systematically invest all the cities and fortresses which were either strategically located or possessed significant garrisons, reasoning that either he would succeed and Jugurtha would be robbed of his support network, or Jugurtha would be forced to come to its defence and could be defeated in a general engagement.⁴⁸⁴ This represents a clear strategy to systematically reduce Jugurtha's capacity to resist and draw an irregular enemy out onto a regular battlefield. Although Sallust did not lay out Metellus' strategy like this, our earlier analysis suggested that Marius' predecessor had been working through a similar strategy (albeit on a more localised scale) in eastern Numidia. Even if he publicly criticised the speed of its implementation, Marius' continuation of the approach suggests he recognised its logic, and one wonders if he contributed to its formulation as one of Metellus' legates. In this case, his enlistment of the *capite censi* becomes a pre-planned surge for this escalation of the ground control campaign.⁴⁸⁵ Marius clearly believed that, with a larger army and Bocchus wavering in his support for Jugurtha, this strategy could now be seen through.

The latter part of the summer of 107 BC saw Marius tour the region to detach these strongpoints from Jugurtha. Holroyd suggests that most of the strongpoints that required attention lay in the region he refers to as 'Old Numidia', roughly corresponding to the Massylian territory that had been given to Adherbal in 116 BC (see *Figure 2.3* & *Figure 2.4*). This would explain why previous operations had been concentrated in that area. Though Marius' conquests are not listed, we might therefore hypothesise that his operations followed this pattern. Marius initially focused his attention on weaker, minor targets, possibly out of a desire to save his army's strength for the expected confrontation with Jugurtha.⁴⁸⁶ However, when the king failed to appear, Marius began to think bigger.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁴ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 88.

⁴⁸⁵ Holroyd, 'The Jugurthine War', 14.

⁴⁸⁶ *ibid.*, 15-16.

⁴⁸⁷ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 89.

His next target would be Capsa, a walled city deep in the desert to the south of Thala (see *Figure 2.5*), supporting the hypothesis of his operating in the east. Though Capsa hosted a strong garrison, its significance stemmed from the city's staunch Jugurthine partisanship and the potential propaganda value of its capture. Orosius claims the city also served as one of Jugurtha's treasuries,⁴⁸⁸ but no other sources corroborate this and Holroyd states that its position on the very edge of Numidian kingdom makes this unlikely.⁴⁸⁹ Metellus' capture of Thala had won him renown and fear amongst Romans and Numidians respectively, and Marius likely hoped for a similar result with his strike on the even more isolated Capsa. On top of emulating Metellus' preparations, Marius endeavoured to ensure surprise by dispatching a diversionary column of light troops to a supply hub near Sicca with orders to await him there. As at Thala, Capsa's inhabitants were so secure in their remoteness that they were wholly unprepared for an attack, enabling Marius' troops to secure the gates and trap many outside the walls. Though the city surrendered shortly thereafter, Marius sacked it nonetheless, massacring the fighting-age males and selling the rest into slavery.⁴⁹⁰ As well as robbing Jugurtha of another defensible sanctuary, the raid and subsequent sack were designed to shock the enemy, impressing upon them that nowhere was truly safe from Marius and what awaited those who resisted him.

The Numidians evidently took this message to heart and, as the prorogued Marius continued his reduction of Jugurtha's strongpoints in 106 BC, he found that most surrendered or were deserted upon his arrival. This indicates that Marius' actions at Capsa achieved their intended effect on Numidian morale, dramatically reducing both the time taken and losses incurred in his sweep. Orosius mentions that Jugurtha resumed his guerrilla attacks against the legions. However, possibly due to the Roman army's increased strength, but did not seriously impede Marius' operations.⁴⁹¹ Though Sallust again does not list Marius' conquests, Holroyd asserts that we can assume he swept in a wide

⁴⁸⁸ Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 5.15.8.

⁴⁸⁹ Holroyd, 'The Jugurthine War', 15.

⁴⁹⁰ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 89-91.

⁴⁹¹ Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 5.15.9.

northwesterly arc. This based on the assumption that earlier operations had likely largely secured Old Numidia and the Cirta region, and the fact that the next location identified by Sallust is a fort near the Muluccha River.⁴⁹² Marking the Numido-Mauretanian border (see *Figure 2.2*), Marius' arrival there from Capsa indicates the scale of his undertaking.⁴⁹³ Even if Holroyd's theory that there were fewer strongpoints outside of Old Numidia is correct, this sweep would still have taken several months, supporting its reading as a premeditated strategy of denial instead of aimless raiding.⁴⁹⁴

The fort at the Muluccha was reportedly another of Jugurtha's treasures, explaining Marius' eagerness to seize it. Either Jugurtha risked losing more of his likely dwindling treasure reserves, thereby degrading his ability to continue his resistance; or he came to its defence and risked battle with the legions. Well-defended and occupying an elevated position that was both tactically defensible and on Jugurtha's far border with a close ally, the treasury's value was clear. However, possibly because of the fort's strong position, Jugurtha did not rush to its defence when Marius arrived and put it to siege. This confidence appears to have been well-founded though, as the siege soon stalled. Marius reportedly considered withdrawing, but the discovery of a concealed path up into the fort allowed him to trick the defenders into abandoning the walls, enabling the legionaries to capture the fort and its treasury.⁴⁹⁵

Having already lost control of much of his kingdom, the capture of possibly one of his last treasures was a major blow to Jugurtha, not least because of its implications for paying his army. As Marius' strategy had intended, he was therefore forced to put everything behind one final gambit. Jugurtha's desperation was such that he handed over a third of his kingdom to secure Bocchus' direct support in driving out the Romans, an offer Bocchus could scarcely refuse.⁴⁹⁶ Bocchus' direct involvement proved the prescience of Marius' raising additional *socii* cavalry as a crucial balancing

⁴⁹² Holroyd, 'The Jugurthine War', 15-16.

⁴⁹³ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 92.

⁴⁹⁴ Holroyd, 'The Jugurthine War', 15-16.

⁴⁹⁵ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 92-94; Florus, *Epitome of Roman History*, 1.36.14.

⁴⁹⁶ Holroyd, 'The Jugurthine War', 17.

element. Sallust reports that they arrived with Sulla during the Muluccha siege, but Holroyd argues that it is unlikely Marius would launch his sweep without waiting for such an important asset.⁴⁹⁷

As the end of the campaign season approached, Marius' army began to work its way back towards Cirta. If Holroyd's assumptions as to Marius' sweep are correct, this return journey will have taken them through as yet uncleared territory, presenting both a risk and an opportunity. The obvious opportunity was to potentially deal with more strongpoints on the way, especially given Sallust's earlier claims of limited resistance. However, making repeated stops in an area where they might operate with relative ease presented a major risk with the combined Berber army looming, even with the addition of Sulla's cavalry. Seemingly cognisant of this danger, Marius reportedly made no such stops.⁴⁹⁸ Given Bocchus' temperamental support, the decimation of Jugurtha's strongpoints, and the capture of much of the Numidian treasury, time was arguably on Marius' side. He would therefore likely have been content to see what damage the winter would do to the enemy before continuing his campaign the next season, but this is not how 106 BC would close.

As the legions marched east, they were intercepted by the two kings, who launched a surprise attack on the column as dusk fell. Attacking from all sides, the Berber assault initially caused chaos, but the disciplined legionaries soon reformed into circular formations that covered their flanks and better defended against cavalry. Assisted by his own cavalry, Marius regrouped his scattered forces and withdrew up some nearby hills. Were it not for the superior discipline of the legionaries, this ordered fighting withdrawal could have become a rout, and it was disciplinary asymmetry that also enabled the Roman breakout. Thinking themselves victorious, the Berbers celebrated through the night. They were subsequently in no state to fight when Marius' army suddenly sallied forth the next morning, and the Africans were routed with heavy casualties.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁷ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 95-97; Holroyd, 'The Jugurthine War', 9.

⁴⁹⁸ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 97.

⁴⁹⁹ *ibid.*, 97-99.

Following this brush with defeat, Marius doubled down on his caution, using native scouts to continually track the enemy and marching his army in a protective square formation in case of ambush. The army also took the road along the Mediterranean coast, avoiding the more cavalry-friendly ground of Numidia's central plateau and enabling resupply from the more pro-Roman coastal cities. Possibly due to these precautions, the two sides did not meet in a major engagement again until Marius finally neared Cirta.⁵⁰⁰ If Marius had skirted the coast past Igilgilis before following the Ampsaga River south, he would have been forced to cross a stretch of flatter ground to reach Cirta (see *Figure 2.4*), and it was seemingly here that the Berbers saw their opportunity and struck.⁵⁰¹

Informed of the enemy's approach by his scouts, Marius held his ground and kept his army's square formation, denying Jugurtha the opportunity to attack a weak flank. Undeterred, the Berbers attacked on all sides. Though they agree that the Second Battle of Cirta was hard-fought, Orosius and Sallust's accounts differ somewhat. The former credits a providential rainstorm for success, while the latter credits a flank attack by Sulla and the cavalry.⁵⁰² Regardless of the specifics, the legions were able to repel the assault and inflict another heavy defeat on the kings, shattering their combined army.⁵⁰³ Within a week of their defeat, the cowed Bocchus initiated fresh talks with Marius, asking to be pardoned for his hostility and for an alliance of friendship with Rome. Recognising the opportunity to rob Jugurtha of his vital ally, Marius entrusted negotiations to Sulla and the legate Aulus Manlius while he made further expeditions against Jugurtha's remaining strongpoints at the beginning of 105 BC.⁵⁰⁴

Having recognised that Jugurtha was the centre of gravity in the war (hence his attempts to isolate him and capture him in battle), Marius knew that neutralising the king was the only permanent solution to the trouble in Numidia. Though he had failed to do this by military means, Bocchus' desire to win Rome's friendship made betrayal a viable option again. Marius subsequently dispatched Sulla

⁵⁰⁰ Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 5.15.10.

⁵⁰¹ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 100-101.

⁵⁰² Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 5.15.10-5.15.17; Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 101.

⁵⁰³ Florus, *Epitome of Roman History*, 1.36.15.

⁵⁰⁴ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 101-104; Florus, *Epitome of Roman History*, 1.36.16; Diodorus, *Library of History*, 34/35.39; Livy, *Periochae*, 66; Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 5.15.18.

with a small force to Bocchus' camp, whereupon the quaestor insisted to the Mauretanian king that the Romans required a show of good faith on his part to cement their friendship: the delivery of Jugurtha. Although initially reluctant, Bocchus eventually lured Jugurtha to his camp under the guise of hosting a peace conference with Sulla, whereupon the Numidian king was captured and turned over to the Romans.⁵⁰⁵ It would be easy to credit this final scheme with victory, but this would ignore the work of Marius and Metellus' armies in creating the desperate conditions for such an approach to be successful.⁵⁰⁶ The victory is therefore a hybrid one, secured by diplomacy and treachery but earned by martial toil, just as in Lusitania. Without Jugurtha to lead (or pay) them, what remained of the king's forces evaporated, giving Marius his promised victory. After serving as the centrepiece of Marius' triumphal parade in Rome, the disgraced Numidian king was thrown in the Tullianum prison, where he was unceremoniously strangled to death not long after.⁵⁰⁷

For his part in Jugurtha's capture, Bocchus was awarded western Numidia, while a pro-Roman grandson of Massinissa was installed as a client king in Cirta to rule over the eastern rump of Old Numidia.⁵⁰⁸ When the region was reorganised into provinces, the Roman state's subsequent attempts to curb native transhumance led to recurrent unrest, the most serious being that of the Gaetolian Tacfarinus during Tiberius' reign. Though provincial rule was never seriously threatened, Tacfarinas' experience as an auxiliary and the mobility of his light troops enabled his insurgency to raid across Numidia for several years.⁵⁰⁹ Jugurtha was dead, but his martial legacy endured.

⁵⁰⁵ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 104-113; Plutarch, *Marius*, 10; Plutarch, *Sulla*, 3; Livy, *Periochae*, 66; Diodorus, *Library of History*, 34/35.39; Florus, *Epitome of Roman History*, 1.36.17-1.36.18; Eutropius, *An Abbreviated History of Rome from Its Beginning*, 4.27.

⁵⁰⁶ Holroyd, 'The Jugurthine War', 18.

⁵⁰⁷ Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 5.15.18-5.15.19; Velleius Paterculus, *Compendium of Roman History*, 2.12.

⁵⁰⁸ Kershaw, *Barbarians*, 174.

⁵⁰⁹ D. Cherry, 'Armed Resistance to Roman Rule in North Africa: From the Time of Augustus to the Vandal Invasion', *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 31, 5 (2020), 1044-1057.

Analysis

Though the Jugurthine War would soon be overshadowed by the climax of the Cimbrian War, a slave uprising in Sicily, and looming revolt among the *socii*, Rome's dismissal of the 'last war' in favour of the latest crises does not diminish its value. The aforementioned focus of historians both past and present on the political figures themselves rather than on their campaigns, also risks overlooking the details of a conflict that should sound familiar to many of us today: a conventional military power struggling to put down an irregular enemy in rough desert terrain. As with the Lusitanian War, Jugurtha did not threaten the survival of the Roman state, nor did he pose a serious threat to neighbouring Roman Africa (unlike the Lusitani and the Hispanic provinces). Nevertheless, the fighting in Numidia was remarkably fierce. The Roman expeditionary force was first smashed in a single battle, attrited to such a degree during its second campaign that an unprecedented recruitment drive was needed to return it to strength, and pushed to the brink of defeat in the final engagements of the war. All of this while the northern border of Italy itself *was* threatened. However, despite what Roman losses might suggest, analysis will show that the Jugurthine War fits our small wars criteria very neatly.

In terms of the forces involved in the Jugurthine War, the asymmetry is even more pronounced than in the other conflicts that have been examined thus far. At the beginning of the conflict, the Roman legion was largely the same as it had been during the Lusitanian War, with Rome's timocratic civil militia (plus a small but growing number of volunteers) organised into role-based classes according to the panoply their wealth afforded. Although not strictly professional, the service requirements for military-age Romans (as many as 20 years/campaigns for infantrymen and 10 for cavalrymen) and the regular training their fighting style required meant that many legionaries were proficient soldiers. Often, legionaries possessed the cumulative training and combat experience of several campaigns.⁵¹⁰ However, Marius' recruitment of the *capite censi* moved the legions another step along its slow march towards true professionalism, growing the nascent trickle of volunteers into a steady flow of men who

⁵¹⁰ Polybius, *Histories*, 6.19, 6.52

were actively joining the army as a career rather than as an unwelcome diversion from their normal trade. As mentioned in the previous chapter, not only were these volunteers often more motivated, their being volunteers meant that they were unlikely to have as high turnover as conscripts. This kept the experience they developed on campaign within the army rather than losing it with demobilisations.

Again, the legionary panoply remained largely the same as in the Lusitanian War, with men largely equipped to either conduct or support protracted close order infantry engagements on the battlefield. If the equipmental regularisation that is often included within Marius' 'reforms' did in fact take place alongside his enlistment of *proletarii*, this battlefield-centric orientation was only further entrenched. This development saw the citizens who made up the *velites* being folded into the new uniform heavy infantry line. Though non-Roman troops would take on the responsibilities of the *velites*, that the legions were sacrificing part of their light infantry to field an even greater proportion of heavy infantry speaks volumes about Roman doctrine. Primarily, it indicates that the attainment of large conventional engagements to inflict decisive defeats remained central in Roman military thought.⁵¹¹

While the Roman military had developed into a well-trained and regulated institution with complex organisational and logistical structures, the same could not be said for the forces of Jugurtha. As is common throughout the ancient world, the account of Sallust suggests that the Numidian military system appears to have been based around a warrior class that existed within Numidian society, presumably the men who would have waged the inter-tribal conflicts that were endemic in the region. Sallust's distinction between these men and "those better acquainted with husbandry and cattle than with war" (who would soon be levied in droves to replenish losses of the former) implies both a certain level of dedication and its accompanying skill. However, it is unlikely that the warriors were 'full-time' soldiers, and they would likely have practiced other trades during peacetime. Jugurtha does appear to

⁵¹¹ Santosuosso, *Storming the Heavens*, 10-14, 16-19.

have maintained some kind of 'elite', standing household cavalry force to serve as his bodyguards and undertake special missions with him.⁵¹² Given his wealth and the obvious benefits of dedicated bodyguards, it is likely that these men (and any similar retinues for powerful nobles) *will* have been 'full-time'. Such formations were the exception rather than the rule, however. Indeed, the tendency of Jugurtha's armies (with the sole exception of his household cavalry) to simply evaporate after defeats is a clear indicator of irregularity compared to Roman forces who conducted ordered retreats and regrouped after defeats.⁵¹³ This post-defeat dispersion (aided by their superior mobility) is described by Callwell as a common behaviour of irregular armies, further supporting this.⁵¹⁴

Despite this relative lack of development, there is evidence to suggest that Berber forces were not the disorganised rabble of robbers that Roman sources paint them as.⁵¹⁵ First of all, when Jugurtha enlisted the services of the Gaetulians after the fall of Thala, he devoted what seems to have been several months to their training. The programme included marching in ranks, following standards, obeying words of command, and the performance of "other military exercises". Given that these Gaetulians were intended to replace the men that Jugurtha had already lost, this implies that these were capabilities the original Numidian troops had possessed.⁵¹⁶ This is supported by reports of Numidians being arranged in a battle line before the action at the Muthul, including mention of discrete sub-units of cavalry and infantry that possessed standards.⁵¹⁷ Even if these groupings in the battle array were simply tribal in nature, it points to the existence of some basic level of discipline and organisation.

The problem with this argument is that there is little explicit mention of the Numidians maintaining this order when fighting, opting instead for loose order or none at all.⁵¹⁸ Jugurtha's training

⁵¹² Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 25, 54, 56.

⁵¹³ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 49, 54, 74, 80, 99.

⁵¹⁴ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 87.

⁵¹⁵ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 97.

⁵¹⁶ *ibid.*, 80.

⁵¹⁷ *ibid.*, 49-50.

⁵¹⁸ *ibid.*, 51, 97.

of the Gaetulians and Rome's earlier training of Numidian infantry in close-order fighting instead implies that their looser order was a calculated decision rather than an indicator of an inability to fight in tight formations.⁵¹⁹ Possessing little or no armour, melee fighting in close formations exposed the Numidians' limited manpower to great risk and impeded the mobility their lightness conferred. By adopting a looser order and striking from a distance with missiles, they therefore were able to expose themselves to as little risk as possible and maintain manoeuvrability superiority when engaging the enemy. As with the Lusitani, the skirmishing hit-and-run tactics of the Numidians did require a certain level of proficiency among the soldiers to work effectively, supporting the premise that Numidian warriors possessed a not inconsiderable base in that regard. However, we should again be careful not to conflate proficiency in such deeply socio-culturally entrenched martial traditions amongst the warrior class with 'regularity'.

Roman doctrine going into the Jugurthine War still revolved around the attainment of conventional engagements with the enemy, relying on the superiority of the legions in pitched battles to inflict decisive defeats on the enemy to "compel [them] to do [the Romans'] will".⁵²⁰ This is evidenced by the Roman strategy in Numidia, which sought to force Jugurtha to commit to the pitched battles he so studiously avoided by robbing him of his towns, strongholds, and treasuries. Bestia accepted the Jugurthine 'surrender' only after failing to draw Jugurtha out, while Jugurtha's baiting of Aulus likely occurred because the commander believed his feint on Suthul/Calama had had its intended effect.⁵²¹ Even the ground denial campaigns of Metellus and Marius also aimed at eventually leaving Jugurtha with no sanctuary to retreat to and no choice but to face them in the open, albeit with greater success. Metellus broke up Jugurtha's army in two battles in Old Numidia, cornering him in Thala and forcing him to seek refuge and men in Gaetulia.⁵²² Meanwhile, Marius' clearance of

⁵¹⁹ Livy, *The History of Rome*, 24.48.

⁵²⁰ Clausewitz, *On War*, 75-77.

⁵²¹ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 28-29, 36-38.

⁵²² *ibid.*, 48, 56, 74-80.

Numidia left an increasingly desperate Jugurtha with little choice but to throw everything he and Bocchus had into two ultimately unsuccessful assaults on Marius' army that broke the back of the anti-Roman resistance.⁵²³ Though we will see that the methods with which Rome hoped to draw Jugurtha out evolved as the war progressed and Numidia's operational realities became apparent, the defeat of Jugurtha and his army on the battlefield remained central to the Roman operational approach.

The reason Roman commanders spent so much effort trying to draw Jugurtha out is that the Numidian approach to the war was *not* a conventional one. Despite showing a capacity for pitched battles at points in their military history, there is little to suggest that conventional engagements were the Numidians' preferred means of combatting the Roman expeditions.⁵²⁴ As discussed earlier, Numidian strategic culture was instead influenced by the region's low-intensity tribal warfare.⁵²⁵ Though Numidian skirmishing tactics could disrupt Roman lines, the risk of heavy casualties innate to such engagements was too great given the relative conventional strength, training, and discipline of the legions. The superior mobility and local knowledge of the Numidians afforded them considerable control over when, where, and how they could engage the legions. The Berbers therefore only fought pitched battles when either they had no other choice or when the tactical and operational picture was in their favour (e.g., in rough terrain).

Instead, Jugurtha's forces routinely conducted both large-scale surprise attacks and small-scale ambushes against the invading legions, launching volleys of javelins or darting in fast to jab with spears before wheeling back and scattering to avoid any Roman attempts at a reply.⁵²⁶ Combined with the aforementioned mobility and local knowledge, these tactics enabled the Numidians to do as much damage as possible in a short time and disengage without being drawn into a slugging match. This 'butcher-and-bolt' operational approach is markedly different from that of the Romans, who

⁵²³ *ibid.*, 87-101.

⁵²⁴ Polybius, *Histories*, 3.72, 3.116; Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 48-53, 101; Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 5.15.9-5.15.18.

⁵²⁵ Horsted, *The Numidians*, 8.

⁵²⁶ Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 5.15.11-5.15.15; Horsted, *The Numidians*, 6-12.

disparagingly used the same word (*latrocinium*) to describe the guerrilla tactics of the Numidians as they had for the Lusitani. However, such a posture will be familiar to any student of irregular warfare.⁵²⁷

The same can be said for Jugurtha's strategy, which was clearly formulated with these principles and considerations in mind, as well as the guiding political objectives he hoped to achieve in the war. In the case of the latter, it can be argued that Jugurtha's primary political objective was maintaining his power within Numidia, or at the very least the lives of himself and his family. This is evidenced by the terms of his negotiations with the various Roman commanders in Numidia.⁵²⁸ The absence of Numidian offensives against Roman Africa suggests an overall defensive posture for Numidian forces, supporting this reading of Jugurthine war aims as being limited to the survival of the regime.

With the Roman expeditionary force being the primary threat in this regard, its removal from Numidia was paramount. Given Jugurtha's familiarity with the strengths and weaknesses of both the legions and his own warriors, the conventional method of doing this (i.e. forcing the legions to withdraw by defeating them in battle) was deemed infeasible. Instead, Jugurtha adopted a less-direct, hybrid approach that consisted of two main parts: guerrilla warfare and political machinations. Sallust describes how Jugurtha was first exposed to Rome's endemic corruption and nepotism when serving in Hispania, and it was against this weakness that he set his considerable guile.⁵²⁹ Having almost prevented Roman intervention outright through the bribery of influential Senators, Jugurtha spread further bribes both back in Rome and within the Roman expeditionary force to win concessions, encourage mutiny and treachery, and to hamstring the Roman campaign wherever possible.⁵³⁰

Part of the reason this met with some initial success is due to the difficulties the legions were facing in the field. As the legions moved about the country, they were constantly frustrated by

⁵²⁷ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 48-52, 97.

⁵²⁸ *ibid.*, 29, 38, 46, 62

⁵²⁹ *ibid.*, 1-9.

⁵³⁰ *ibid.*, 25-29, 34, 36, 38, 66.

Jugurthine guerrilla warfare and scorched earth tactics.⁵³¹ The size of actions varied, but the regularity of even the small ones saw the Roman expeditionary force suffer a steady stream of losses. Meanwhile, the Romans were given few opportunities to land counterpunches of their own. According to Sallust, Jugurtha's hope was that Roman frustrations with their lack of progress and the prospective difficulty of the campaign would make them amenable to being bribed into settling for reduced demands.⁵³² The same went for dealing with the campaigns of Metellus and Marius, whom Jugurtha clearly hoped to confound and attrit to such a degree that the Romans would be forced to withdraw in order to focus their attention and resources on the Cimbric threat. This 'long-game' strategy on the part of the irregulars is a common one in asymmetric warfare (particularly in expeditionary examples). In this context, all the guerrillas need to do is stay 'in the fight' and keep inflicting casualties while the pressure on and weakness within the regular force (and its associated authority) grows. The inherent force protection qualities of the Numidian operational art, their mobility and affinity for the terrain, as well as the network of strongpoints across the country made this strategy a natural and effective fit for Jugurtha.

With the operational and strategic situation examined, where the Jugurthine War fits into Callwell's typology of small wars now needs to be considered. Some important context to remember going into this is that Numidia was not Roman territory at this time or even a Roman puppet, but an independent kingdom in its own right that was merely allied to Rome through treaties of friendship.⁵³³ This immediately rules out the Jugurthine War as having been an example of Callwell's second class of small wars: campaigns for the suppression of lawlessness and/or insurrection; which he describes as being exclusively internal in nature.⁵³⁴ Which of the remaining two classes the war falls into is indicated by the Roman motives and objectives going into the conflict, as well as the geo-political end state of

⁵³¹ *ibid.*, 54-56; Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 5.15.9.

⁵³² Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 29.

⁵³³ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 5-7; Appian, *The Punic Wars*, 32, 54, 67, 105-107.

⁵³⁴ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 26.

post-war Numidia. The catalyst for direct Roman involvement was arguably Jugurtha's killing of Adherbal and the massacre of the Italians, a diplomatic incident the Roman Senate could not ignore.⁵³⁵

Though the treaty signed by the bribed Bestia (amounting to a relatively small indemnity) should not be taken as representative of Roman aims for the war, the terms of Jugurtha's surrender proposed by Metellus began with a similar, albeit larger indemnity. However, the scheming undertaken by Metellus to effect Jugurtha's delivery to him either dead or alive suggests that the accompanying request to present himself to the consul was simply another means of achieving that.⁵³⁶ This reading, as well as Metellus' later insistence to Bocchus that Jugurtha's fate was sealed and Sulla's own ploy to capture Jugurtha through Bocchus, suggests that Rome intended to punish Jugurtha for overseeing the murder of its allied king and the slaughter of its citizens.⁵³⁷ The extent of the punishment they envisioned at the outset is unclear. It may be that an indemnity *was* the desired outcome until the public outcry proved it to be insufficient. After this, it is likely that Jugurtha's removal from power and imprisonment/forced exile from Numidia might have been called for, until his vexatious resistance signed his death warrant.

Regardless of the specifics, this suggests that the Jugurthine War falls within Callwell's third category, pertaining to wars waged to punish an enemy for an injury, overthrow a dangerous military power, or establish order in foreign territory.⁵³⁸ Given Numidia's placement both on the border of Roman Africa and within Rome's diplomatic sphere generally, the latter two sub-types are also relevant. These can be read as Rome toppling a hostile Jugurtha on their African border due to the threat posed by Numidian cavalry, and Roman intervention in an ally's civil war respectively. The Jugurthine War's inclusion in this group is further supported by the fact that, after Jugurtha was captured, Numidia remained an independent kingdom (albeit with a new pro-Roman king).

⁵³⁵ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 26-27.

⁵³⁶ *ibid.*, 29, 46-47, 61-62, 70-72.

⁵³⁷ *ibid.*, 83, 111.

⁵³⁸ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 27-28.

Furthermore, though a large portion of the kingdom passed to Bocchus for his role in the capture of Jugurtha, Rome itself annexed no territory. These details preclude the war's inclusion in Callwell's first class of small wars.⁵³⁹

In light of these considerations, the Jugurthine War is certainly a small war. Furthermore, it is a textbook example of a punitive campaign in the mould of Napier's expedition to Abyssinia. The Roman campaign to exact retribution on Jugurtha was undertaken by a disciplined and increasingly professionalised army that was organised and trained to inflict defeats on the enemy in conventional tactical, operational, and strategic contexts. However, this force struggled to get to grips with Jugurtha's warriors, who preferred to operate in a highly irregular fashion. The legions subsequently looked for a way to flush out Jugurtha and compel him to commit his forces to a large battle where Roman conventional superiority could be brought to bear. Meanwhile, the Numidian king leveraged his warriors' superior mobility and familiarity with the theatre to instead wage a guerrilla campaign against the Roman expedition. This, combined with a campaign of bribery to undermine both Roman fighting forces and Rome's political will to wage the war, represented a hybrid effort intended to force a Roman withdrawal through attrition and a perceived lack of progress. In this way, Jugurtha was able to see off two Roman armies and maintain his campaign of resistance for several years in the face of larger and ever more determined invasions, requiring Roman strategic overhauls and effecting changes within the very fabric of the legions themselves. As has been said, these characteristics align well with both the Callwellian and more modern understandings of small wars, featuring many parallels to draw to prove relevancy.

Lessons From the Jugurthine War

Before we move on to the lessons from the Jugurthine War, it is important to gauge the success of the Roman campaign. As both Clausewitz and Callwell relate, war derives from a political object, which

⁵³⁹ *ibid.*, 25-26.

must obviously feature heavily in operational and strategic planning.⁵⁴⁰ Therefore, success should be measured using the political object as its metric. As this case study has just explained, the Roman campaign was a punitive one intended to punish Jugurtha for his transgressions against Rome. Again, it is possible that the initial object had been to simply extract an indemnity from Jugurtha, but by Metellus' command it was clear that Rome sought his capture so that a more personal punishment might be meted out.

Given the relative conventional strength of the legions compared to Jugurthine forces, the Senate likely expected a relatively short campaign. As Beaufre reminds us though, the enemy is not a passive recipient of one's strategy, and the legions instead spent the next six years mired in a protracted war to root out Jugurtha.⁵⁴¹ Roman military operations were hardly the picture of success, alternating between fruitless and disastrous in the cases of the campaigns of Bestia and Albinus, and the forced surrender of the army under Aulus respectively. Even when progress began to be made under Metellus, the heavy battlefield losses and attrition by guerrillas were not sustainable given Roman manpower shortages. Were it not for Marius' recruitment reforms, these difficulties would likely have fatally undermined future operations.

Nevertheless, despite the early setbacks, slow progress, and relatively high casualties, Roman objectives *were* met. Jugurtha was executed and replaced by a new (pro-Roman) king, thereby securing Africa's Numidian border by restoring both order in the kingdom and Rome's strategically useful relationship with it. Since there is nothing to suggest annexations were ever intended, the absence of these should not prevent the Jugurthine War from being thought of as a success. As with the Lusitanian War, Rome's difficulties should be thought of as being representative of the general struggle regular troops have in conflicts which manifest irregular and guerrilla characteristics. Like Callwell says, when campaigns degenerate into guerrilla warfare-centric conflicts, regular forces face a

⁵⁴⁰ Clausewitz, *On War*, 80-81, 87; Callwell, *Small Wars*, 34.

⁵⁴¹ Beaufre, *An Introduction to Strategy*, 22.

“protracted, thankless, invertebrate” task; something which is exacerbated by conducive local geography and complementary habits within the enemy population, both of which were present in Numidia.⁵⁴²

Centres of Gravity

As with the Lusitanian War, the eventual Roman success was facilitated by a recognition of the enemy’s ‘centre of gravity’ and its elimination through the exploitation of its ‘critical vulnerabilities’. This allowed the legions to overcome the operational and strategic obstacles which had been impeding their progress, shifting the momentum in Rome’s favour and changing the dynamics which had previously dictated the initiative of the war. The nature of the conflict and the objectives of its opposing sides had a number of implications for the centre(s) of gravity within the Numidian war effort.

As discussed during our classification of the Jugurthine War, the war revolved around Jugurtha personally rather than being a battle for control of territory, with the Romans attempting to bring him to justice and the Numidian king using the resources at his disposal to evade that justice. If one applies the effects-based understanding of centres of gravity espoused by Clausewitz and Echevarria, then Jugurtha arguably takes on that role in this strategic context.⁵⁴³ As per the work of Strange and Iron, the Numidian king (through his active leadership) can be labelled a ‘moral centre of gravity’, possessing “the will to develop, execute, and sustain a policy of opposition to an enemy as well as the ability to exert that will through the military and people”.⁵⁴⁴ If Jugurtha is eliminated (either killed or captured), then the Numidian war effort falls apart, having lost both its director and indeed the reason for its existence. Indeed, from the Roman perspective such a scenario simply means victory. The validity of this reading is indicated by the fact that Numidian forces receive no further mention following Jugurtha’s capture. This suggests that they took no further actions and likely simply evaporated, there

⁵⁴² Callwell, *Small Wars*, 26-27, 31-32.

⁵⁴³ Clausewitz, *On War*, 485:595-596; Echevarria, *Clausewitz and Contemporary War*, 186; Echevarria, ‘Clausewitz’s Center of Gravity’, 115.

⁵⁴⁴ J. L. Strange & R. Iron, ‘Center of Gravity – What Clausewitz Really Meant’, *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 35 (2004), 20-27:26.

being no longer any reason to fight.⁵⁴⁵ Jugurtha therefore represented the primary centre of gravity for the Numidians and was subsequently the focus of Roman operations.⁵⁴⁶

Given that Jugurtha's army was the actor capable of exerting power and influencing the enemy, it could also be argued that Jugurtha's army represented a *physical* centre of gravity in its own right, possibly even the primary one. The fact that Roman victory closely followed the defeat of Jugurthine forces in the Second Battle of Cirta seems to support this.⁵⁴⁷ However, Jugurthine forces only appear to have operated actively when led by him directly, making them at the very least subordinate to his centre. Furthermore, Jugurtha could always simply raise or purchase a new army (provided he possessed the means) if his army was defeated, as indeed he did on multiple occasions during Metellus' campaigns.

Though the defeat of his army undoubtedly had an impact on the course of the war, that Metellus was not much closer to victory by the time of his replacement shows that the loss of multiple armies was not a decisive blow by itself. Even if robbed of the means to replace his forces, Holroyd asserts that Jugurtha might still have continued to resist Rome, albeit on a smaller scale, as a raider and robber around its desert borders.⁵⁴⁸ Meanwhile, if Jugurtha was eliminated or was no longer able to provide for them, the army would come apart due to being bereft of its motive force. Given Clausewitz's belief that armies represented the most obvious centres of gravity, it is conceivable that Jugurtha's armies represented secondary, possibly operational-level centres of gravity.⁵⁴⁹ However, they were so closely tied to Jugurtha that each was arguably subsumed into his primary, strategic centre of gravity. There is subsequently much overlap in their critical requirements and vulnerabilities too.

⁵⁴⁵ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 113-114.

⁵⁴⁶ Strange, *Centers of Gravity & Critical Vulnerabilities*, 44.

⁵⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 45.

⁵⁴⁸ Holroyd, 'The Jugurthine War', 6, 18.

⁵⁴⁹ Clausewitz, *On War*, 596.

As laid out in Joe Strange's work on the centre of gravity concept, each centre is enabled by a number of 'critical capabilities', which are themselves influenced by 'critical requirements'. In this system, one can therefore attempt to neutralise a centre of gravity by targeting those requirements that are deficient or vulnerable: 'critical vulnerabilities'. Strange goes on to suggest what these might be in the context of a moral centre of gravity like a leader, something which can then be applied to Jugurtha. In order to properly function as the centre of gravity, Jugurtha's critical capabilities would have been as follows: to remain alive or out of Roman hands, to stay informed of the strategic and operational picture, to retain control over the apparatus of state through his court and elites, and remain influential so that he cannot be supplanted. Given the nature of the Roman war goals and the strategy adopted by Jugurtha, the first and second would be the most relevant, especially given his in-person command of Numidian forces in the field. According to Strange, the corresponding 'critical requirements' for these capabilities are the "resources and means" that protect Jugurtha's person and keep him informed.⁵⁵⁰

In our context, this can be interpreted as the forces that Jugurtha commanded, his treasures, and his network of strongpoints. Jugurtha's warriors were primarily his protection and means of striking blows against the Roman expedition. The mobility of these forces also enabled them to fulfil a vital scouting and intelligence-gathering function, allowing Jugurtha to operate with a degree of security and largely dictate when and where it was most favourable to strike. Given that conflict with Rome likely severely impacted Numidia's foreign trading, Jugurtha was reliant on his treasure reserves to finance his armies, spy network, and his campaign of bribery.⁵⁵¹ Integral to Jugurtha's campaign was his network of strongpoints across the country, some of which also stored portions of his treasury. Their main contribution though was to afford Jugurtha bases from which he could operate against the legions, supply nodes with which to keep his forces in the field, and sanctuaries to retreat to in

⁵⁵⁰ Strange, *Centers of Gravity & Critical Vulnerabilities*, 43, 48-51.

⁵⁵¹ Holroyd, 'The Jugurthine War', 16-17.

the face of pressure from the legions. In short, Jugurtha required men, money, and sanctuary to maintain his critical capabilities.

Strange identifies that the exploitation of critical vulnerabilities within these critical requirements is central to undermining defeating or neutralising a centre of gravity or others that it relies on.⁵⁵² In our case study, Jugurtha's critical requirements were undermined by a number of factors. The first of these was Numidia's sparse population. This resulted in a relatively small pool of men suitable for military service and an even smaller number of dedicated 'warriors' for Jugurtha to recruit into his army. In addition to limiting the size of any force that Jugurtha could field at any one time, this deficiency meant that it would become increasingly difficult to replace losses as the war progressed. This in turn put his person at risk by eroding the means with which he could resist and attempt to deter the legions.

One way this vulnerability could be mitigated was the employment of mercenaries to replace Numidian warriors and levies, but this was an expensive alternative. It was, however, within Jugurtha's means thanks to his considerable treasury. Unfortunately for Jugurtha, his treasury appears to have been divided amongst a number of cities and forts within his network of strongpoints across the kingdom. This presented a major problem for him. Although these strongpoints formed an important and enabling part of his countrywide support infrastructure, manpower constraints made adequately garrisoning all of them whilst also fielding sufficient forces to keep the pressure on the legions unfeasible. As a result, many possessed understrength garrisons, weakening the strongpoint network which enabled his effective long-range operations.⁵⁵³ Though the treasuries received larger garrisons, their (presumably intentional) placement in isolated areas (e.g. the Muluccha, the Aurès Mountains) risked leaving them exposed should the weakness of the support node network begin to inhibit the movement of Jugurthine forces.

⁵⁵² Strange, *Centers of Gravity & Critical Vulnerabilities*, 74.

⁵⁵³ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 54, 87.

It was these vulnerabilities that the Romans targeted. Throughout the war, the legions aimed to force Jugurtha and his army to engage them in such a manner that they could inflict a decisive defeat on the Numidians. Given Jugurtha's presence at the head of the army, the king's potential death or capture was further incentive.⁵⁵⁴ The legions carried out a series of systematic clearance operations against Jugurthine strongpoints, first securing Old Numidia (as a means of access and line of communication from Roman Africa) before sweeping across the rest of the kingdom.⁵⁵⁵ In the short term, it was hoped that the threat to particularly important cities or fortresses would compel Jugurtha to risk the aforementioned engagements so as to thwart Roman pressure. Meanwhile, if Jugurtha did not come to the relief of his strongpoints, the Numidian king would be deprived of both his support network and the resources he had dispersed amongst these hubs. On top of the loss of manpower, this would make it much harder for Jugurtha to operate in these areas, corralling him for a Roman strike. Based on Sallust's account, Jugurtha's offensive operations sharply decline in frequency once Marius began his sweep, a marked difference from the guerrilla operations that dogged previous Roman campaigns.⁵⁵⁶

Within this, those strongpoints which served as treasuries were also targeted.⁵⁵⁷ In addition to possessing stronger garrisons whose loss would be more keenly felt by Jugurtha, the seizure of these treasuries directly degraded Jugurtha's capacity for resistance. Marius' capture of the Muluccha treasury shows the efficacy of this course of action, forcing Jugurtha to cede a large portion of his kingdom to secure the support of Bocchus for a last, desperate offensive. This was likely because the Numidian king knew he would not be able to keep his forces in the field much longer. With his already limited manpower drained, very few sanctuaries left to flee to, and his means to support his war effort dwindling, Jugurtha had no choice but to show himself and give the Romans the fight they wanted.⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 36-37, 51-52, 74, 101.

⁵⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 54, 87-92.

⁵⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 54-56, 88-92.

⁵⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 37, 75, 92.

⁵⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 97.

Though the armies of Bocchus and Jugurtha were smashed in the Second Battle of Cirta, the Numidian king himself was narrowly able to escape. With a much smaller force, he would now be even harder to pin down. This is where the other aspect of the Roman hybrid strategy came into play: the use of bribery and intrigue to influence, isolate, or eliminate Jugurtha's moral centre of gravity. Beginning under Metellus, this use of Jugurtha's own methods of bribery and self-interest against the Numidian kingdom culminated in the king's near-capitulation (through the influence of Bomilcar) and at least one internal plot to remove Jugurtha by a number of his followers.⁵⁵⁹ The latter prompted a purge within the Jugurthine camp that left the now-paranoid Numidian king extremely isolated, impairing the third and fourth of his critical capabilities mentioned earlier.⁵⁶⁰

After Bocchus' tentative entrance into the war, the Mauretanian king also became a target for these efforts. One could argue that Bocchus and his army each represented moral and physical centres of gravity respectively, albeit secondary ones supporting Jugurtha's primary centre. Indeed, Strange asserts that strong allies can be impactful centres of gravity, particularly when they are arguably more militarily powerful than the primary antagonist (as was likely the case here).⁵⁶¹ Metellus subsequently sought to forestall direct Mauretanian involvement through diplomacy. This was something which Marius later continued, at least until Jugurtha's promise of a third of Numidia proved too tempting for Bocchus to turn down. Having already been reluctant to enter the war, the defeat by Marius at Cirta was sufficient to bring Bocchus back to the table. Through canny diplomacy, Sulla was then able to convince the Mauretanian king to betray Jugurtha to the Romans in order to avoid sharing the Numidian's fate.⁵⁶² Though the battlefield defeats were enough to neutralise the Mauretanian centres of gravity, Jugurtha (and therefore victory) would likely have continued to remain elusive were it not for the less kinetic aspects of Rome's hybrid strategy.

⁵⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 46-47, 61-62, 70-72.

⁵⁶⁰ *ibid.*, 74-76

⁵⁶¹ Strange, *Centers of Gravity & Critical Vulnerabilities*, 15.

⁵⁶² Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 83, 88, 102-113.

Unable to bring their overwhelming conventional force to bear on the enemy in Numidia as they would like, the Romans adopted an alternative, hybrid strategy that exploited the critical vulnerabilities of the enemy system. Correctly identifying Jugurtha as the primary centre of gravity within the context of their campaign and the strategic situation in Numidia, they drew him out through a protracted strategy that undermined his critical capabilities. This involved denying him operational freedom by systematically eradicating his support infrastructure, attacking his capacity to make war at the source by robbing him of his financial means, and isolating him within his command and government apparatus. The legions were subsequently offered the decisive battles that they desired, and accordingly inflicted a decisive defeat. This allowed their non-kinetic means to detach and co-opt the supporting Mauretanian centres of gravity from Jugurtha, enabling them to strike surgically at the exposed moral centre of gravity that the Numidian king represented to win the war.

Limiting Enemy Freedom of Operation

According to Callwell, one of the core difficulties experienced by regular armies in small wars is the fact that the strategic level favours the irregulars. Despite often possessing the initiative, their superiority in development, materiel, reserves, training, and organisation, the regulars are restricted in their operational freedom by the very factors that afford them their tactical superiority. Namely, the necessity of maintaining cohesion due to their more elaborate organisation, and that the logistical requirements of supporting their well-equipped army leaves them reliant on their bases and lines of communication. Not only are irregulars less burdened by these constraints, their freedom of action is multiplied by superiority in mobility and intelligence, enabling them to strike when and wherever would be most effective.⁵⁶³

Consisting largely of very light cavalry (mounted on low-maintenance horses) and similarly light infantry, the operational freedom of Jugurtha and his forces was underpinned by the

⁵⁶³ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 52-54, 85-88.

aforementioned network of strongpoints across the country.⁵⁶⁴ Ranging from small forts to large cities, these served as forward operating bases for Jugurthine forces, supporting operations in their region by providing the warbands with supplies, services, and refuge. These hubs enabled Jugurthine forces to conduct the high-mobility guerrilla campaign against the Roman expedition that formed a key part of the Numidian king's strategy. Without static lines of communication, Jugurtha was able to pursue the main Roman column across large swathes of the country before diverting to attack another legionary force in another distant location, all without reducing his operational capacity.⁵⁶⁵ As long as this infrastructure existed, Jugurtha could dictate the tempo of operations in Numidia by only fighting when and where it benefitted him. This put the legions at risk of becoming merely passive actors within the battlespace, thereby making their defeat more likely.

Wylie argued that control is central to strategy, with the primary aim of a strategist being some degree of control over the enemy for one's own purposes. To achieve this, Wylie emphasises control of the pattern of war, which is attained by manipulation of the enemy centre of gravity to one's own benefit and their detriment. Imposing the Numidian scenario over this sees Jugurtha using the above means to attempt to keep the Roman expedition off-balance, forcing Roman commanders to behave reactively to his actions and thus losing control of the pattern of the war. In Wylie's aggressor-conservator model, the loss of control by the aggressor (who usually starts with it given he has likely chosen to start the war on his terms) will result in a period of comparative equilibrium, wherein neither side has a clear advantage or possesses sufficient control. This moment can be roughly located to the Battle of the Muthul, where Metellus breaks Jugurtha's army but fails to achieve the decisive victory he had hoped for and at a very heavy cost.⁵⁶⁶ Wylie asserts that, when stuck in this equilibrium, the aggressor has two options: to continue the pattern he initially set, or to forge a new direction.⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶⁴ Horsted, *The Numidians*, 6-12.

⁵⁶⁵ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 36-38, 44, 54-61, 74, 88, 97-101; Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 5.15.8-5.15.9.

⁵⁶⁶ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 48-54

⁵⁶⁷ Wylie, *Military Strategy*, 87-91.

As we have seen, the Romans took the latter option. Under Metellus and Marius, the legions did not waste their time chasing Jugurtha but instead targeted his strongpoints, seizing many for themselves and destroying others outright.⁵⁶⁸ These were an important critical requirement that enabled the centres of gravity that Jugurtha and his army represented. Targeting them therefore exerted the kind of influence Wylie describes as necessary to attain control.⁵⁶⁹ Though the innate mobility of Jugurthine forces remained, when the Romans began depriving Jugurtha of his strongpoints (thereby isolating him from his support infrastructure) it became increasingly difficult and dangerous for the Numidians to operate in these areas, as shown by the decline in Jugurthine attacks after the clearances began. Initially, the expansion of Roman control across Numidia simply denied Jugurtha certain operational and strategic options as they became increasingly impractical. However, as the Roman sweep progressed and his isolation and restriction became more complete, Jugurtha was compelled to all but abandon his guerrilla tactics and face the Romans relatively openly. This conformity meant that Jugurtha was no longer fighting the war that had kept him alive for the past few years but the one the legions wanted him to, and it proved disastrous for him.

Jugurtha's refusal to conform to the Roman pattern of war largely contributed to the survival of him and his regime for as long as it did after the war began, as indeed is usually the case for irregular enemies who make use of these methods. However, by adopting a strategy of ground control to deny Jugurtha and his forces access to their support infrastructure, Metellus and Marius were able to isolate the Numidian centres of gravity. This robbed these elements of the freedom of action that Callwell attributes to irregulars and which enabled the Jugurthine strategy. With the help of the other aspects of the Roman approach, the ground control campaign forced Jugurtha to conform to the Roman pattern of war, thereby ceding strategic control to the legions and negating the innate advantages the irregulars possessed.

⁵⁶⁸ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 54-61, 87-94, 103.

⁵⁶⁹ Wylie, *Military Strategy*, 91.

Applying Sufficient Force

Though effective, the strongpoint clearance strategy was a monumentally resource-intensive operation, covering as it did a theatre roughly the size of the entire Italian Peninsula. This requirement was recognised most clearly by Marius, whose surge of troops into the theatre shifted the momentum in Rome's favour. However, this analysis will show that even the early campaigns displayed an awareness in Rome that small wars still require massive force.

Though Sallust does not note the size of the Roman armies sent to Numidia, Orosius claims that the force led first by Spurius Postumius Albinus and then his brother Aulus was 40,000-strong.⁵⁷⁰ This army was in fact the same one that had been raised by Bestia for his initial campaign.⁵⁷¹ If Orosius' numbers are correct, and if we assume that the army structure described by Polybius was still accurate, the consular army in question was twice the size one would normally expect. Such contingencies were usually only reserved for emergencies.⁵⁷² Though Bestia and Albinus were not planning the methodical ground control campaigns of Metellus and Marius, it was still recognised that a significant force was needed to achieve success against Jugurtha. Indeed, the very fact that consuls were sent instead of giving the job to the praetor of Africa shows that Rome was not planning on taking any half measures. This is despite the undoubtable presence of the Roman military chauvinism assuring them of victory over the barbarians, as well as the possibly more pressing threat of a Cimbric invasion of Italy. One wonders if this was also a lesson that was learned from the Roman experience in Hispania.

When Metellus was allotted the Numidian command, his first thought was to raise additional levies and enlist a large number of auxiliaries from across the Roman sphere. Although the original army had undoubtedly suffered losses in its two years of operations, Sallust's account suggests that these had not been serious.⁵⁷³ This additional wave of recruitment will therefore have swelled the consular army beyond its already enlarged size. An interesting point to note is that Metellus had not

⁵⁷⁰ Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 5.15.6.

⁵⁷¹ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 27-28, 36.

⁵⁷² Polybius, *Histories*, 3.107, 6.20-6.21.

⁵⁷³ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 38, 43-44.

yet set upon the strategy of systematically clearing Jugurthine strongpoints when this decision was made. As well as making the reportedly heavy losses at the Muthul survivable, this decision enabled the subsequent shift in the legions' operational posture in line with Metellus' new strategy. With more men at his disposal, the consul could endure Jugurtha's guerrilla attacks and place the garrisons necessary for his campaign without seriously compromising the army's effectiveness.⁵⁷⁴ Numidian guerrilla warfare also meant that, as Metellus' lines of communication extended, the job of ensuring their security became increasingly burdensome. Callwell points out this is one of the primary difficulties for regular armies engaging in small wars, as the requirements end up weakening the 'active' fighting forces with which one intends to use to inflict a decisive defeat on the enemy. Without eschewing one's lines of communications entirely, which possesses its own downsides, it is impossible to remove this problem entirely. However, like with attrition and garrison requirements, Metellus was able to mitigate this risk somewhat by giving himself a larger reserve to begin with.⁵⁷⁵

While Metellus' large deployment had enabled his seemingly unintended strategic shift, Marius appears to have intended to conduct such operations from the outset and prepared accordingly. In addition to reinforcements to bring the consular army back to full strength, Marius enlisted large numbers of discharged veterans and volunteers, as well as calling in even more auxiliaries. Ground control campaigns like the one Marius intended to wage require significant deployments in order to work as intended, and any attempt to do so with a smaller military footprint would almost certainly result in failure. Though not unsuccessful in a localised view, the forces fielded by Metellus proved insufficient to sustain his campaign's momentum in the face of the losses they suffered. Marius' determination not to make the same mistake is displayed by the waiving of property requirements for recruitment into the legions, a measure usually reserved for only dire emergencies.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷⁴ *ibid.*, 54-56.

⁵⁷⁵ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 85-86, 115-124.

⁵⁷⁶ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 84-86, 95.

In attempting to wage them with anything other than overwhelming force, one is rejecting the fact that small wars are exactly that: wars. To paraphrase Clausewitz, small wars are therefore physical contests wherein both sides attempt to overpower one another by matching their effort to their opponent's power of resistance.⁵⁷⁷ When the enemy already possesses several strategic advantages, as Callwell says irregular enemies do in small wars, one must therefore look for every possible means of altering the balance in one's favour.⁵⁷⁸ As such, the maximum possible exertion of strength is imperative if success in war is desired. The scale of the Roman deployment in Numidia allowed it to survive two major setbacks caused by poor strategy, and gave it the ability to switch to a more resource-intensive strategy mid-campaign with some success. Victory was ultimately enabled by an unprecedented surge of manpower into the theatre which met the requirements of the new strategy and enabled the legions to offset the strategic advantages of the irregulars.

Commitment

Just as the Roman strategy was enabled by the application of massive force in Numidia, both were ultimately made possible by a willingness to see the war against Jugurtha through. Be it in terms of people, physical resources, economies, or political capital, wars are costly enterprises. As such, states generally aim to achieve their objectives as efficiently and as quickly as possible. However, Clausewitz rightly points out that the realities of warfare mean that wars rarely "consist of a single short blow" due to the time it takes for each side to concentrate and direct its strength in their struggle to overpower the other.⁵⁷⁹ Callwell suggests that this is even more true for small wars (particularly those that feature guerrilla warfare in rough, restrictive terrain), since the enemy's methods and the impediments to the operations of regular forces can make the prosecution of these campaigns inordinately toilsome.⁵⁸⁰ As a result, success in small wars requires sufficient will within the population

⁵⁷⁷ Clausewitz, *On War*, 75-77.

⁵⁷⁸ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 85-96.

⁵⁷⁹ Clausewitz, *On War*, 79-80.

⁵⁸⁰ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 25-32, 85-86, 348.

and institutions of the regular power to commit to the conflict and be prepared to see it through. This determination was displayed across the three socio-political pillars of the so-called trinity mentioned by Clausewitz, in this case: the Roman people, the legions and their commander, and the Senate.⁵⁸¹

The outrage caused in Rome by Jugurtha's massacre of the Italians at Cirta in 113 BC was exactly the kind of "primordial violence, hatred, and enmity" that Clausewitz talks about as part of this trinity, and which is central to the conduct of war by a state.⁵⁸² It was this sentiment that first overcame the influence of the bribed Roman politicians to compel the Senate to exact vengeance upon Jugurtha and then repudiate the dishonourable treaty of Bestia and continue the war.⁵⁸³ Despite the various setbacks, Roman losses, and the general perception that the war was dragging on, there was never a repeat of the draft-dodging behaviour that arose during the wars in Hispania. Indeed, levy requirements were met throughout the war, and Marius' call for volunteers was met with great enthusiasm from across Roman society.⁵⁸⁴

The nature of the Roman politico-military arrangement meant that there was a large overlap between these two pillars, given that the consul (or proconsul) in command of the expedition wielded considerable political authority too. As a result, there was relatively little friction between the legions and the Senate, which no doubt contributed to the latter's determined support of the former. Though no progress had been made and great calamity had befallen the expedition in the short-sighted campaigns of Bestia and the Postumii Albini, the Senate elected to again continue the war against Jugurtha. Not only that, the Senate committed additional resources to the theatre under both Metellus and Marius, despite the looming threat of the Cimbri. Metellus and Marius both began their campaigns hoping for a quick resolution to the war, but willingly adopted a strategy that would require many months of arduous campaigning in order to have the intended effect.⁵⁸⁵ Both men were prorogued in

⁵⁸¹ Clausewitz, *On War*, 89.

⁵⁸² *ibid.*

⁵⁸³ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 27-35.

⁵⁸⁴ Polybius, *Histories*, 35.4.

⁵⁸⁵ Holroyd, 'The Jugurthine War', 15-16.

their command during these operations, a clear indication of support from the Senate for their intentions and methods.⁵⁸⁶

Throughout the war, the Senate and the more successful of the legions' commanders displayed a recognition that wars (and ones like this in particular) are not won overnight, and that one must commit fully to their prosecution to have the best chance of success. Although the Italian Peninsula itself was threatened by the Cimbri, the Senate (influenced at times by the people) refused to give up on its objectives in Numidia, and continued to maintain the increasingly large and resource-intensive expedition. Metellus and Marius, recognising that the short-sighted campaigning of earlier generals had proven ineffective, were willing to adopt a more purposeful long-term strategy in pursuit of their objectives. If it provided them with ultimate victory, Rome was more than happy to work for years to bring such a result to fruition. This patience and determination served the Romans well in Numidia and would continue to do so throughout their tumultuous future.

Adaptation

This lesson takes a somewhat different form in the context of this case study, to the credit of the legions. By the time of the expedition's arrival in Africa in 112 BC, Rome was roughly two decades removed from the conclusion of the Numantine War; the last of the so-called 'Celtiberian Wars' which had given the legions such a lesson in irregular warfare. In the previous case study, we discussed how intelligence cycles within the Roman military system hamstrung institutional learning to prevent the legions properly adapting to the tactics and operational art of the Lusitanians. In comparison, barring some anomalous actions under particularly poor and inexperienced commanders, the Romans showed in Numidia that they had begun to learn how to fight small wars on an institutional level. The above lessons have already shown how Roman commanders shifted their strategy to fit the character of the Jugurthine War, and so this analysis will examine the other ways this development manifested itself.

⁵⁸⁶ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 39, 43-44, 54, 87-89.

The early Roman campaigns in the Jugurthine War receive relatively little attention in the sources that are still available to us. However, one thing is noticeable when comparing the campaigns of Lucius Calpurnius Bestia and Spurius Postumius Albinus to many of those from even the later stages of the Lusitanian War: the relative absence of disastrous defeats at the hands of irregular methods. Though they made little real progress in the attainment of Rome's wider strategic objectives during this period, Sallust's record suggests that Jugurtha failed to inflict defeats resembling anything like those suffered in Hispania on the expedition during this period.⁵⁸⁷ The obvious outlier here would be the defeat of the army under Aulus Postumius Albinus, but this clear blunder by an overstepping and overeager subordinate thrust into command is the exception rather than the rule.⁵⁸⁸ Given the similarity of the geography and the operational art of the irregulars in the two cases (and indeed the even greater mobility of the Numidian horsemen), this suggests that the legions and their commanders had made changes to their mode of operations to address known risks and difficulties.

This is further supported by the actions of Metellus and Marius. When Metellus was first appointed to the Numidian command, he appointed veterans of the Numantine War like Marius and Rufus to key positions within his staff.⁵⁸⁹ This decision to seek out veterans of wars in Hispania rather than the more recent operations against the northern tribes suggests an understanding of the distinct nature of the Jugurthine War. With the military art of the Numidians presumably common knowledge in military circles, Metellus recognised that he needed officers with experience relevant to irregular warfare if he was to be successful. As a result of this experience, Metellus' forces took several practical precautions during their operations, including more widespread scouting to ensure route security and gather intelligence on the enemy.⁵⁹⁰ Special care was also taken to protect Roman foragers adequately, as well as not to pursue Numidian forces too eagerly (a clear reference to the *conkursare* tactics that

⁵⁸⁷ Plutarch, *Marius*, 9.

⁵⁸⁸ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 28-29, 36-39.

⁵⁸⁹ Plutarch, *Marius*, 7:10; Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 50, 86.

⁵⁹⁰ Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 46.

led many units to disaster in Hispania). These direct, considered responses to Numidian guerrilla warfare saved Metellus' forces from Jugurtha's planned ambush at the Muthul and kept Roman losses to sustainable levels during the operations in Old Numidia in the face of considerable friction.⁵⁹¹

Somewhat unsurprisingly given the likelihood of his involvement in their implementation, these operating procedures remained a fixture of Roman conduct after Marius himself took over command in 107 BC. Effective intelligence-gathering enabled Marius' early defeats of Jugurthine forces, which themselves provided the breathing room for the legions' massive clearance operation. The final two battles of the war were undoubtedly influenced (in Roman favour) by Marius' effective use of scouting and anti-ambush marching precautions. Another important adaptation was one of force composition. By ordering the raising of additional units of horsemen from among the *socii*, Marius was able to considerably expand the expedition's cavalry corps. Though they also helped fulfil cavalry's usual scouting role, the primary purpose of this force was to be the Roman answer to the highly-mobile light horsemen that made Jugurthine forces so dangerous. This was a function they carried out ably at the decisive Second Battle of Cirta.⁵⁹²

By the time of the Jugurthine War, it appears to have become clear to the Romans that asymmetric warfare against irregular enemies required a different approach across all levels of warfare, lessons learned the hard way in several gruelling conflicts in Hispania. Though the proficiency of Jugurtha and his warriors in their traditional art of war precluded a quick and easy victory, the legions were largely able to avoid the debilitating losses that had plagued Hispanic operations and make gradual progress. This was achieved in large part by adopting measures specifically formulated to mitigate the dangers posed by irregular enemies and level the playing field as much as possible. Though established doctrine imparts obvious benefits in terms of training and organisation, one must be prepared to adapt conduct to new operational realities, especially in small wars.⁵⁹³

⁵⁹¹ *ibid.*, 48-55.

⁵⁹² *ibid.*, 88, 95, 100-101.

⁵⁹³ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 23.

Chapter 4: The Gallic War (58 BC – 50 BC)

The Gallic Menace

For much of early Roman history, ‘the Gauls’ occupied a position in the collective Roman psyche as something akin to a modern-day ‘Bogeyman’, being the subject of a profound and long-lasting fear. The existence of this so-called *metus Gallicus* (Terror of the Gauls) is much debated by historians, but relates to the cultural shock felt following Rome’s defeat at the Battle of the Allia and the city’s sacking by Brennus and the Senones.⁵⁹⁴ Though the Senones themselves would be expelled from the country in 283 BC, the Gallic menace would rear its head repeatedly in the centuries following the disaster. Though some became Roman allies, Gallic raids became a regular occurrence on the Italian Peninsula. The last of these came in 225 BC, when a coalition of Insubres and Boii (bolstered by Gallic mercenaries from the Alps referred to as Gaesatae) invaded Italy. The whole Peninsula was mobilised to resist, and the Romans eventually succeeded in destroying the host at the Battle of Telamon.⁵⁹⁵

Rome spent the next few years on the offensive, endeavouring to establish control over what it labelled *Gallia Cisalpina* (‘Gaul on this side of the Alps’) to end the threat these tribes posed to Italy. The two most powerful Cisalpine tribes, the Boii and Insubres, were subjugated in relatively short order, leaving Rome largely in control of the region.⁵⁹⁶ Colonies were subsequently established to shore up Roman control, including Cremona, Placentia, and Mutina (See *Figure 3.1*). However, the outbreak of the Second Punic War and Hannibal’s invasion sparked a wave of revolt, forcing the Romans to pull back from the north to defend Italy proper.⁵⁹⁷ It was not until after the Second Punic War that Rome could look north again. Luckily for them, the Gauls had not pressed their advantage during this time, seemingly content to merely support Carthage’s war.⁵⁹⁸ As Rome moved back into the region, the tribes

⁵⁹⁴ V. Rosenberger, ‘The Gallic Disaster’, *The Classical World*, 96, 4 (Summer 2003), 365-373; Livy, *The History of Rome*, 5.34-5.55; Diodorus, *Library of History*, 14.113-14.117.

⁵⁹⁵ Polybius, *Histories*, 1.77, 2.18-2.31.

⁵⁹⁶ Bagnall, *The Punic Wars*, 132-133.

⁵⁹⁷ Polybius, *Histories*, 3.40, 3.65-3.86, 3.106; Livy, *The History of Rome*, 21.25, 21.45-21.48, 21.63, 23.24.

⁵⁹⁸ Bagnall, *The Punic Wars*, 235.

rallied to resist them, but were broken in a battle at Cremona in 200 BC.⁵⁹⁹ Rome was back on the offensive after this, restoring their colonies and conducting regular campaigns in the north. By 190 BC, the major Gallic tribes of the region had been re-subjugated, leaving Rome free to look *beyond* the Alps.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁹ Livy, *The History of Rome*, 31.2, 31.10-31.11, 31.21.

⁶⁰⁰ Livy, *Periochae*, 31-36; Goldsworthy, *Roman Warfare*, 78-83.

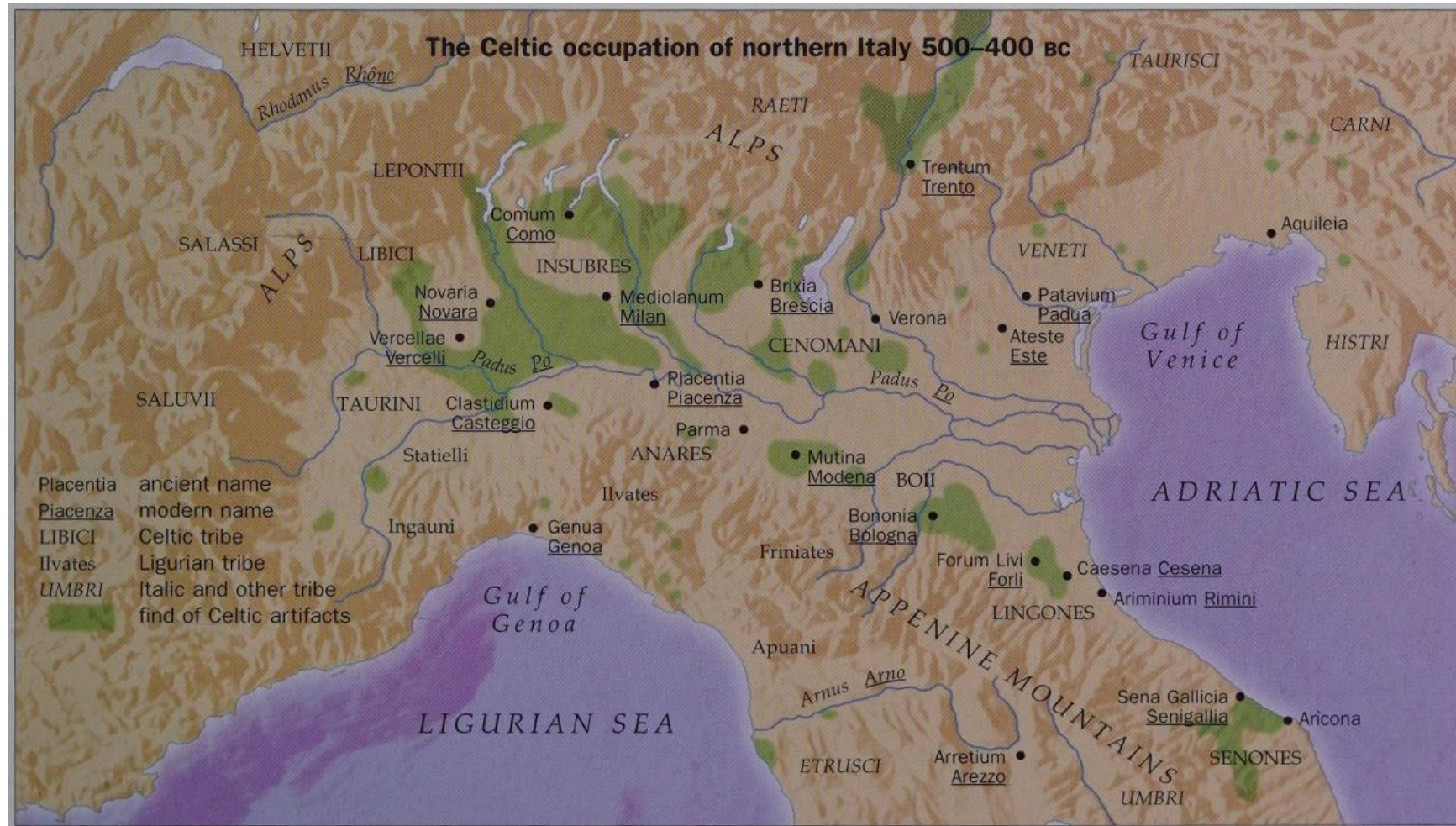


Figure 14: The Celtic occupation of northern Italy 500-400 BC⁶⁰¹

⁶⁰¹ N. Constable, *Historical Atlas of Ancient Rome* (London: Mercury Books, 2006), 19.

This Transalpine expansion was enabled by Rome's friendship with the Greek colony of Massalia (modern-day Marseille), an influential maritime power in southern Gaul who were historic competitors of Carthage and had proven faithful allies during the Punic Wars.⁶⁰² Their wealth saw them beset by the Gauls and Ligurians that surrounded them, and it was in wars to defend Massalia that Rome gained its first territories in Gaul proper. Between 125-121 BC, the legions defeated several tribes in southern Gaul, including the Gallo-Ligurian Salluvii, the Vocontii, Allobroges, and Arverni (see *Figure 3.2*).⁶⁰³ Though the Arverni were spared annexation, the other tribes were not so lucky. Rome established the colony of Aquae Sextiae in Salluvian territory, dubbing the region *Gallia Transalpina* ('Gaul on the far side of the Alps'). Benedict attributes this more proactive Gallic policy to the protection of land-based lines of communication with Roman Hispania as much as a desire to protect Massalia.⁶⁰⁴ The construction of the *Via Domitia* (a road linking Italy and the Iberian Peninsula) in 118 BC and the foundation of the colony of Narbo Martius to guard its southern stretch supports this theory.⁶⁰⁵ Rome soon eclipsed Massalia as the region's dominant mercantile power, a position it had paid for in Gallic blood.

This much-abridged summary of the Romano-Gallic conflict up until the first century BC hardly paints a picture of positive relations, seeing death and destruction dealt out vigorously by both sides. Nevertheless, Roman Gaul would come to be considered one of the stalwart pillars of the Roman Empire. The region would experience long periods of relative peace and see prominent citizens admitted to the Senate within a century of its conquest.⁶⁰⁶ This transition was realised through several factors. Chief amongst these were the urbanisation of Gallic society and elevation of pro-Roman elites synonymous with the Romanisation of barbarian populations, accompanied by the swift

⁶⁰² Strabo, *Geography*, 4.1.4-4.1.5; Polybius, *Histories*, 3.95.

⁶⁰³ Livy, *Periochae*, 60-61; Florus, *Epitome of Roman History*, 1.37; Orosius, *Histories Against the Pagans*, 5.13-5.14; Velleius Paterculus, *Compendium of Roman History*, 2.10.

⁶⁰⁴ C. H. Benedict, 'The Romans in Southern Gaul', *The American Journal of Philology*, 63, 1 (1942), 38-50.

⁶⁰⁵ Velleius Paterculus, *Compendium of Roman History*, 1.15.

⁶⁰⁶ J. G. Couper, 'Gallic Insurgencies? Annihilating the Bagaudae', in T. Howe & L. Brice (eds.), *Brill's Companion to Insurgency and Terrorism in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2015), 312-343; C. Tacitus, *Annals*. Translated from Latin by J. Jackson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), 11.25.

eradication of what pockets of dissent did arise.⁶⁰⁷ However, Drinkwater asserts that Gaul's Romanisation was not as rigorous as elsewhere, suggesting that the foundations of this were instead laid in Gaul's comprehensive subjugation by Gaius Julius Caesar in the 50s BC.⁶⁰⁸

Despite often having only a handful of legions, Caesar conquered a hostile population several million strong across an area of over 200,000 square miles in a nearly decade-long campaign. As touched upon in the methodology, Caesar's account of the conquest is distorted by pro-Roman/Caesarian biases and often wild exaggerations as to Roman achievements (e.g., Gallic numbers/losses).⁶⁰⁹ Unfortunately, other ancient histories that deal with the Gallic War are either incomplete in their coverage or believed to have drawn upon Caesar's work themselves. This again brings us back to the necessity (familiar to those used to exploring ancient history) of simply working with what we have.

However, though certain specifics of Caesar's record are questionable, the broad strokes of the conquest he lays out are grounded and plausible in that they conform reasonably to expected military capabilities, realities, and responses. It should be remembered that it is this more general level of military conduct that this thesis is concerned with, rather than lessons where technical exactitude is more acutely felt. Thus, provided keeps these flaws in mind when considering the 'details' provided by Caesar (just as with any other classical source of questionable accuracy), the Gallic War can still serve as a valuable source of lessons. This chapter will therefore show that Roman success in Gaul was enabled by Caesar's consistent targeting of Gallic centres of gravity, an operational boldness that helped the legions keep the initiative and control the patterns of war, and the canny use of the various instruments of hard power to manipulate Gallic politics and keep the Gauls divided.

⁶⁰⁷ G. Woolf, *Becoming Roman: The Beginnings of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1-23, 29-34.

⁶⁰⁸ J. F. Drinkwater, *Roman Gaul: The Three Provinces, 58 BC-AD 260* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 18-19.

⁶⁰⁹ Henige, 'He Came, He Saw, We Counted', 215-242.

Gaul: The Barbarian Frontier?

The region the Romans referred to as *Gallia* broadly correlated with modern France, but also encompassed (in addition to northern Italy) western Switzerland, Belgium, Luxembourg, and those parts of Germany and the Netherlands on the near side of the Rhenus (Rhine).⁶¹⁰ Rome's transalpine province (often called simply *Gallia Provincia*) lay in the southeast, following the Mediterranean coastline round from the Alps to the eastern Pyrenees and the border with Hispania Citerior. The rest of the country represented what is often referred to as '*Gallia Comata*' ("long-haired Gaul") or simply 'Free Gaul' (see *Figure 3.2* & *Figure 3.3*). In his commentary on his Gallic conquest, Caesar famously described Free Gaul as being roughly divisible into three ethnically distinct areas.⁶¹¹ 'Celtica', the largest of these, stretched across from Brittany to the Rhine and was dominated by Celtic-speaking Gauls. 'Belgica' lay beyond the Sequana (Seine) and Matrona (Marne) rivers that marked Celtica's northern borders and was home to the Belgae, a nation of disputed but possibly mixed Celto-Germanic heritage. On the southwest coast, alongside *Gallia Provincia*, lay 'Aquitania'. Separated from Celtica by the Garumna (Garonne) River, the region was named for the Aquitanian people (noted as being closer in appearance and language to Hispanics rather than other Gauls) that lived there, though some Celtic tribes are said to have inhabited the area too.⁶¹²

⁶¹⁰ A. Arrowsmith, *A Grammar of Ancient Geography – Compiled for the Use of King's College School*, (London: S. Arrowsmith & B. Fellowes, 1832), 48-58.

⁶¹¹ G. J. Caesar, *Gallic War*. Translated from Latin by K. A. Raafaub (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 2019), 1.1.

⁶¹² Strabo, *Geography*, 4.1-4.4; Pliny, *The Natural History*, 4.31-4.33.

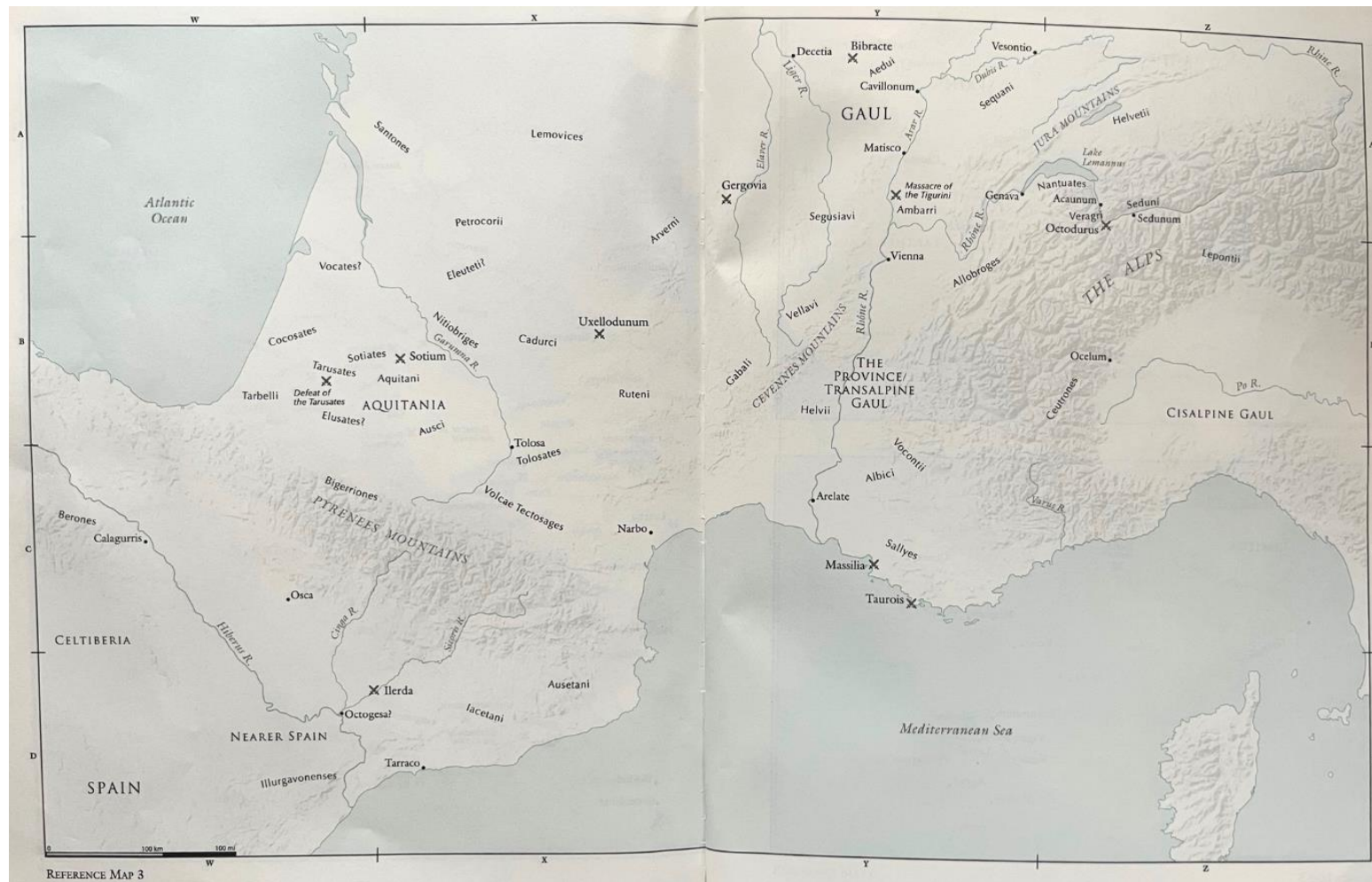


Figure 15: Map of Southern Gaul; showing Cisalpine Gaul, Transalpine Gaul, Aquitania, a portion of Celtica, and part of Northern Hispania⁶¹³

⁶¹³ K. A. Raafaub (ed.), *The Landmark Julius Caesar: The Complete Works* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 2019), Reference Map 3.

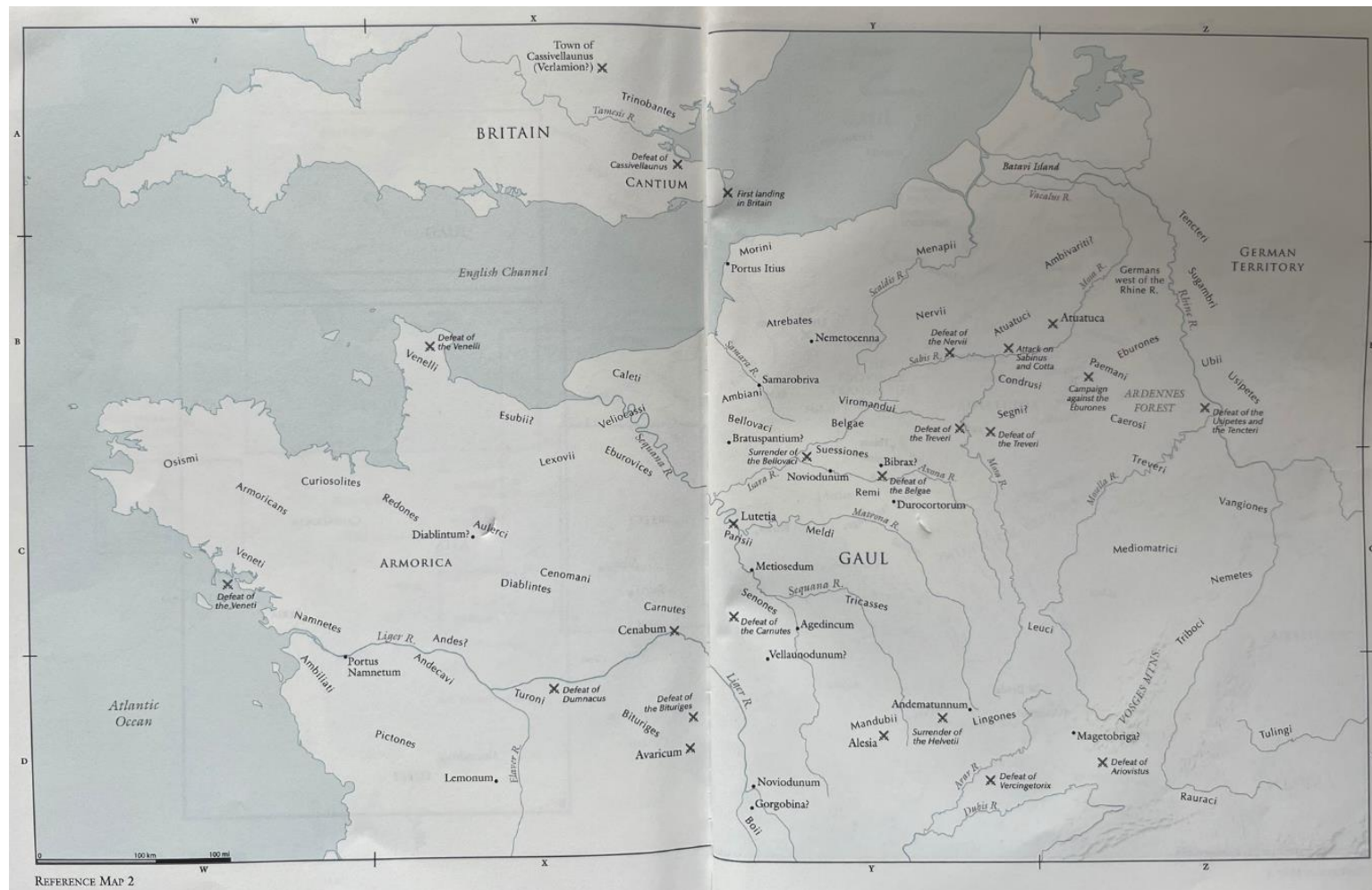


Figure 16: Map of Northern Gaul; showing most of Celtica and Belgica, including Britain and part of Germany⁶¹⁴

⁶¹⁴ *ibid.*, Reference Map 2.

Gallic society shared many similarities with the Celticised peoples of the Iberian Peninsula discussed earlier in this project, having begun to centralise and urbanise by the first century BC thanks in part to spreading Mediterranean influence. Like on the Iberian Peninsula though, this influence diminished as one moved further inland. In Gallic society, however, the clan appears to have been less prominent, leaving the tribe (*pagus*) as the basic political unit.⁶¹⁵ In addition to their numerous smaller settlements, each tribe usually possessed (depending on their relative size and wealth) at least one larger fortified *oppidum*. These served as tribal capitals and/or centres of trade, industry, or administration. Tribes were often then organised into larger, super-tribal confederations or 'nations' which the Romans referred to as *civitates*.⁶¹⁶ It was from the *oppida* that Gaul's highly stratified society was run, with the commoners working to support two primary empowered groups: the druids and the military aristocracy. The latter were the chiefs and retainers that led and fought for the tribe, while the former (themselves recruited from the nobility) oversaw religious and civil matters.⁶¹⁷

Caesar describes the Gauls as prone to factionalism and dispute across all levels of their society, with conflict *within* nations, tribes, settlements, and even households just as common as *between* tribal confederations.⁶¹⁸ Nevertheless, as Rome's conquest of southern Gaul showed, it was not uncommon for allies amongst other tribes and nations to support one another against rivals both internal or external. Appeals for German or even Roman aid were also not unheard of. However, their constant inter- and intra-group squabbling massively impeded their ability to resist the conquests of Rome, who would never face a Gaul totally united against them.⁶¹⁹ This again echoes Strabo's comments about the Celticised tribes of the Iberian Peninsula.⁶²⁰

⁶¹⁵ Santosuosso, *Storming the Heavens*, 10-11.

⁶¹⁶ J. McIntosh, *Handbook to Life in Prehistoric Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 86, 89-95; K. Gilliver, *Caesar's Gallic Wars: 58-50 BC* (London: Routledge, 2003), 13-15; Drinkwater, *Roman Gaul*, 9-12.

⁶¹⁷ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 6.13-6.20.

⁶¹⁸ *ibid.*, 6.11, 6.15.

⁶¹⁹ Drinkwater, *Roman Gaul*, 10.

⁶²⁰ Strabo, *Geography*, 3.4.5.

Warriors and Warfare in Gaul

As was the way of Celticised societies, Gallic armies were organised along the same tribal lines as civil life and led by their respective military aristocracy (e.g., nobles/chiefs/kings). Typically, these armies were made up of two parts. The first of these was the semi-permanent retinues of warriors maintained by the nobility; men raised in the warrior lifestyle and with skills honed in Gaul's endemic inter-tribal raiding. Paid for with tribute from their tribesmen and raided loot, these bands were often well-equipped and motivated, capable of conducting smaller operations by themselves or forming the nucleus of a larger army. The more powerful and wealthy nobles would display this by furnishing larger and better equipped retinues, in turn giving them greater prestige.⁶²¹ If a situation required the full military strength of the tribe(s) to be mobilised, however, these warriors were massively outnumbered by the second component: the free tribesmen. Armed according to their means and preferences, these levies were not true warriors but civilians fielded only in dire straits.⁶²²

As a result, Gallic forces varied considerably in their armament. While wealthier warriors and nobles would have been able to afford chainmail armour and helmets like those worn by Roman legionaries, armour became increasingly uncommon as the wealth and status of the individual in question declined. It was therefore common, even amongst line infantry, to see men fighting in just a tunic and breeches or even naked. Though tastes varied between tribes and nations, the archetypal Gallic infantryman wielded either a spear or a long, slashing sword (or both if wealth allowed) alongside a large, oblong shield. Like the legionaries, it was also relatively common for line infantry to carry a handful of javelins. Amongst those who fought as skirmishers out of either preference or financial necessity, common weapons included javelins, slings, and even bows. Generally consisting of the wealthiest men, Gallic horsemen were armed in a similar fashion to the heavier Gallic infantry, and regularly outmatched their Roman opposites in cavalry clashes. However, in battle it was common for

⁶²¹ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 6.15.

⁶²² Goldsworthy, *Roman Warfare*, 79-81; McIntosh, *Life in Prehistoric Europe*, 307, 332; Gilliver, *Caesar's Gallic Wars*, 23-25; P. Wilcox, *Rome's Enemies (2): Gallic and British Celts* (Oxford: Osprey, 1985), 9-10.

them to dismount and fight on foot. Some particularly rich Celtic nobles (notably among the Britons) used chariots as battlefield transport and mobile skirmishing platforms, though Gilliver asserts that these had fallen out of use on the Continent.⁶²³

The Gauls held displays of personal bravery and martial prowess in high regard, and their military culture was therefore geared to offering combatants ample opportunity to win renown. The primary arena for this was in direct engagements with the enemy. Forces would line up for battle along pre-existing socio-political and socio-economic lines, with nobles leading their warrior retinues and (if required) their respective free tribesmen from the front. After working themselves up through various means, the entire force would charge. If this did not break the enemy, the Gauls would pull back to take a short rest and begin the whole cycle again, repeating until the enemy broke or they exhausted themselves and retired.⁶²⁴ Though ambushes were used, this was generally not done in a hit-and-run manner like those of the Lusitani or Numidians, but rather to ensure the charge's hammer blow fell more decisively.⁶²⁵ However, Gilliver suggests that not all tribes and nations shared the same 'doctrine', and it is possible that some smaller tribes could have practiced irregular tactics to address asymmetry in conflicts with larger neighbours. Indeed, possibly out of an inability to match Rome's capacity to field and supply large armies for extended periods, many tribes proved willing to use irregular methods when faced with the legions' overwhelming conventional might. However, it is not clear whether these were pre-existing methods or simply a response to the Roman military machine.⁶²⁶

⁶²³ Strabo, *Geography*, 4.4.3; Wilcox, *Gaulic and British Celts*, 15-24; McIntosh, *Life in Prehistoric Europe*, 307-308; Gilliver, *Caesar's Gallic Wars*, 23-25.

⁶²⁴ Wilcox, *Gaulic and British Celts*, 24, 33.

⁶²⁵ Livy, *The History of Rome*, 23.24.

⁶²⁶ Gilliver, *Caesar's Gallic Wars*, 26-29; Goldsworthy, *Roman Warfare*, 79-81.

The Gallic War

58 BC

Given their strength and proximity to Gaul, the Germans were an influential actor in the region, having made their presence felt previously with the migration of the Cimbri, Teutones, and Ambrones across Gaul, as well as Italy and the Iberian Peninsula.⁶²⁷ Several German-speaking peoples, including the Eburones, Condrusi, Caerosi, Paemani, and Segni, also settled in northeastern Gaul at some point between the third and first centuries BC.⁶²⁸ Though the tensions caused by these events would subside, a fresh wave of what Drinkwater describes as Germanic 'latecomers' began to pressure Free Gaul towards the middle of the first century BC. Few felt this more than the Helvetii, a confederation of Celtic tribes living in the Swiss Plateau, who found themselves constantly defending against German incursions. Penned in by the geography and hostile Germans, they began preparations to migrate west in the hopes of carving out new territories for themselves.⁶²⁹ While the Helvetii struggled, some tribes attempted to exploit the German threat. As part of their struggle for prominence with the Aedui, a Roman-allied Gallic tribe living in what is now Burgundy, the Arverni and their supporters the Sequani invited a large number of Germans into Gaul. Generally reported to have been Suebi, these Germans proved instrumental, defeating the Aedui resoundingly in the late 60s BC and forcing them to become the subjects of the Sequani. Unfortunately for the Sequani, the Suebic king Ariovistus turned on his erstwhile employers, seizing a third of their territory and demanding yet more.⁶³⁰ This development, putting more Germans in their immediate vicinity, likely further convinced the Helvetii of the wisdom of westward migration.⁶³¹

⁶²⁷ Livy, *Periochae*, 63-68; Plutarch, *Marius*, 11, 14-27.

⁶²⁸ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 2.4, 6.32.

⁶²⁹ *ibid.*, 1.1-1.4.

⁶³⁰ *ibid.*, 1.31, 1.35; M. T. Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*. Translated from Latin by E. S. Shuckburgh (London: George Bell & Sons, 1908), 1.19.

⁶³¹ Drinkwater, *Roman Gaul*, 13-14; Gilliver, *Caesar's Gallic Wars*, 30; Santosuosso, *Storming the Heavens*, 58-60.

Though the defeat of one of their principal Gallic allies represented a serious blow to Roman prestige, and indeed the Senate had decreed in 61 BC that the Aedui and other *amici* must be defended, a revolt among the Allobroges prevented a timely Roman response.⁶³² By the time the Allobroges had been pacified, the fate of the Aedui was likely already sealed. In fact, Ariovistus was declared “king and friend [of the Roman People]” in 59 BC, effectively supplanting the Roman allies he had helped to defeat the previous year. Ironically (given the events of this chapter), this was during the first consulship of Caesar himself.⁶³³ Having accrued massive debts and a laundry list of enemies looking to indict him during his election and consulship, Caesar secured proconsular military commands in Gallia Cisalpina, Illyricum, and (upon the death of the previous appointee) Gallia Transalpina for a five-year term. This gave him command of four legions on Rome’s frontier, providing him with the resources and infrastructure for the military adventurism he sought.⁶³⁴

His pretext duly arrived in 58 BC when the Helvetii razed their settlements and began their migration. They were joined by their neighbours the Rauraci, Tulungi, and Latobrigi, as well as some Boii.⁶³⁵ Caesar notes that there were two routes the migrators could take: a mountainous route through Sequanian lands, or a much easier route through Allobrogian Gallia Transalpina. The tribes elected to take the latter, possibly hoping that the recently rebellious Allobroges would allow them passage. Earlier mention of Helvetic raids on Gallia Provincia by Cicero might therefore be read as probes to route’s viability.⁶³⁶ Caesar force-marched Gallia Provincia’s legion up to the Allobrogian *oppidum* of Genava (modern-day Geneva), which controlled the bridge over the Rhodanus (Rhône) that the migrants would need to cross on their journey (see *Figure 3.4*). Unable to force their way past

⁶³² Dio, *Roman History*, 37.47–37.48; Livy, *Periochae*, 103.

⁶³³ Dio, *Roman History*, 38.34; Caesar, *Gallic War*, 1.35.

⁶³⁴ Plutarch, *Caesar*. Translated from Greek by B. Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919), 14; Dio, *Roman History*, 38.8; Suetonius, *Life of Julius Caesar*. Translated from Latin by J. C. Rolfe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 22.

⁶³⁵ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 1.5; Plutarch, *Caesar*, 14.

⁶³⁶ Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, 1.19.

Caesar, the Helvetii were forced to take the route through Sequanian and Aeduan lands. However, when Caesar learnt they planned to settle near the province's borders he resolved to intercept them.⁶³⁷

Leaving his legate Titus Labienus in charge of the garrison at Genava, Caesar returned to Cisalpine Gaul to collect his other three legions from their winter quarters at Aquileia (see *Figure 3.1*) and raise another two. This represented a 50% increase in the legionary forces at his command, as many as 10,000 additional men.⁶³⁸ He hurriedly marched these five legions back to Gallia Provincia directly through the Alps, shrugging off resistance from the local Alpine tribes and crossing into Free Gaul. Having traversed Sequania and plundered their way across the territory of the Aedui, Ambarri, and Allobroges, the migrants were located by Caesar's long-range reconnaissance units attempting to cross the Arar (Saône) River, and the legions set off in pursuit (see *Figure 3.4*). Most had already crossed, but the relative speed of the legions allowed them to catch the remainder (apparently from the Tigurini tribe) while they were burdened with their baggage and inflict a heavy toll.⁶³⁹

⁶³⁷ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 1.6-1.10; Dio, *Roman History*, 38.32.

⁶³⁸ C. S. Mackay, 'The Roman Military', in K. A. Raafaub (ed.), *The Landmark Julius Caesar: The Complete Works* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 2019), 672-676:673.

⁶³⁹ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 1.10-1.13.

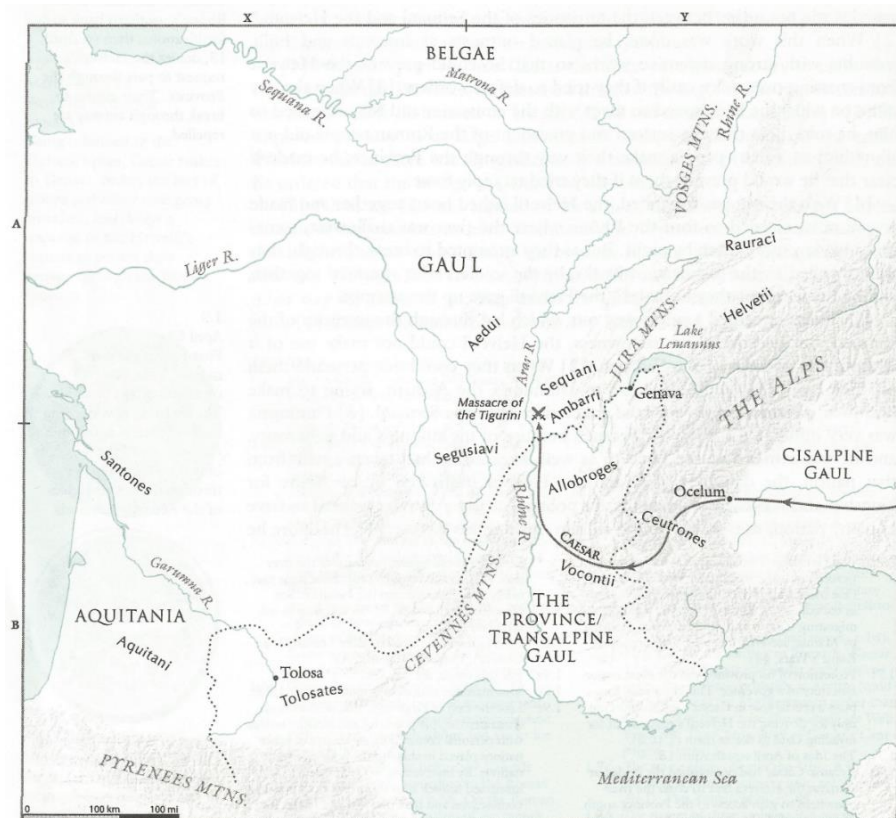


Figure 17: Map of Caesar's movements during the opening stage of the campaign against the Helvetii⁶⁴⁰

Following the Battle of the Arar, the legions built a bridge over the river to pursue the rest, resulting in several indecisive skirmishes between Roman scouts and the Helvetian rearguard as they moved across the country. Eventually, Caesar had to divert from his pursuit to resupply at the nearby Aeduan *oppidum* of Bibracte. Thinking this a retreat, the Helvetii turned about to follow and harass the Roman column. While his cavalry delayed the Helvetian advance, Caesar positioned his forces on a nearby hill to face the approaching host. The battle was hotly contested, and even saw the Helvetii fight in a dense, phalanx-like shield wall. However, the legions' superior armament, discipline, and conditioning soon told. The Gallic camp and baggage train was seized, and those who could fled to the territory of the Lingones (see Figure 3.5). Unable to immediately pursue the survivors due to Roman casualties, Caesar ordered the Lingones not to assist the fugitives, and when the Romans resumed their march they were soon met by desperate Helvetian emissaries offering surrender. In exchange for

⁶⁴⁰ Raaflaub, *The Landmark Julius Caesar*, 10.

peace with Rome, the migrant tribes were ordered to turn over hostages and return to their old lands, ensuring that the region (which bordered Roman territory) was not left open to Germanic settlement.⁶⁴¹ The Aedui were permitted to settle the Boii in their territory, likely as an additional deterrent against further aggression. Of the nearly 370,000 Helvetii who left, only a third remained to be resettled; the rest had either been captured and enslaved or killed.⁶⁴²

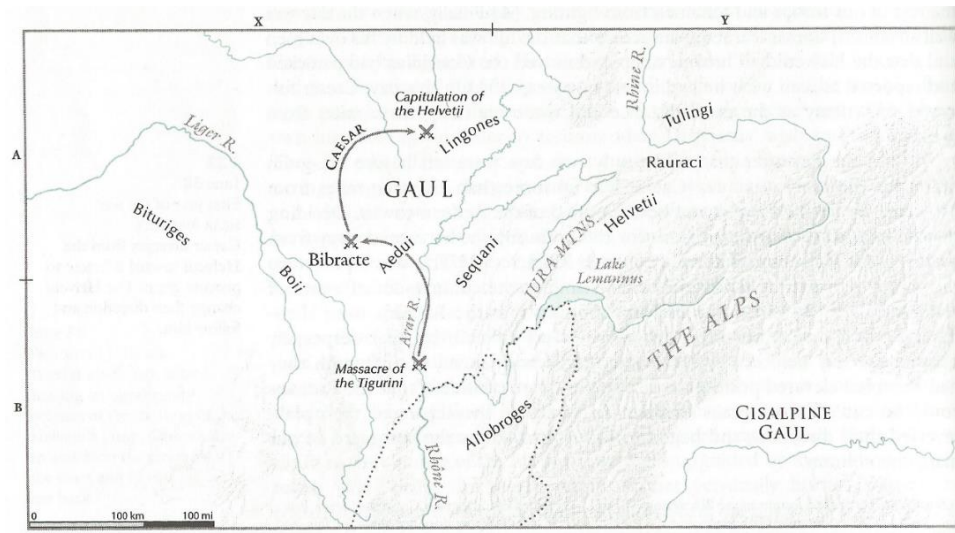


Figure 18: Map of the defeat of the Helvetii, including tribal locations after resettlement⁶⁴³

Having been saved from potential Helvetic domination, Gallic leaders cynically flocked to congratulate Caesar on his victory over the dangerous confederation and begged him to also intervene against the increasingly tyrannical Ariovistus and his Germans.⁶⁴⁴ Not only did the continued subjugation of Roman allies damage Roman prestige, an emboldened German presence in Gaul could pose a significant threat to Roman territory. Caesar therefore sent emissaries to Ariovistus demanding the return of all Aeduan hostages, the cessation of hostile actions against the tribe and their allies, and that no more Germans cross the Rhine. However, the German king refused to comply. Receiving intelligence of fresh German raids on the Aedui and tribes massing on the far side of the Rhine, the

⁶⁴¹ Dio, *Roman History*, 38.33.

⁶⁴² Caesar, *Gallic War*, 1.13-1.29.

⁶⁴³ Raaflaub, *The Landmark Julius Caesar*, 20.

⁶⁴⁴ Livy, *Periochae*, 104.

proconsul force-marched his six legions to occupy the Sequanian *oppidum* of Vesontio, a large settlement that was reportedly the primary target of Ariovistus (see *Figure 3.6*).⁶⁴⁵

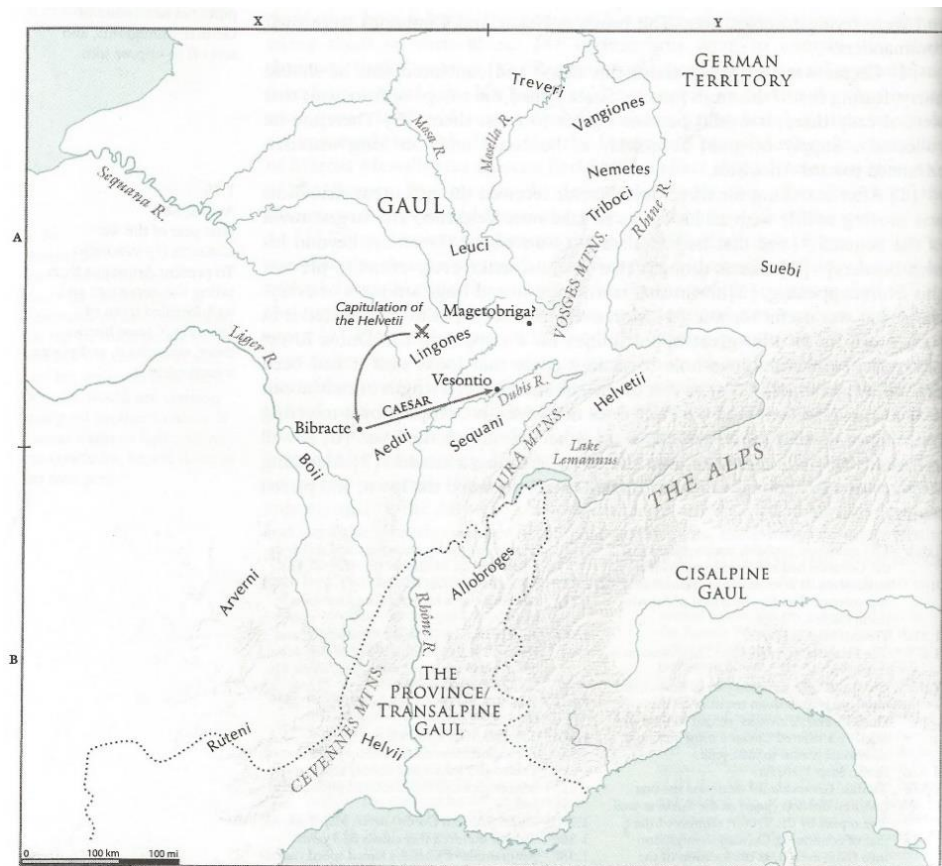


Figure 19: Map of Caesar's move from Bibracte to occupy Vesontio ahead of Ariovistus⁶⁴⁶

After resupplying at Vesontio, Caesar pressed further westwards (see *Figure 3.7*). Though this operational tempo likely complicated their logistical arrangements, the legions' unexpected arrival reportedly shocked Ariovistus into parleying. The German king still refused to back down, however.⁶⁴⁷ Although Ariovistus' cavalry was able to cut the Romans off from their supply lines for a time, poor auguries reportedly prevented him from accepting Caesar's offered battle. Hearing this from captives, Caesar forced the issue by launching a direct attack on the German camp, whereupon the tactics, discipline, and endurance of the outnumbered legions again secured a hard-fought victory. Though

⁶⁴⁵ Caesar, *Galic War*, 1.30-1.38; Dio, *Roman History*, 38.34-38.35.

⁶⁴⁶ Raafflaub, *The Landmark Julius Caesar*, 34.

⁶⁴⁷ Gilliver, *Caesar's Gallic Wars*, 36.

some Germans (including Ariovistus) were able to escape back across the Rhine, Caesar's cavalry ran down the rest, and Plutarch reports as many as 80,000 Germans were killed.⁶⁴⁸ Following the Battle of Vosges (see *Figure 3.7*), many of the Germans who had been preparing to cross the Rhine into Gaul melted away, and Caesar wintered his troops in Sequanian territory while he oversaw his civil responsibilities in Cisalpine Gaul.⁶⁴⁹ The year's campaigning had resolved both the Helvetic crisis and the issue of German encroachment into Gaul, repairing Roman influence on the far side of the Alps in doing so.⁶⁵⁰

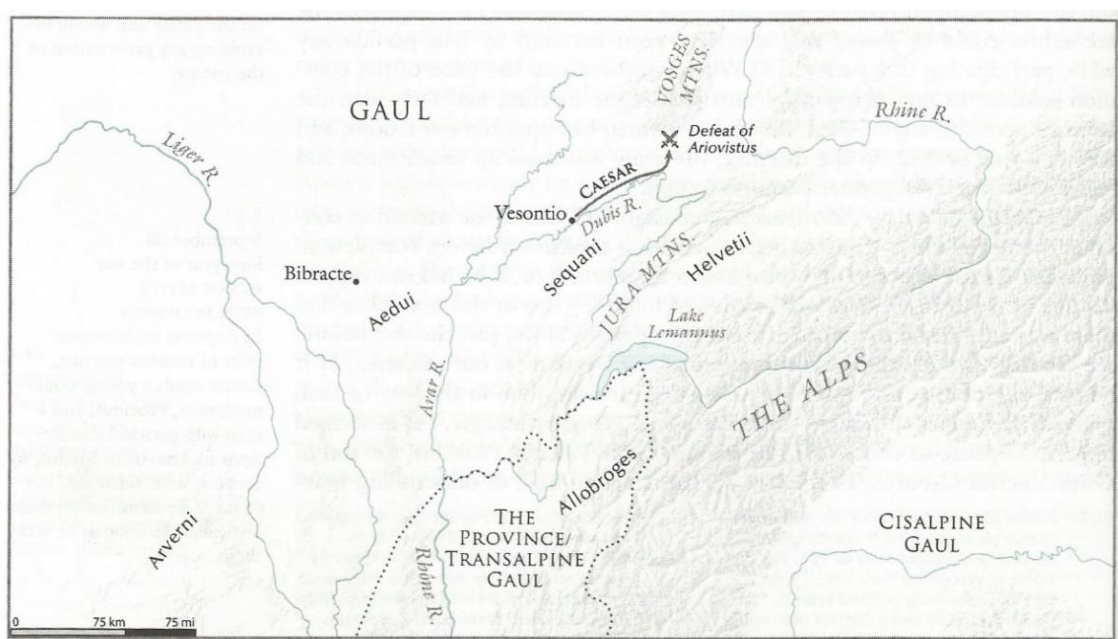


Figure 20: Map of Caesar's movements leading up to the Battle of Vosges⁶⁵¹

⁶⁴⁸ Dio, *Roman History*, 38.35-38.50; Plutarch, *Caesar*, 19.

⁶⁴⁹ Caesar, *Galic War*, 1.39-1.54.

⁶⁵⁰ Livy, *Periochae*, 103-104.

⁶⁵¹ Raaflaub, *The Landmark Julius Caesar*, 44.

The decision to winter the legions in Free Gaul rather than Roman territory stoked lingering suspicions in Celtica about Caesar's intentions. Their suspicions were shared by the Belgae of northern Gaul, who feared that Belgica would be next if the Romans decided to establish more direct control over Celtica. Unwilling to exchange a German master for a Roman one, elements within the tribes began to conspire against the Romans, exchanging hostages to cement their pact. When word of this was reported to Caesar, the proconsul began preparing for a fresh campaign. Tribes that lived on the Belgic border were set to work gathering intelligence and another two legions were levied in Cisalpine Gaul. The former reported tribal levies being gathered for a single large army. Caesar therefore decided to launch a pre-emptive strike, hurrying his army from their base at Vesontio to the Belgic border in just 15 days.⁶⁵²

Once more, Caesar's rapid advance caught the enemy by surprise. The Remi, a Belgic tribe who lived on the Belgica-Celtica border (see *Figure 3.8*, Durocortorum is their capital), immediately surrendered themselves to Roman authority. Claiming no part in the conspiracy and offering total compliance, they provided the Romans with a great deal of intelligence on the location and strength of the conspirators. The tribe identified these as the Bellovaci, Suessiones, Nervii, Atrebatas, Ambiani, Morini, Menapii, Caleti, Veliocasses, Viomandui, and Atuatuci, as well as several of northeastern Gaul's Germanic tribes. According to Caesar, the Remi suggested that the anti-Roman coalition could field as many as 250,000-300,000 men. Hoping to break up this force to avoid facing them all at once, Caesar dispatched his Aeduan auxiliaries to ravage the territory of the Bellovaci (the largest and most powerful tribe in the coalition). However, Roman long-range reconnaissance soon reported that enemy's approach, forcing Caesar to hurriedly move his camp across the nearby Aisne (*Axona*) where the river would protect his flanks.⁶⁵³

⁶⁵² Caesar, *Gallic War*, 2.1-2.2; Plutarch, *Caesar*, 20; Dio, *Roman History*, 39.1.

⁶⁵³ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 2.3-2.5; Dio, *Roman History*, 39.1.

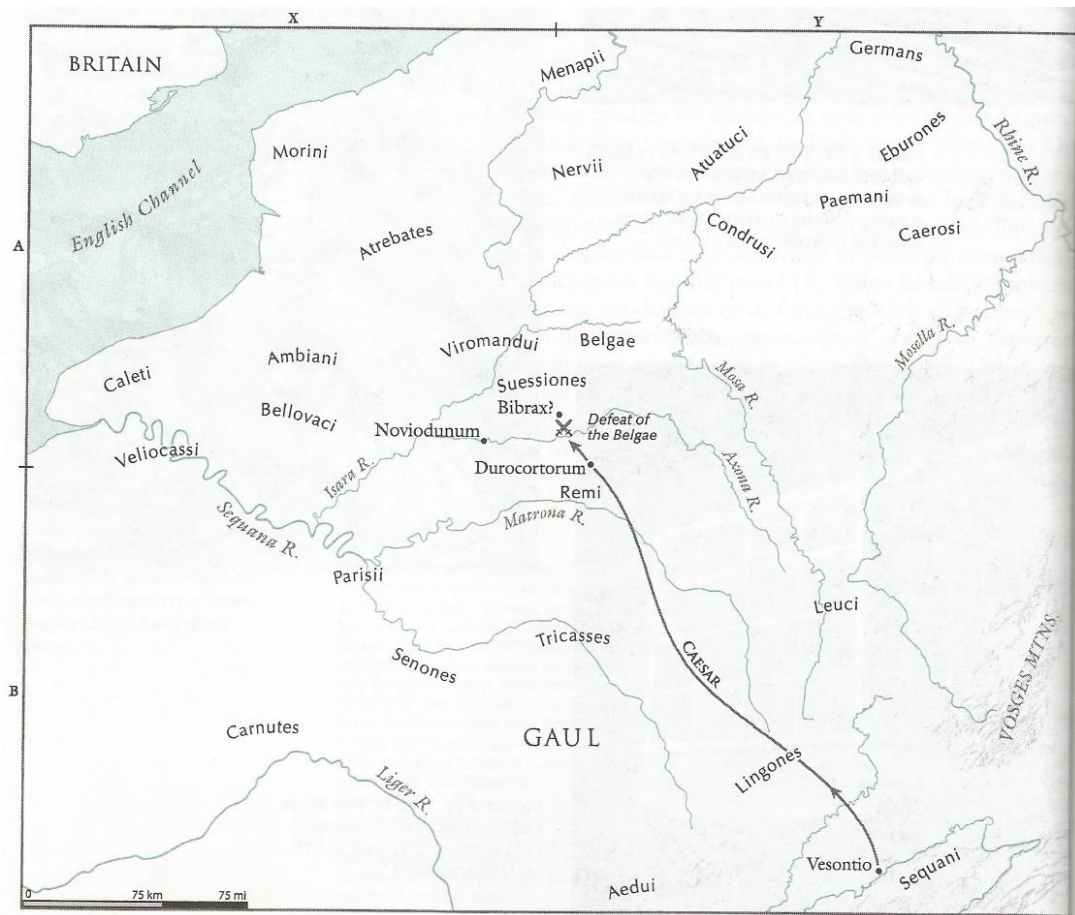


Figure 21: Caesar's advance from Sequania into Gallia Belgica⁶⁵⁴

Hearing of the Remi's submission, the Belgic army attacked the nearby *oppidum* of Bibrax. A force of Roman auxiliaries (Numidian and Cretan archers, as well as Balearic slingers) was sent to bolster its defence, prompting the Belgae to break their siege and instead ravage the surrounding farmland before advancing on the Roman army. After some unsuccessful skirmishes with Roman forces, supply issues forced the Belgic host to disband, with each tribe returning home on the promise that they would all rally to the aid of whomever the Romans attacked first. Another chief factor in this decision was the Aeduan force sent out by Caesar, the progress of which was making the Bellovaci increasingly restless. Representing as much as a fifth of the coalition's fighting strength, their departure would significantly weaken the Belgic host, a risk its leaders could not accept.⁶⁵⁵

⁶⁵⁴ Raaflaub, *The Landmark Julius Caesar*, 58.

⁶⁵⁵ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 2.6-2.10; Dio, *Roman History*, 39.1-39.2.

Having not immediately followed for fear of an ambush, Caesar sent his cavalry out to harass and delay the column's rearguard the next morning. This allowed a force of three legions under Labienus to catch up with them and inflict significant casualties. Hoping to capitalise on the shock of this defeat, he immediately led his army on a forced march into Suessionian territory and laid siege to the *oppidum* of Noviodunum (see *Figure 3.9*). The speed and ease with which the legionaries constructed the siege works necessary for an assault demoralised the defenders, and they sent emissaries asking to surrender. At the request of the Remi, who shared a close relationship with the Suessiones, Caesar accepted the surrender.⁶⁵⁶ Gilliver points out the valuable precedent this and the acceptance of the Remi set for Caesar's dealings in Gaul, showing Gauls the benefits of surrender compared to the devastation of the Helvetii and Germans by the legions.⁶⁵⁷ This soon paid dividends as Caesar subsequently received the surrenders of the powerful Bellovaci and the Ambiani without resistance.⁶⁵⁸ Caesar accepted the Bellovacian capitulation at the encouragement of the Aedui (with whom they shared historic ties), recognising the value of increasing the influence of his principal allies.⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵⁶ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 2.3.

⁶⁵⁷ Gilliver, *Caesar's Gallic Wars*, 38.

⁶⁵⁸ Plutarch, *Caesar*, 20; Livy, *Periochae*, 104.

⁶⁵⁹ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 2.11-2.15; Dio, *Roman History*, 39.2.

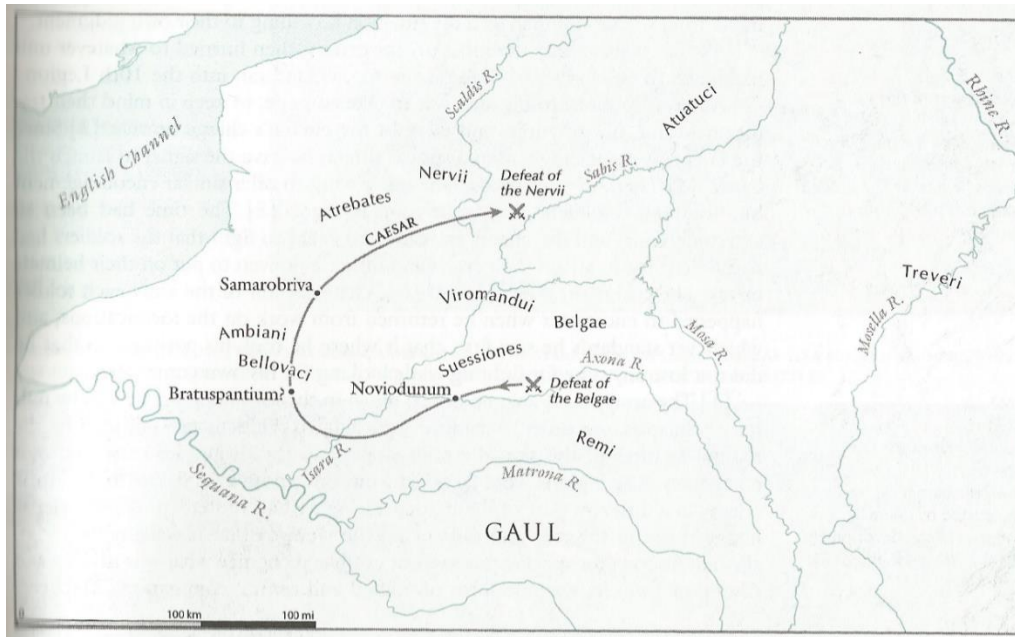


Figure 22: Map of Caesar's route through the Suessiones, Bellovaci, and Ambiani that took him to the Sabis (Sambre)

River⁶⁶⁰

Moving northeast, the legions entered the territory of the Nervii and their allies the Atrebatas and Viromandui (see Figure 3.9). These tribes vowed to neither send emissaries or accept any peace. After some minor skirmishes, Caesar received intelligence that these tribes had gathered at the Sabis River to rendezvous with the Atuatuci before attacking the legions. Scouts were subsequently sent out to identify a good location for a camp at the river. However, Gallic traitors within the Roman column informed the Nervii of the legions' direction and disposition, and the tribes prepared an ambush. As the legions arrived at the chosen location and began to build their camp, the Nervii and their allies burst forth from their concealment in nearby forestry.⁶⁶¹

Although Caesar had sent a screening force of cavalry and skirmishers across the river in anticipation of meeting enemy elements, the speed with which their full force (possibly as many as 75,000 men) appeared and engaged caught the legions unprepared.⁶⁶² Not only had the two less-

⁶⁶⁰ Raaflaub, *The Landmark Julius Caesar*, 65.

⁶⁶¹ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 2.15-2.19; Dio, *Roman History*, 39.3.

⁶⁶² Caesar, *Gallic War*, 2.4.

experienced legions making up the rearguard not even arrived yet, many legionaries from the rest had been sent out to collect construction materials and were thus absent when the attack began. Though the legions' training and battle experience prevented them from being completely overrun immediately, the battle balanced on a knife edge. Such was the chaos that elements of both sides captured each other's camp. This changed with the arrival of the Roman rearguard, however, which prevented the encirclement of the Roman line and expelled the Nervii from the army's camp. The tribes were soon repulsed. Having stood their ground the longest, Nervii suffered such tremendous losses that they offered their surrender, after which their allies quickly followed suit.⁶⁶³ Caesar accepted and reportedly even went as far as to order their neighbours to refrain from hostile actions against them in their weakened state. This was calculated generosity to encourage other tribes to surrender, made more effective by the reduction of a powerful tribe to such weakness that they relied on Roman generosity for survival after resisting.⁶⁶⁴

⁶⁶³ Plutarch, *Caesar*, 20; Livy, *Periochae*, 104; Dio, *Roman History*, 39.3.

⁶⁶⁴ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 2.19-2.28.

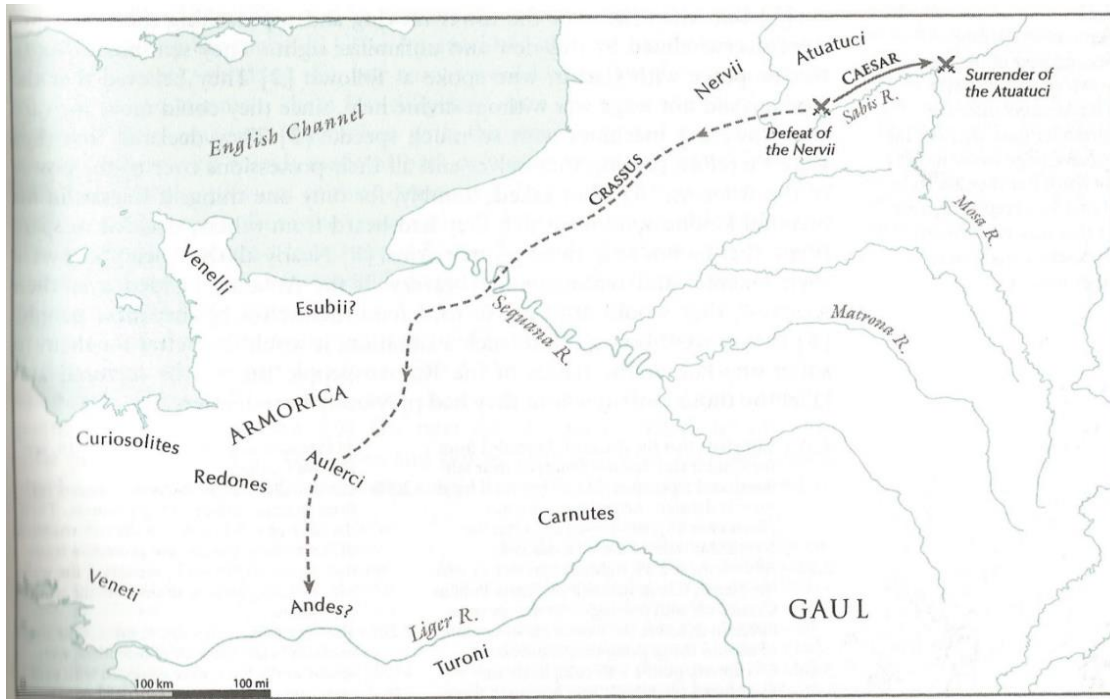


Figure 23: Map of Caesar's defeat of the Atuatuci, including Crassus' concurrent campaign in the west⁶⁶⁵

Having returned home following the defeat of their intended compatriots, the Atuatuci soon found Caesar's army on their doorstep, albeit minus a legion sent west to Armorica (roughly analogous to modern-day Brittany) under Publius Licinius Crassus (see *Figure 3.10*). Rather than try and defend everything, the Atuatuci pulled back much of their population and manpower to their most defensible settlement to resist the coming Roman assault. After initially surrendering on lenient terms as the Roman siege developed, they unsuccessfully attempted a surprise night-time breakout, prompting Caesar to sack the town in retaliation. The survivors of the sack (reportedly numbering just over 50,000) were enslaved in another calculated act to discourage future resistance.⁶⁶⁶ Caesar makes no mention of further unrest from the Belgic tribes whose surrender is not recorded, suggesting that his campaigns had cowed them somewhat. This theory of an 'overawing' of the tribes is supported by the

⁶⁶⁵ Raaflaub, *The Landmark Julius Caesar*, 75.

⁶⁶⁶ Dio, *Roman History*, 39.4.

description of general peace in Gaul as the legions entered winter quarters in the lands of the Carnutes, Andes, and Turoni.⁶⁶⁷

57 BC was not an unmitigated success, however. As Caesar returned to Italy at the end of his campaigns, he sent his legate Servius Sulpicius Galba to secure the northern roads through the Alps with a legion and some cavalry. Despite initially subduing the Nantuates, Veragri, and Seduni that inhabited the area (see *Figure 3.2*), resentment at handing over hostages and fear of Roman intentions saw the tribes revolt and attack the wintering legionaries. Although a last-ditch breakout saved Galba's force from destruction, they were forced to withdraw back to Gallia Provincia, suggesting Roman control of Gaul was not as complete as Caesar's reports back to Rome suggested.⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁷ Caesar, *Gallie War*, 2.29-2.35.

⁶⁶⁸ *ibid.*, 3.1-3.6; Dio, *Roman History*, 39.5.

Caesar's declaration of peace in Gaul was proven somewhat premature by the eruption of serious unrest on its Atlantic coastline. Crassus had previously reported compliance in the region, securing hostages from the local tribes with seemingly little resistance and wintering his troops with the Andes. However, local grain shortages that winter forced Crassus to send out officers to levy tribute from the nearby Esubii, Curiosolites, and Veneti (see *Figure 3.11*). Likely also suffering from its effects, the tribes were less than enthusiastic about the prospect of having to hand over what little they had to the legions. Owing to their domination of the Atlantic sea lanes thanks to their strong navy and strategically-located *oppida*, the Veneti were regarded as the most influential of the maritime tribes. Therefore, when they seized the Roman officers sent to them, the other tribes quickly followed the Venetic example. Soon, the whole of Armorica had sworn to stand united against Roman tyranny, demanding the return of their hostages in exchange for the release of the captured Romans.⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁹ Caesar, *Gallie War*, 3.7-3.8; Dio, *Roman History*, 39.40.

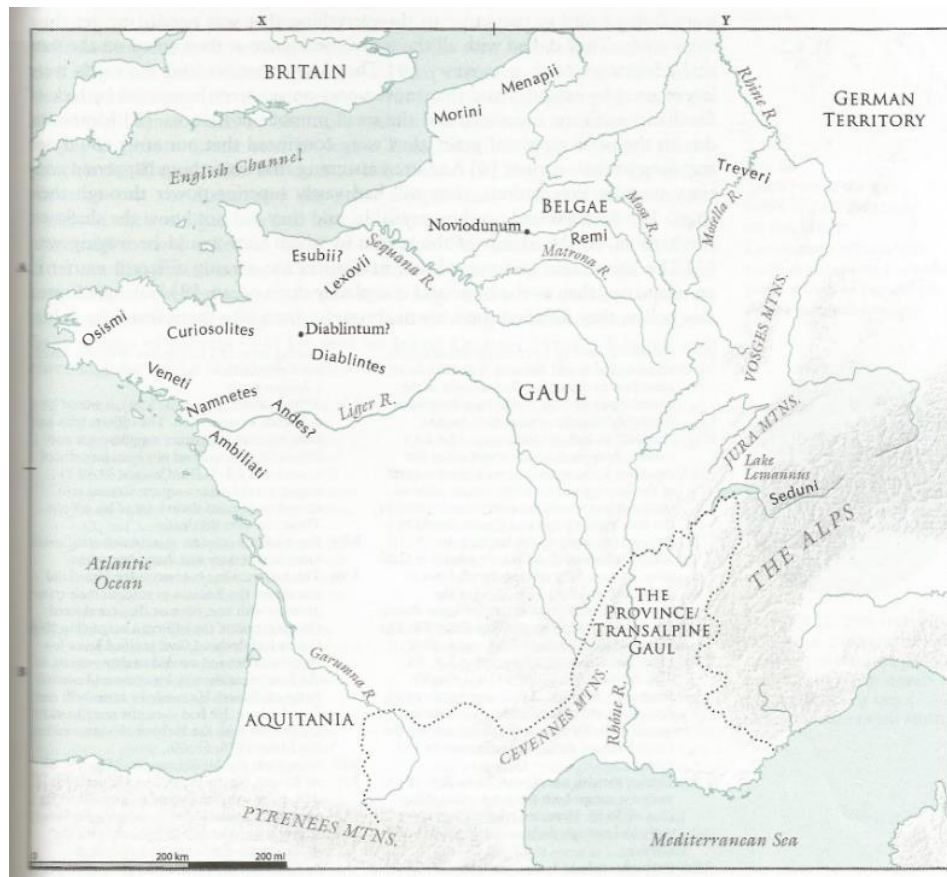


Figure 24: Map of the maritime tribes against which Caesar campaigned in 56 BC⁶⁷⁰

Unable to return immediately, likely due to the infamous triumvirate conference at Luca (Lucca),⁶⁷¹ Caesar ordered Crassus to construct a fleet in the Liger (Loire) River. Meanwhile, having not received their hostages back, the Veneti and their allies began readying their *oppida* for siege and concentrating as much of their fleet in Venetia as possible. The Veneti received pledges of support from the Osismi, Lexovii, Namnetes, Ambiliati, Morini, Diablintes, and Menapii (see Figure 3.11). The tribe also sent for auxiliaries from Britain, where their maritime trade had forged connections. Caesar notes that the operational environment on the coast strongly favoured the maritime tribes, with estuaries hampering land movement and a lack of harbours impeding sealift. Furthermore, the Romans lacked knowledge of both the local maritime geography and seamanship on open oceans (as opposed to inland seas like the Mediterranean). Most importantly, the Veneti possessed a large fleet

⁶⁷⁰ Raafaub, *The Landmark Julius Caesar*, 87.

⁶⁷¹ Plutarch, *Caesar*, 21; Suetonius, *Julius Caesar*, 24.

of quality ships tailored to such conditions. Nevertheless, the proconsul had to respond, lest he invite similar defections across a Gaul already increasingly discontent with Roman domination.

Upon returning to Gaul, Caesar elected to divide the army. Labienus would take a cavalry force northeast to deter Germanic crossings and keep the Belgic tribes in line. Crassus was sent south to Aquitania with twelve legionary cohorts and a large contingent of cavalry to prevent the tribes there from aiding the Armoricans (see *Figure 3.13*). Lastly, Quintus Titurius Sabinus would take three legions north into modern-day Normandy to prevent the locals from joining up with the main enemy concentration in the west (see *Figure 3.12*). Caesar would lead the five remaining legions (minus the men detached to go with Crassus) west, while Decimus Junius Brutus Albinus sailed the fleet of Roman and allied ships to Venetia.⁶⁷²

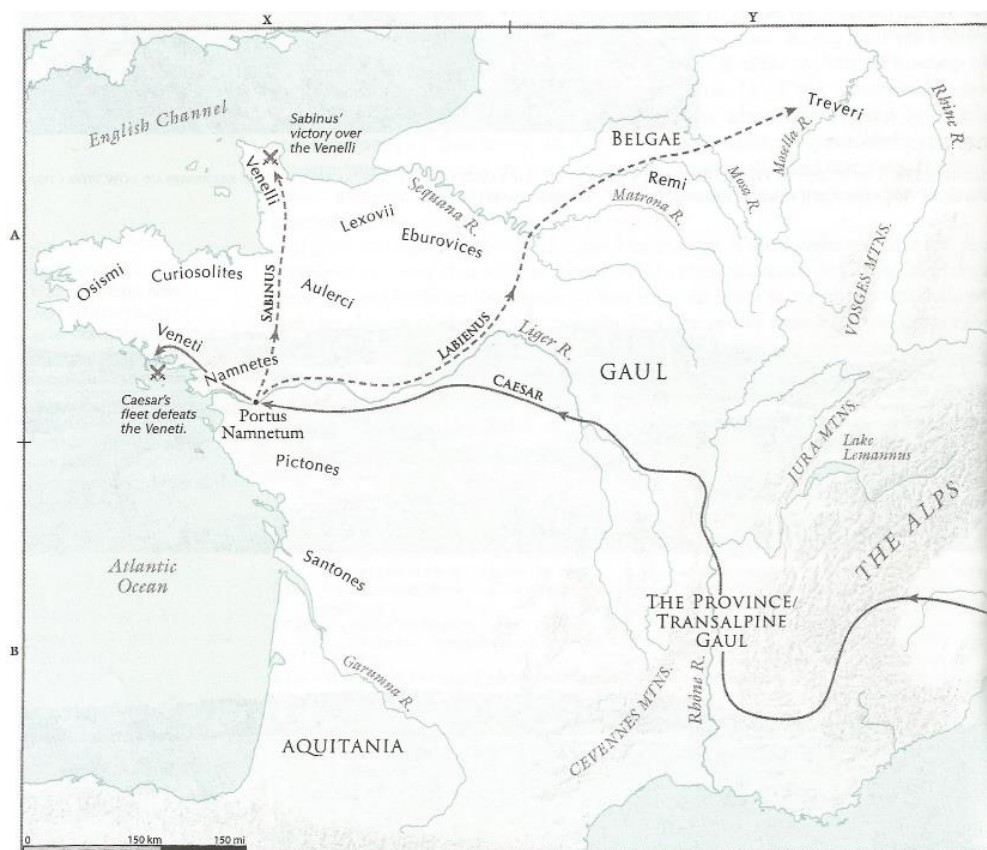


Figure 25: Map of the operations of Caesar, Labienus, and Sabinus⁶⁷³

⁶⁷² Caesar, *Gallic War*, 3.9-3.11; Dio, *Roman History*, 39.40.

⁶⁷³ Raaflaub, *The Landmark Julius Caesar*, 92.

Caesar's operational plan involved the systematic, piecemeal reduction of Venetic strongholds and their garrisons. However, the Veneti were able to leverage their sea power and the natural defensibility of their terrain to seriously frustrate this. High tides regularly cut off land access to *oppida*, obstructing ground assault, while naval blockades risked damage from treacherous shallows or being stranded by retreating tides. In the event legionary earthworks overcame these barriers, the Venetic navy (knowing the waters as only natives can) would simply evacuate the settlement to another, similarly well-defended *oppidum*. This was a capability the Romans struggled to deny them. As well as lacking safe coastal harbours from which to operate, Roman galleys were outclassed by Venetic ships. The latter were better crewed, better adapted to local conditions, faster before the wind, larger, and resistant to Roman naval tactics like ramming, missiles, and grapnels.⁶⁷⁴

With little to show for the summer's considerable efforts save for empty *oppida*, Caesar resolved to wait until his fleet was large enough for a decisive attack on the enemy navy so as to rob the Veneti of their means of evading defeat. Though reinforced, Brutus' enlarged Roman fleet was still outnumbered by its Venetic counterpart (which numbered more than 200 ships) when the two met at the Battle of Morbihan (see *Figure 3.12*). Learning from their earlier difficulties, the Roman sailors adopted a new tactic: immobilising the oarless Gallic ships by using sharp hooks on long poles to cut their rigging. This allowed the Romans to board them and turn naval battle into an infantry fight. Many Veneti attempted to disengage but were becalmed by a drop in wind, allowing the Roman galleys to capture almost the entire fleet. This robbed the Armoricans of their primary means of defence and sealift, stranding their assembled leaders at the mercy of Caesar's approaching army. Though Caesar accepted their submission, he sought to make an example of the Veneti to other tribes who might consider resisting Roman officials or revolting. Their tribal leaders were executed, and all other survivors were enslaved.⁶⁷⁵

⁶⁷⁴ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 3.12-3.13; Dio, *Roman History*, 39.40.

⁶⁷⁵ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 3.14-3.16; Dio, *Roman History*, 39.41-39.43; Livy, *Periochae*, 104.

Caesar's operations against the Veneti went uninterrupted thanks to the efforts of his legates. In the north, Sabinus defeated an army of Venelli, Lexovii, Aulerci, and Eburonices attempting to move into the main Venetic area of operations. The tribes surrendered after suffering heavy losses. Caesar reflects that quick reversals of fortune like this were often enough to break the spirits of the belligerent but ultimately weak-willed Gauls. Crassus faced a much tougher task securing Aquitania with little more than a single legion. Indeed, the scale of the undertaking and martial reputation of the Aquitani prompted him to mobilise additional auxiliaries and legionary veterans (*evocati*) from Gallia Provincia. The Aquitani (possibly due to Hispanic influences in their culture) made greater use of guerrilla methods than other Gauls, frustrating Crassus' campaign. After fighting off an ambush by the Sotiates, Crassus pressed his advantage and besieged the tribe's capital, forcing a capitulation (see *Figure 3.13*). However, a coalition coalesced around the Vocates and Tarusates that included not just Aquitani but also Cantabrian warriors from Hispania Citerior, including men who had served under Quintus Sertorius. These forces began cutting the legions off from their lines of communication, using their superior mobility and local geographical knowledge to block roads and attack supply convoys. Increasingly outnumbered every day, Crassus attacked the enemy camp to force a decisive engagement before his situation became untenable, breaching their defences and breaking the army. This heavy defeat shattered Aquitanian resistance and compelled all but the region's most distant tribes to surrender.⁶⁷⁶

⁶⁷⁶ Caesar, *Gallie War*, 3.17-3.27; Dio, *Roman History*, 39.45-39.46.

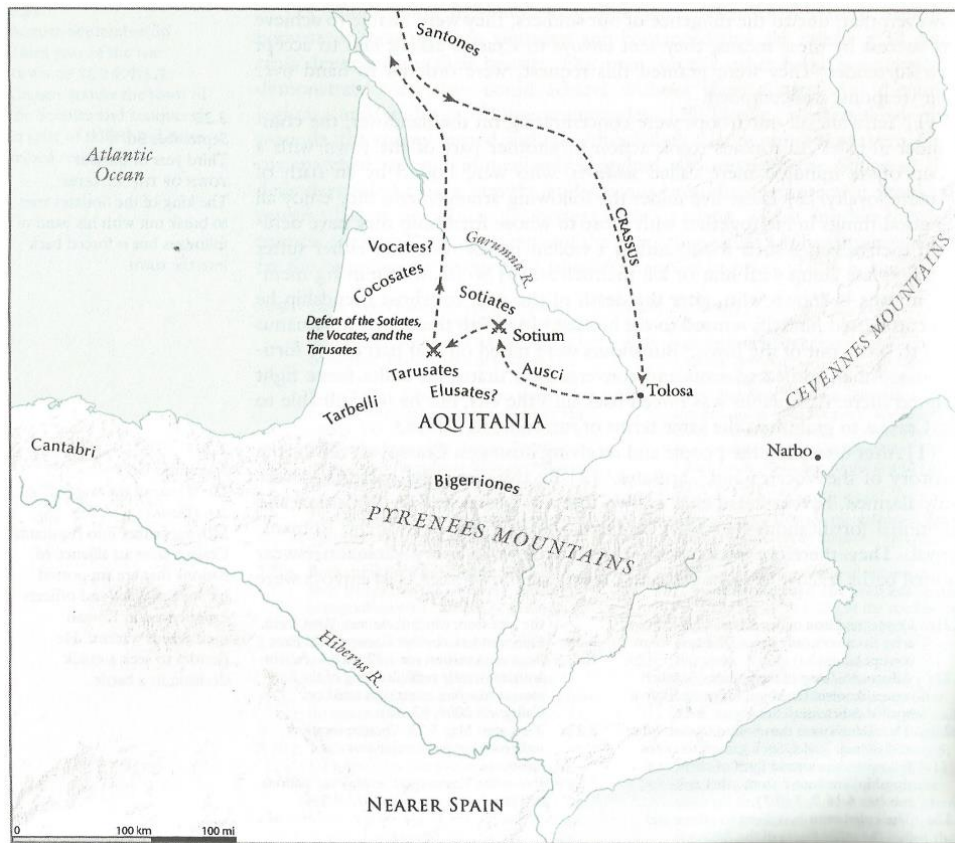


Figure 26: Crassus' campaign in Aquitania⁶⁷⁷

Caesar attempted to use the breathing space won by these Roman campaigns to extinguish the last flames of the year's unrest before winter hit, setting out to subdue the Belgic Morini and Menapii (see *Figure 3.11*). His doing so so late in the campaign season suggests he expected this would be a simple job, possibly relying on the psychological effects of his earlier exploits. However, recognising the legions' advantage in battle, the Morini and Menapii adopted a less direct strategy. The tribes abandoned their settlements and began waging a guerrilla campaign out of their marshy, densely-wooded hinterlands. Arriving to root them out, the legions were assailed with hit-and-run attacks from the woods, the denseness of which hindered legionary techniques and made counterattacks or pursuit a costly endeavour. Caesar made some headway (capturing some herds and wagon columns) by reshaping the battlefield to something more favourable through deforestation, but the Gauls simply retreated into even thicker woods. With losses mounting and winter setting in, Caesar

⁶⁷⁷ Raaflaub, *The Landmark Julius Caesar*, 100.

abandoned his campaign and simply razed the tribes' abandoned settlements and fields before going into winter quarters amongst the Lexovii and Aulerici (see *Figure 3.12*).⁶⁷⁸

Despite ending on a low note, 56 BC saw the legions subjugate almost the entire Gallic coast in a matter of months through the canny distribution of forces to keep the enemy divided and the attainment of decisive engagements where possible. This display of dominance also warded off the simmering unrest that kept threatening to break out, suggesting an awareness of the importance of belief in victory in feeding revolt. Even in his interrupted operations against the Morini and Menapii, Caesar's dogged deforestation indicated a recognition of the dangers posed by the tribes' guerrilla warfare, as well as the psychological value of military spectacles like that undertaken in convincing the Gauls of Roman inexorability.

⁶⁷⁸ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 3.28-3.29; Dio, *Roman History*, 39.44.

Though 55 BC saw relatively little action in a freshly secured Gaul, Caesar was not idle. With his fellow triumvirs Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus and Marcus Licinius Crassus sharing a consulship, he sought new initiatives with which to stay relevant back in Rome.⁶⁷⁹ His first opportunity presented itself over the winter, when the Germanic Usipetes and Tencteri began crossing the Rhine into Belgica (see *Figure 3.14*). Caesar states that they did so to escape the depredations of the Suebi, but Cassius Dio suggests they were possibly also invited in by the Gauls to fight Caesar. Not trusting the reaction of the unpredictable Gauls to these new circumstances, Caesar immediately rejoined his army, hoping to get ahead of the trouble before it escalated out of control.⁶⁸⁰

As he had expected, Caesar's spies reported that several Gallic nations were encouraging and offering aid to the Germans. With the German presence spreading, Caesar summoned the Gallic leaders, ordering them to furnish cavalry for a campaign to expel the raiders. Roman deep reconnaissance located the invaders in Treverian territory, and the army moved to confront them (see *Figure 3.14*). Though German envoys attempted to stall his advance with talk of truces, an ambush on his cavalry scouts and reports that German raiders were pressing west convinced him that he needed to strike before they gained further momentum. When German elders arrived to downplay the ambush, Caesar detained them and launched an attack on the enemy camp. Leaderless and shocked by this sudden attack, the German defence reportedly turned into a rout in short order. Men, women, and children alike reportedly died in droves to either Roman swords or the current of the Rhine as they attempted to flee. While Caesar's claim of 430,000 German dead for no Roman loss is easily dismissible, the German death toll was likely very high. This display of brutality was not without purpose, however, serving as a warning to other Germans against crossing the Rhine and showing potentially duplicitous Gauls that Roman power was as potent as ever.⁶⁸¹

⁶⁷⁹ Gilliver, *Caesar's Gallic Wars*, 43-44.

⁶⁸⁰ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 4.1-4.6; Dio, *Roman History*, 39.47; Plutarch, *Caesar*, 22.

⁶⁸¹ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 4.6-4.15; Dio, *Roman History*, 39.47-39.48; Plutarch, *Caesar*, 22.

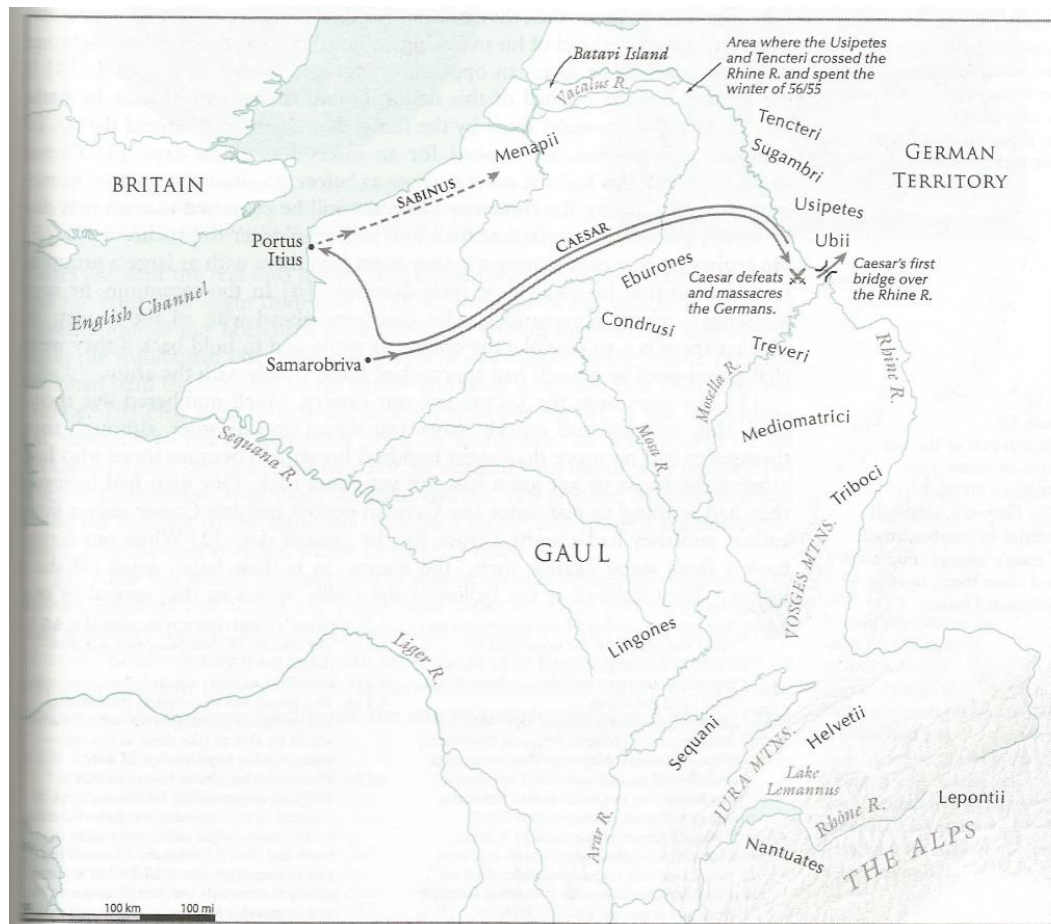


Figure 27: Map of Caesar's campaigns in the Gallic theatre during 55 BC⁶⁸²

Caesar wanted to press his point to the Germans further, however, and resolved to cross the Rhine. He was further influenced in this by the refusal of the Sugambri (see Figure 3.14) to turn over fugitive Usipetes and Tencteri, as well as pleas from the Ubii (a friendly German tribe that had sought Roman protection from the Suebi) for a show of solidarity with them to deter further aggression.⁶⁸³ To add to the spectacle of his crossing, Caesar ordered the construction of a large bridge over the Rhine. Roman engineers completed the bridge in just 10 days, allowing Caesar to march on Sugambrian territory, which he put to the torch. This crossing led several German tribes to seek Roman friendship and caused such panic amongst the Suebi that they abandoned their settlements and mobilised their entire nation in anticipation of a Roman invasion. Satisfied with the fear instilled by his crossing and

⁶⁸² Raaflaub, *The Landmark Julius Caesar*, 113.

⁶⁸³ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 4.3.

the panic his seizure of the initiative caused, Caesar withdrew back over the Rhine after just 18 days in Germania.⁶⁸⁴

Following his historic crossing into Germania, Caesar resolved to take another historic step and cross the sea to Britannia.⁶⁸⁵ Despite the approach of winter, Brittonic support for the Gallic tribes in previous campaigns compelled Caesar to act, even if just to conduct reconnaissance for later. Since it offered the shortest crossing, the legions encamped in the territory of the Morini while the Roman fleet assembled at a harbour located in what is now the Pas-de-Calais (see *Figure 3.14*).⁶⁸⁶ During this time, envoys from part of the Morini gave hostages to secure a truce with Rome, though some holdouts and the Menapii still refused to submit. To address this threat to his port, Caesar left behind six legions under Sabinus and Lucius Aurunculeius Cotta. However, even with this large force, the legates were unable to penetrate the Menapii's woodland strongholds and were forced to settle for territorial devastation.⁶⁸⁷

Though his two legions established a beachhead on Britannia's southeast coast after an opposed landing, bad weather forced the ships transporting his cavalry to turn back and caused severe damage to many that arrived. Although several local tribes initially submitted, Caesar's reliance on them for supplies and his army's relatively small size soon became apparent, and they conspired to revolt. After mauling a foraging legion in an ambush, the Britons smelled blood in the water and attacked the Roman camp. Despite repulsing this attack and forcing fresh surrenders from the Britons, Caesar recognised his position was untenable and (having cannibalised his most damaged ships to repair the rest) beat a hasty retreat to Gaul. Upon disembarking, the beleaguered legions were almost immediately ambushed by revolting Morini. The legions fought them off, however, and a campaign by Labienus saw them forced back into submission after the marshlands that had previously protected

⁶⁸⁴ *ibid.*, 4.16-4.19; Plutarch, *Caesar*, 22-23; Dio, *Roman History*, 39.47-39.48; Livy, *Periochae*, 105.

⁶⁸⁵ Suetonius, *Julius Caesar*, 25.

⁶⁸⁶ Strabo, *Geography*, 4.5.2.

⁶⁸⁷ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 4.20-4.22, 4.38; Dio, *Roman History*, 50; Plutarch, *Caesar*, 23.

the tribe dried up. Though it was a sensation in Rome, that only two Brittonic tribes bothered to send hostages to Gaul proves the inefficacy of Caesar's campaign. Nonetheless, Roman control of Gaul was still just about holding together when the legions entered winter quarters in Belgica.⁶⁸⁸

⁶⁸⁸ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 4.23-4.38; Dio, *Roman History*, 51-53; Plutarch, *Caesar*, 23; Livy, *Periochae*, 105.

54 BC

Not to be denied, Caesar immediately began preparations for a return to Britannia, ordering his fleet repaired and expanded over the winter. However, when he returned to Gaul in spring, his departure was delayed by an internal power struggle amongst the Belgic Treveri (see *Figure 3.15*). Caesar led four legions and several hundred cavalry east to intervene, leaving behind their baggage trains to move faster. Upon arriving, the proconsul was approached by Cingetorix (one of the rival leaders), who swore loyalty to both Rome and Caesar personally. The Romans' unexpected arrival and the implied favour Cingetorix's presence in Caesar's camp suggested led the Treverian nobility to flock to Cingetorix. Increasingly isolated, Indutiomarus (Cingetorix's rival) backed down, dismissing his assembled forces and handing over 200 hostages (including his son) to Caesar. Though Caesar's timely response had averted the immediate crisis, Cingetorix's elevation exacerbated the anti-Roman sentiment of Indutiomarus and his faction. Furthermore, the proconsul's haste to move on to his expedition meant that this was left to ferment.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁹ Caesar, *Gallie War*, 5.1-5.4.

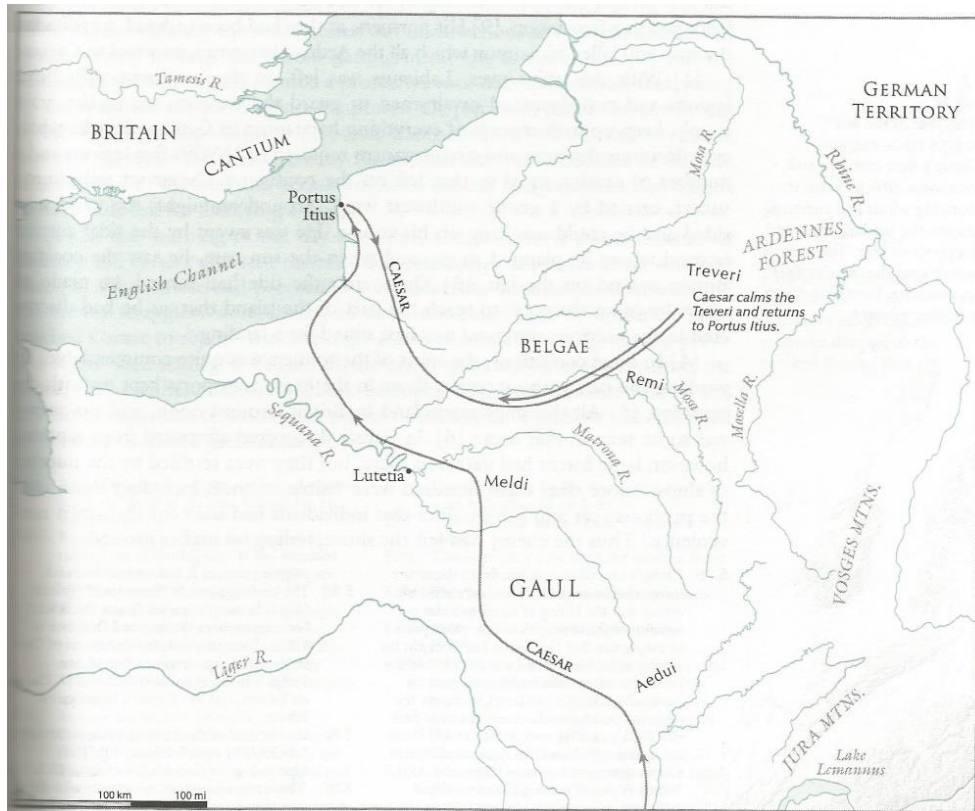


Figure 28: Map of Caesar's actions before departing for his second expedition to Britain⁶⁹⁰

Recognising the imminent threat of revolt, Caesar decided that only those Gallic leaders he trusted most would remain in Gaul during his expedition, hoping that removing the rabble-rousers to Britain would lessen the chance of revolt in his absence. However, some Gallic leaders (led by the Aeduan druid Dumnorix) saw this as a ploy to sideline and later kill those who might prevent the Romans taking over Gaul entirely, and plotted to revolt. As the expedition was embarking, Dumnorix attempted to desert with the Aeduan cavalry. Having learned the conspiracy from pro-Roman Aedui, Caesar had expected this and sent a force of cavalry to detain him, but Dumnorix resisted violently and was killed. Though expedient, his death vindicated his claims about Roman intentions to many Gauls, fanning the nascent flames of revolt.⁶⁹¹

⁶⁹⁰ Raafaub, *The Landmark Julius Caesar*, 137.

⁶⁹¹ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 5.5-5.7.

Nevertheless, Caesar embarked on his expedition with five legions and 2,000 Gallic horse, leaving Labienus behind with three legions and another 2,000 cavalry to keep the peace in Gaul and oversee Caesar's logistical provisions. Caesar's entire force crossed successfully this time, establishing a bridgehead in *Cantium* (Kent). Advancing inland (see *Figure 3.16*), they were dogged by mounted Brittonic guerrillas, who skirmished with Roman cavalry pickets, ambushed foragers, and conducted hit-and-run raids on camp sentries. Feigned retreats were also used to draw counterattacking Roman cavalry away from the less mobile legions before dismounting and rounding on them as infantry, forcing Caesar to limit the independent operations of his cavalry. Caesar nonetheless made steady progress, crossing the Tamesis (Thames) River to raze the territory of the Brittonic coalition's king: Cassivellaunus of the Catuvellauni.⁶⁹² Cassivellaunus' inability to defend his own territory prompted Brittonic defections to Caesar, including the Trinobantes. In addition to hostages, the defecting tribes provided Caesar with the location of Cassivellaunus' chief *oppidum*, which Caesar promptly attacked. When a last-ditch assault by his Kentish vassals on Caesar's coastal base then failed, Cassivellaunus surrendered. Eager to return to Gaul, Caesar left the king's power structures intact and installed no garrison; demanding only hostages, a yearly tribute to Rome, and that the Trinobantes not be attacked.⁶⁹³

⁶⁹² Gilliver, *Caesar's Gallic Wars*, 49.

⁶⁹³ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 5.8-5.22; Dio, *Roman History*, 40.1-40.4; Livy, *Periochae*, 105.

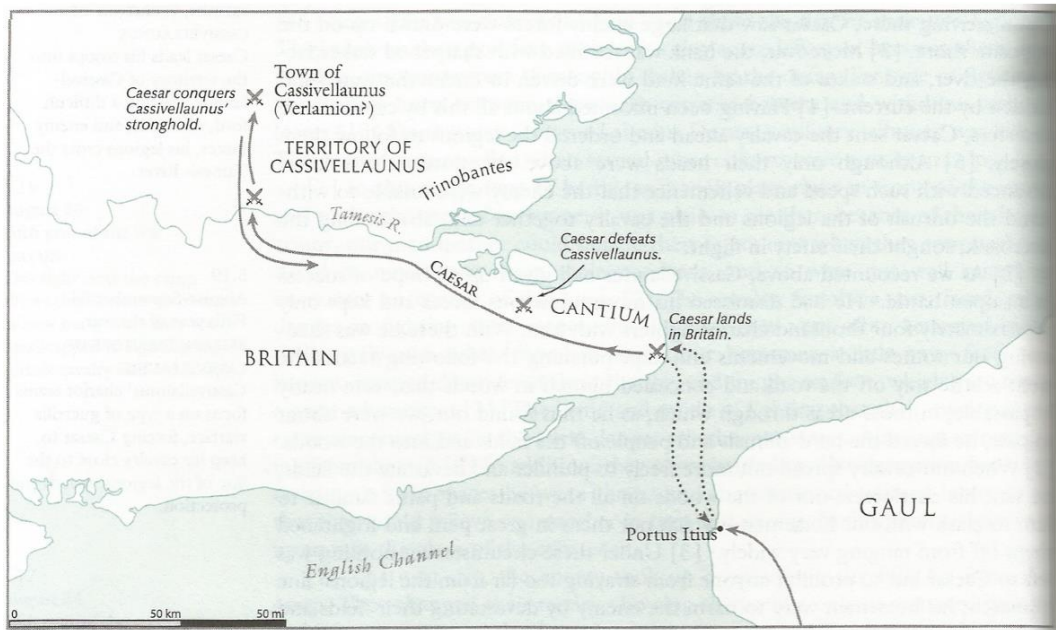


Figure 29: Map of Caesar's second expedition to Britain⁶⁹⁴

Crossing back to Gaul just before winter, Caesar learnt in one of his Gallic summits that drought had severely reduced the grain harvest. This forced him to encamp his legions separately to lessen the burden on hosting tribes. Though one was stationed in Armorica and another with the Carnutes of Celtica (in response to the murder of the tribe's pro-Roman king), most were clustered in Belgica so that they could still support one another if required (see *Figure 3.17*). Despite these measures, being forced to feed thousands of foreign soldiers and their pack animals during a time of scarcity engendered significant enmity within the affected tribes. After barely a week in winter quarters, the legions found themselves under coordinated attack.⁶⁹⁵ Allegedly induced by Indutiomarus of the Treveri, the Eburones attacked the legion under the legates Sabinus and Cotta. Though the camp held, the Eburonian chief Ambiorix lured the legates out of their camp with claims that all of Gaul was in revolt, that a horde of Germans was coming, and offers of safe passage out of their territory. However, the Gauls ambushed the legions in a forested ravine a few miles from their camp, blocking off their

⁶⁹⁴ Raaflaub, *The Landmark Julius Caesar*, 144.

⁶⁹⁵ Gilliver, *Caesar's Gallic Wars*, 49.

retreat and picking them apart from distance with missiles. The legion was annihilated almost to a man (including its legates), with only a few escaping to Labienus' camp in Remian territory.⁶⁹⁶

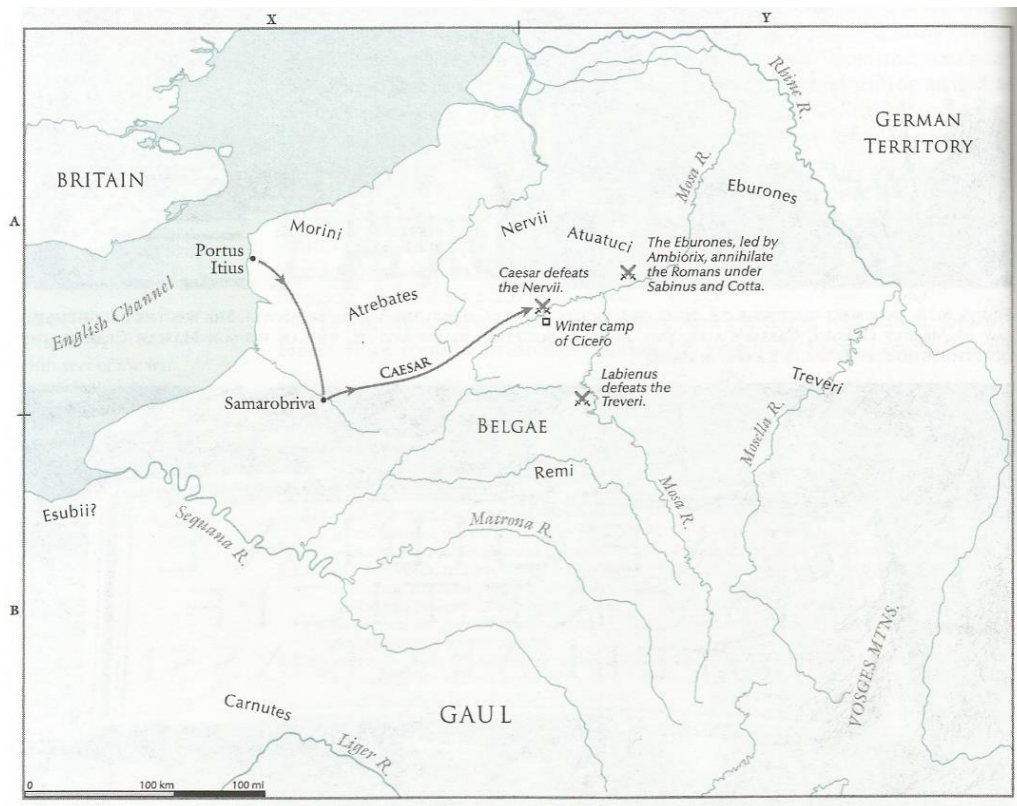


Figure 307: The events of the winter of 54 BC⁶⁹⁷

Emboldened, Ambiorix immediately travelled west to the Atuatuci and Nervii, stirring them up with word of his victory and organising a similar attack on the legion under Quintus Tullius Cicero that the latter hosted. The tribes' surprise attack killed many Roman foragers, but the camp itself again held and Cicero could not be lured out like Sabinus and Cotta had. After more than a week besieged in their camp, a Roman slave was able to slip through the Gallic encirclement to get word to Caesar at Samarobriva (see Figure 3.17). The proconsul gathered the two legions and allied horsemen immediately to hand and marched west relieve Cicero. Caesar also reached out to Labienus for

⁶⁹⁶ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 5.23-5.37; Dio, *Roman History*, 40.4-40.6; Plutarch, *Caesar*, 24; Livy, *Periochae*, 106.

⁶⁹⁷ Raafflaub, *The Landmark Julius Caesar*, 148.

additional forces, but the legate was himself beset by the Treveri, who had also revolted following the massacre of Sabinus and Cotta's legion.⁶⁹⁸

Nervian scouts eventually detected Caesar's approach, and the large host (reportedly around 60,000 strong) broke off its siege to intercept him. Warned by Cicero, Caesar took position on a nearby hill, making his camp deliberately small to goad the enemy into attacking on unfavourable ground. The Gauls soon took the bait, at which point Caesar's men sallied forth from all four of the camp's gates, surprising the Gauls with the sudden attack and routing them with heavy losses. Not risking ambush by pursuing the survivors through the region's forests and marshes, Caesar instead rendezvoused with Cicero, whose legion was reportedly so battered that 90% were wounded in some way.⁶⁹⁹

This setback gave pause to those either up in arms or considering it, with Indutiomarus pulling his Treveri back from Labienus' camp and the Armorican tribes aborting their attack on the legion they hosted. Nevertheless, the destruction of a legion emboldened the Gauls considerably, and Caesar received intelligence that many Gallic nations were discussing preparations for war. Though he attempted to maintain order by variously rewarding or threatening Gallic leaders, some holdouts remained. The Senones ousted their pro-Roman king, while Indutiomarus (having failed to convince the Germans to try their luck again) ousted Cingetorix and began gathering warriors from across the region for an offensive against Labienus and the Remi. However, he was killed in a targeted Roman surprise attack after approaching Labienus' camp to taunt the legionaries. Leaderless, his assembled forces dispersed.⁷⁰⁰ Although Caesar's decisive action in relieving Cicero and Labienus' elimination of Indutiomarus checked Ambiorix's momentum, that the proconsul felt it necessary to raise another three legions that winter (bringing his total to ten) shows he expected operations to escalate significantly.⁷⁰¹

⁶⁹⁸ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 5.38-5.48; Dio, *Roman History*, 40.7-40.10; Plutarch, *Caesar*, 24.

⁶⁹⁹ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 5.49-5.52; Dio, *Roman History*, 40.10; Plutarch, *Caesar*, 24; Livy, *Periochae*, 106.

⁷⁰⁰ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 5.53-5.58; Dio, *Roman History*, 40.11.

⁷⁰¹ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 6.1; Plutarch, *Caesar*, 24-25.

Just as Caesar had prepared for 53 BC, so too had the Gauls. The Treveri had bought Germanic assistance for themselves and Ambiorix, while the Nervii, Atuatici, and Menapii were joined in their resistance by the German tribes living on the Gallic side of the Rhine (the so-called *Germani cisrhenani*). Meanwhile, the Senones and the Carnutes were openly planning war and stirring up their vassals and neighbours. The simultaneous onset of these uprisings could overwhelm his forces, so Caesar elected to take pre-emptive action against the tribes in detail. Setting out from Samarobriua with the four nearby legions, he launched a surprise invasion of the Nervii (see *Figure 3.18*). Aside from their proximity to Caesar's HQ in Ambianian territory, thereby offering both immediacy and surprise, the Nervii were likely chosen because their strength made them a threat and would make their defeat more psychologically imposing. Unable to muster their forces or even evacuate in the face of the legions' unexpected arrival and speedy advance, the Nervii could do little to resist as the Romans devastated large swathes of their territory and captured their people. Overawed, they were forced to surrender and turn over hostages to Caesar, who then returned to winter quarters.⁷⁰²

⁷⁰² Caesar, *Gallic War*, 6.2-6.3.

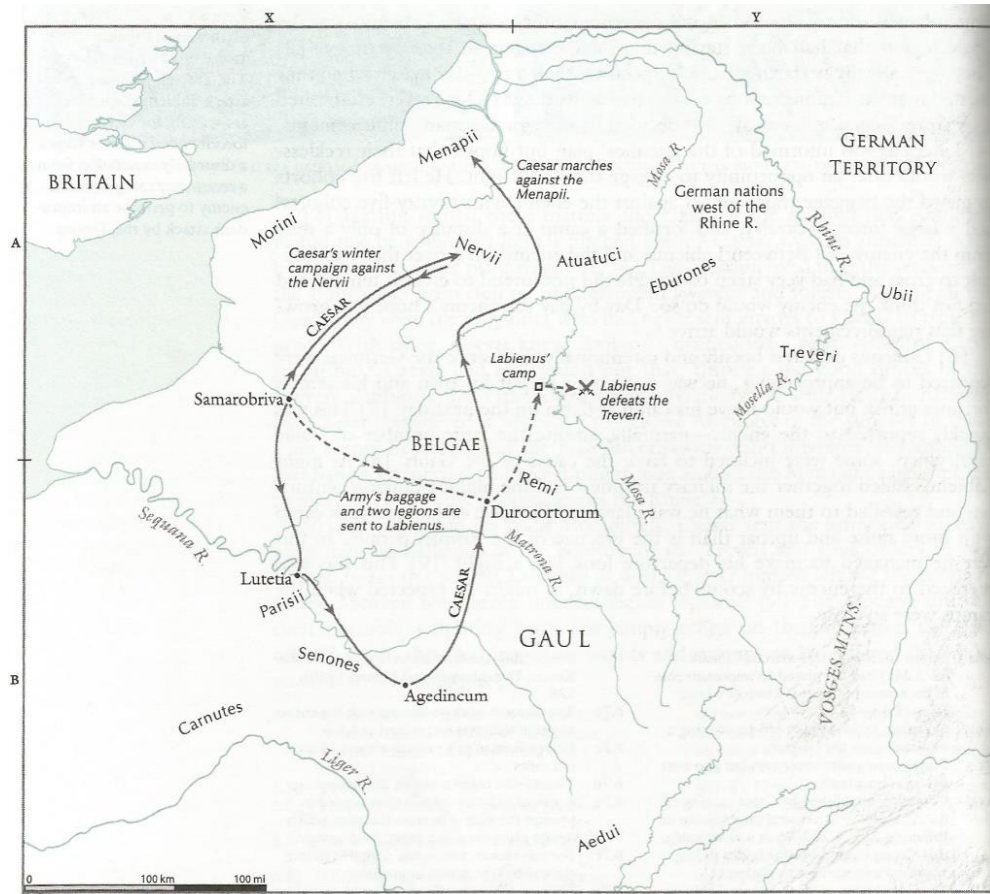


Figure 31: Opening Roman operations of 53 BC⁷⁰³

When Caesar convened a Gallic summit at the end of winter, the Senones, Carnutes, and Treveri did not answer the summons. Expecting open revolt to follow soon after, Caesar decided on another pre-emptive strike, relocating his conference to Lutetia (a town of the Parisii) in anticipation of an invasion of the neighbouring Senones (see *Figure 3.18*). After announcing his intentions to the assembled Gallic leaders, Caesar immediately led a force of a few legions to Senonia by forced marches. This, combined with his pre-planned proximity, prevented the tribe from preparing for the attack. Like the Nervii, the Senones were soon forced to surrender to save the populations and possessions at the legions' mercy. Their surrender was accepted at the encouragement of the Aedui, who took their hostages. The defeat of their co-conspirators also prompted the Carnutes to reconsider their sedition and surrender to Caesar via the Remi to avoid a similar fate. This seizure of the initiative

⁷⁰³ Raaflaub, *The Landmark Julius Caesar*, 178.

and rapidity of action allowed the Romans to quash this branch of Ambiorix's revolt before it got off the ground, shoring up the Roman position somewhat and providing sufficient breathing room for the main phase of operations.⁷⁰⁴

These attacks on the conspiring tribes in detail formed part of Caesar's expressed overall strategy of isolating Ambiorix from potential allies and sanctuaries, since he knew the Eburonean leader would not risk battle. The Treveri and Menapii were thus targeted, the former enabling Germanic support and the latter possessing highly defensible territory. Caesar sent two legions and the army's baggage to reinforce Labienus' legion on the Remian-Treverian border, while he took several unencumbered legions against the Menapii. As before, the Menapii retreated into their marshes and forests for protection. However, the unencumbered legions (divided into three separate columns with even lighter operational footprints) overcame the boggy ground by building bridges and boardwalks. Meeting little resistance from the Menapii, these columns razed their fields and settlements, capturing both animals and tribespeople. As with the Nervii, the threat to the tribe's long-term survival this posed forced the Menapii to finally surrender, with Caesar imposing a garrison of Gallic cavalry to ensure their compliance and that they did not receive Ambiorix.⁷⁰⁵

In the east, the two legions escorting the baggage arrived to reinforce Labienus' camp (see *Figure 3.18*) just before the approaching Treverian host, which subsequently halted to await German reinforcements. Learning of this, Labienus marched out to try and force an engagement, camping across a steep-banked river from the Treveri in the hopes of drawing them into attacking across it. When the Treveri observed the Romans seemingly breaking down their camp and withdrawing, the tribe rushed across the river to attack the fleeing legions, at which point Labienus turned his army around and charged. Tired from the crossing and on unfavourable ground, the Treveri were soon driven back in a bloody rout, the news of which caused the incoming Germans to flee back across the Rhine.

⁷⁰⁴ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 6.3-6.4.

⁷⁰⁵ *ibid.*, 6.5-6.6.

They were joined by the Treverian leaders, allowing Caesar to restore the loyal Cingetorix to kingship upon the proconsul's arrival from Menapia.⁷⁰⁶

Caesar continued this isolation strategy with another strike across the Rhine to punish the Germans for their involvement and deter them from giving Ambiorix refuge or further support. With help from the Ubii, Caesar discovered that these Germans had been Suebi, and that their nation was again mobilising in response to his crossing. Unable to commit to a protracted campaign in Germany, the proconsul withdrew back across the Rhine, leaving part of his bridge intact to suggest he may return and 12 cohorts to guard the river. Caesar clearly saw Ambiorix himself as the priority. Upon returning to Gaul, he dispatched his cavalry to scour the region in search of the Eburonean leader, throwing the region into chaos. Whether a deliberate move to avoid facing the coming legions directly or simply being caught totally unprepared, Ambiorix did not assemble the Eburones' warriors but instead sent word to the various communities to look out for themselves. Some sought sanctuary with other tribes, while others fled into the Ardennes Forest or areas of swampland in the hopes of staying out of Caesar's reach.⁷⁰⁷

⁷⁰⁶ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 6.7-6.8; Dio, *Roman History*, 40.31; Livy, *Periochae*, 107.

⁷⁰⁷ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 6.9-6.10, 6.29-6.31; Dio, *Roman History*, 40.32; Livy, *Periochae*, 107.

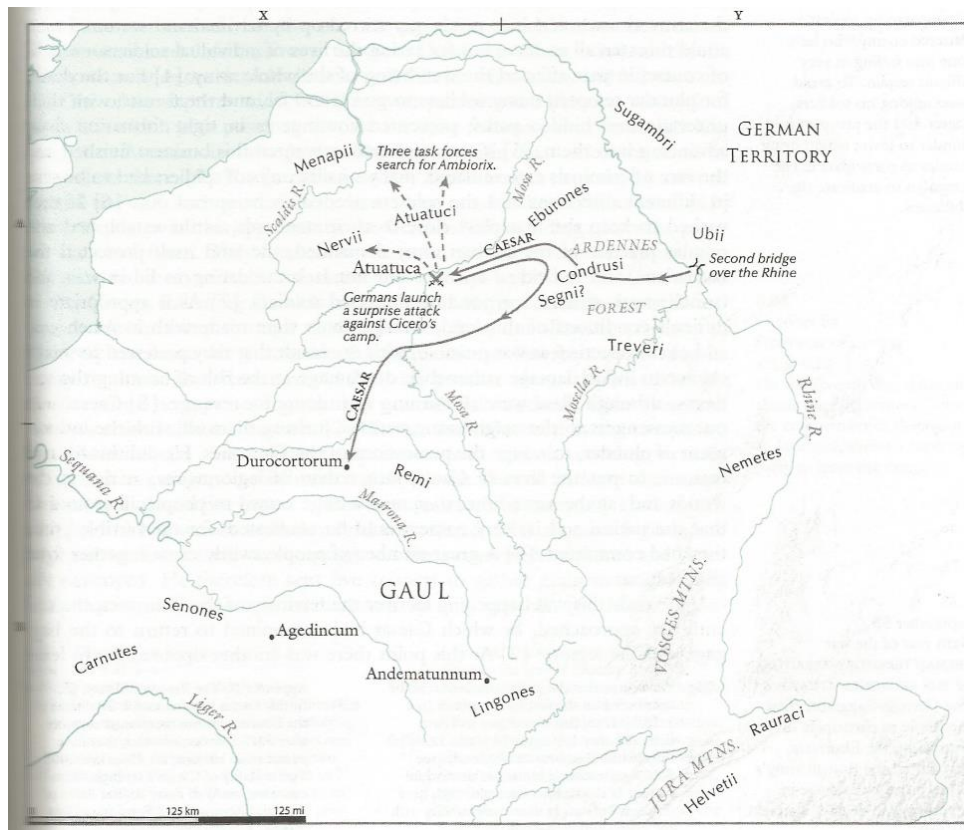


Figure 32: Caesar's pursuit of Ambiorix⁷⁰⁸

Leaving his baggage and a legion at the Eburone *oppidum* of Atuatuca, Caesar took the remaining nine unburdened legions into the lands of the Atuatuci in pursuit, dividing the army into three columns to cover more ground (see Figure 3.19). Labienus led one towards the border with the Menapii, while Gaius Trebonius' column pushed into northern Eburonia and Caesar's swept towards the Ardennes. Each was ordered to devastate the region as they went, before rendezvousing at Atuatuca after a week. Though they faced little organised resistance, the terrain routinely forced the legions into dispersed formations, and isolated soldiers from these smaller units were often lost to guerrillas. To divert attention from his forces and expedite the capitulation of the Eburones through greater hurt, Caesar issued an open invitation to nearby nations to join in the pillaging for themselves, an offer many took him up on.⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁸ Raafaub, *The Landmark Julius Caesar*, 193.

⁷⁰⁹ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 6.32-6.34; Dio, *Roman History*, 40.32.

Following the army's rendezvous at Atuatuca, Caesar continued his hunt for Ambiorix and the destruction of the rebel leader's tribe, sending his Gallic horse out across Eburonia with orders to pillage and raze every settlement or building they found. Though Eburonia burned and many captives were taken, Ambiorix himself disappeared, possibly escaping to Germany.⁷¹⁰ Regardless, the campaign neutralised him as a rallying point for Belgica's tribes. Furthermore, while no official surrenders are mentioned, the devastation wrought by Caesar's punitive scorched-earth campaign likely left the tribes of northern Gaul in little state to revolt. Caesar therefore led his army back south to winter quarters, stopping briefly in Remian territory to pass judgement on those involved in the conspiracy of the Senones and Carnutes, for which Caesar had the Senonic ringleader executed. Unwilling to risk leaving his legions isolated again, Caesar wintered six with the Senones at Agedincum and the remaining four in pairs with the Treveri and Lingones (see *Figure 3.19*).⁷¹¹

⁷¹⁰ Florus, *Epitome of Roman History*, 1.45.8.

⁷¹¹ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 6.35-6.44; Livy, *Periochae*, 107; Dio, *Roman History*, 40.32.

Caesar's brutal punitive campaign had bred considerable resentment amongst both the abused tribes and the rest of the country, who began wondering if they might be next. There was similar displeasure at his execution of the Senonic chief according to Roman legal traditions, which reinforced the suggestion given by his Gallic summits that Gaul was little more than a Roman province. So, while Caesar was away in Cisalpine Gaul organising a levy to replenish his army, Gallic leaders began discussing a revolt and who should lead it. Emboldened by news of unrest in Rome,⁷¹² which the Gauls believed would occupy Caesar, the Carnutes offered to strike the first blow if the other tribes pledged to stand with them. Gallic factionalism had stymied sufficient cooperation thus far, but the assembled tribes assented.⁷¹³ Gilliver theorises that this show of unity was due to the presence of a site of great religious significance to the Gauls within the territory of the Carnutes that would likely be threatened by Roman retaliation.⁷¹⁴

As promised, the Carnutes struck first, massacring the Roman citizens who had established themselves in the *oppidum* of Cenabum (see *Figure 3.20*). Word quickly spread, travelling the 160 miles to Arvernia within the same day, where a young Arvernian nobleman by the name of Vercingetorix began agitating for the tribe to carry out their own massacre. However, not wanting to draw Roman ire, the other nobles banished him from their capital, Gergovia. Undeterred, Vercingetorix toured Arvernia gathering supporters and warriors, using them to oust the anti-revolt faction and have himself proclaimed king. He immediately sent envoys out calling on the tribes to hold true to their oath. Tribes across Gaul answered the call, including the Senones, Parisii, Pictones, Cadurci, Turoni, Aulerci, Lemovices, Andes, and presumably the Carnutes (see *Figure 3.20*). These tribes then elected Vercingetorix to lead the revolt. Cementing his authority with hostages and threats of violence against

⁷¹² Livy, *Periochae*, 107.

⁷¹³ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 7.1-7.2.

⁷¹⁴ Gilliver, *Caesar's Gallic Wars*, 36; Caesar, *Gallic War*, 6.13.

waverers, Vercingetorix had soon amassed a large army. This was in turn used to coerce even more tribes into joining him, including the Biturigic vassals of the Aedui.⁷¹⁵

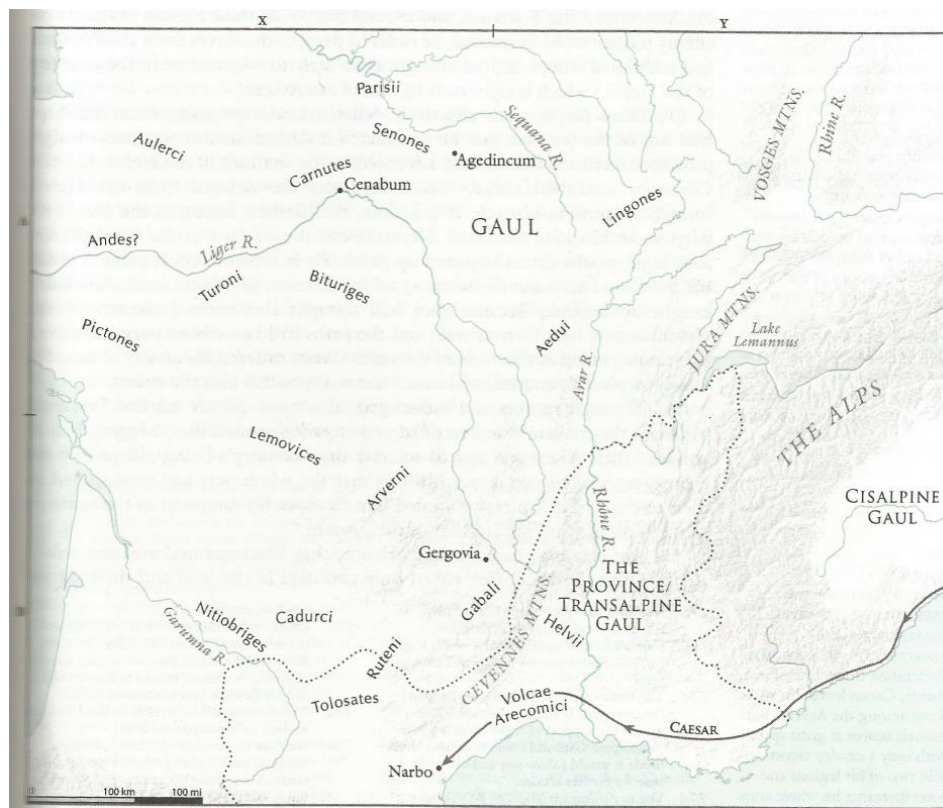


Figure 33: Map showing Caesar's initial movements in 52 BC, including many of the relevant tribes of central and southern Gaul⁷¹⁶

With the situation in Rome now stabilising, Caesar travelled to Gallia Provincia as soon as news of the revolt reached him. However, the proconsul found himself in a difficult position. Any attempt to summon his legions south would likely see them attacked on the march, while the scale of the conspiracy made travelling north to them highly risky. Furthermore, the Cadurci had induced the Ruteni, Nitiobriges, and Gabali on Gallia Provincia's borders (see Figure 3.20) to join the revolt, directly threatening Roman territory in the hopes of keeping Caesar bottled up. After using provincial troops to defend the border and bolster the reinforcements he had brought from northern Italy, Caesar

⁷¹⁵ Caesar, *Gallie War*, 7.3-7.5; Dio, *Roman History*, 40.33; Plutarch, *Caesar*, 25-26; Florus, *Epitome of Roman History*, 1.45.20-1.45.21.

⁷¹⁶ Raaflaub, *The Landmark Julius Caesar*, 207.

launched a surprise crossing of the unwatched Cévennes mountains with a small force to ravage Arvernia (see *Figure 3.21*). As Caesar intended, Vercingetorix was subsequently obliged to move south towards home to placate the Arverni in his army, opening the way for Caesar to slip through to the two legions in Lingonian territory. From there, he was able to get word to the rest of his legions and arrange a rendezvous at Agedincum.⁷¹⁷

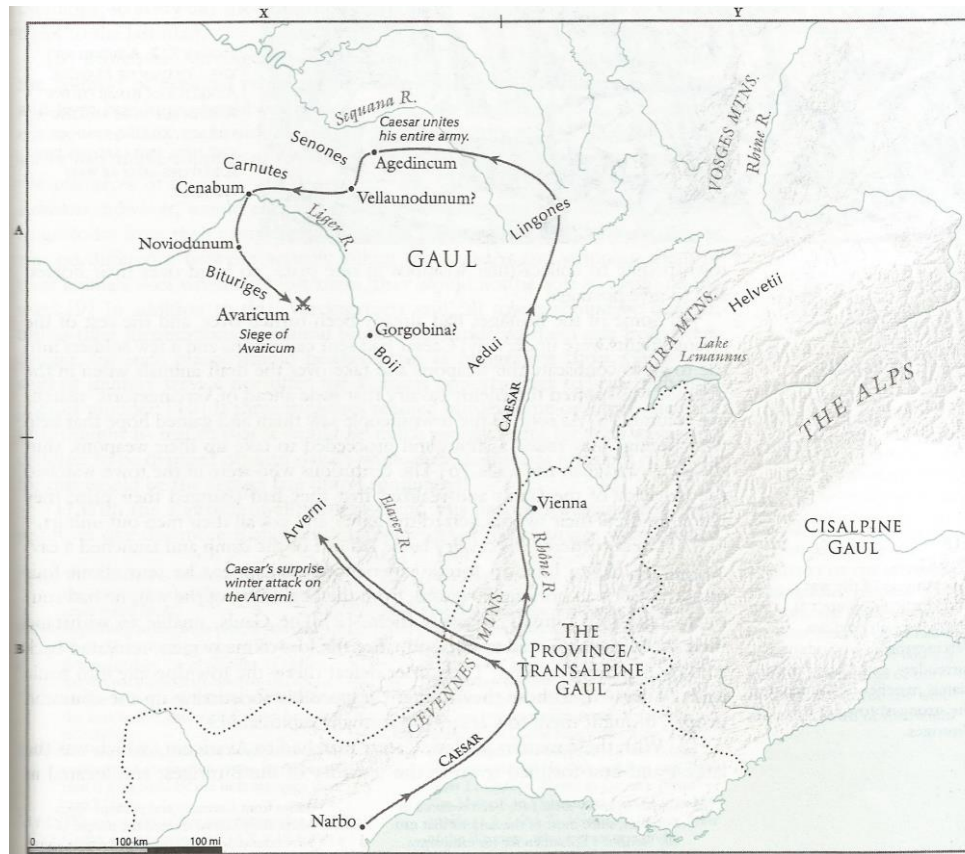


Figure 34: Caesar's operations leading up to the Siege of Avaricum⁷¹⁸

Realising he had been outmanoeuvred by Caesar, Vercingetorix immediately returned north, moving against the Boii that the Aedui had settled back in 58 BC. This, likely deliberately, presented Caesar with a dilemma. If he marched to their defence, he risked supply issues due to the distances involved and the seasonal conditions. However, doing nothing risked exacerbating the revolt by

⁷¹⁷ Caesar, *Gallie War*, 7.6-7.9; Plutarch, *Caesar*, 26; Dio, *Roman History*, 40.33; Florus, *Epitome of Roman History*, 1.45.22.

⁷¹⁸ Raaflaub, *The Landmark Julius Caesar*, 211.

appearing weak and showing Roman protection counted for nothing. Unable to accept the latter, Caesar ordered the Aedui to arrange supplies and set out with eight unencumbered legions to relieve the Boii. To extract additional supplies and better secure his lines of communication, Caesar captured any *oppida* he encountered as he advanced (see *Figure 3.21*). This also served to damage the affected tribes' will to continue their revolt. Senonic Vellaunodunum and Biturigic Noviodunum were allowed to surrender to avoid delays, but Cenabum was brutally sacked and its inhabitants enslaved in revenge for their earlier massacre of Roman citizens there.⁷¹⁹ With Caesar's army rapidly approaching, Vercingetorix broke off his siege of Boian Gorgobina and moved to intercept the legions, temporarily interrupting Noviodunum's formal capitulation before being driven off by Caesar's Germanic cavalry.⁷²⁰

Caesar then moved against Avaricum (see *Figure 3.21*), the capital of the Bituriges, believing that a strike there would force the tribe back into submission. Meanwhile, recent setbacks prompted Vercingetorix to adopt a new strategy that exploited Caesar's supply issues. Fields and settlements across the region would be razed so as to deny the legions easy access to forage and grain. The clear intention here being to starve the legionaries and, by denying them fodder for their pack animals and horses, effectively paralyze Caesar's army. The proconsul would then be forced to either withdraw (exposing his weakened army to attack on the march) or send his foragers further from the protective umbrella of the camp for supplies (exposing them to attack). Deemed sufficiently defensible, Avaricum was spared destruction and reinforced. Though Caesar reached Avaricum, Vercingetorix's strategy was taking its toll, with the proconsul noting considerable losses amongst his foragers and a serious grain shortage (exacerbated by unenthusiastic Aeduan support).⁷²¹

Vercingetorix made no attempt to break the Roman siege, being content to continue his own indirect siege of Caesar's camp and further bolster Avaricum's garrison, who frustrated Roman siege efforts with frequent sallies and clever counters. The legionaries eventually completed their

⁷¹⁹ Caesar, *Gallie War*, 7.17.

⁷²⁰ *ibid.*, 7.9-7.13.

⁷²¹ *ibid.*, 7.13-7.17; Dio, *Roman History*, 40.34.

siegeworks, however, and Vercingetorix ordered his men to abandon the town under cover of night. Interestingly, this plan was thwarted by Avaricum's civilian population. Unwilling to be left undefended, the Gallic civilians alerted Roman sentries to the flight. When Caesar stormed the *oppidum* the next day, the assault swiftly became a massacre, with few surviving the legions' wrath.⁷²² While Caesar blames this slaughter on the hardships of the siege, it was likely perpetrated on his orders to make an example of Avaricum and the Bituriges for their defection and fierce resistance.⁷²³

Though forced to retreat, Vercingetorix was nonetheless able to keep his coalition together. Envoys were sent out across Gaul to procure reinforcements from Arvernian allies and convince the remaining holdouts to join the revolt. With Roman supplies replenished from Avaricum's stocks and the weather now improving, Caesar resolved to maintain his momentum and continue his offensive, marching south towards Arvernia in the hopes of drawing Vercingetorix out. After diverting to resolve an Aeduan power struggle, ordering them to assemble cavalry and infantry for garrisoning supply hubs, Caesar divided his army. Labienus took two legions (plus the two still at Agedincum) and some cavalry north to address the threat posed by the Parisii and Senones, while the proconsul took the rest of the army south towards the Arvernian capital of Gergovia (see *Figure 3.22* & *Figure 2.23*). Clearly expecting the Romans to attack his own territory as they had Ambiorix's, Vercingetorix moved to prevent the legions from crossing the Elaver (Allier) River. However, the Gallic army was forced to withdraw to avoid a pitched battle when Caesar outmanoeuvred the Gauls and snuck across.⁷²⁴

⁷²² Florus, *Epitome of Roman History*, 1.45.23.

⁷²³ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 7.17-7.28; Dio, *Roman History*, 40.34.

⁷²⁴ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 7.29-7.35; Dio, *Roman History*, 40.35.

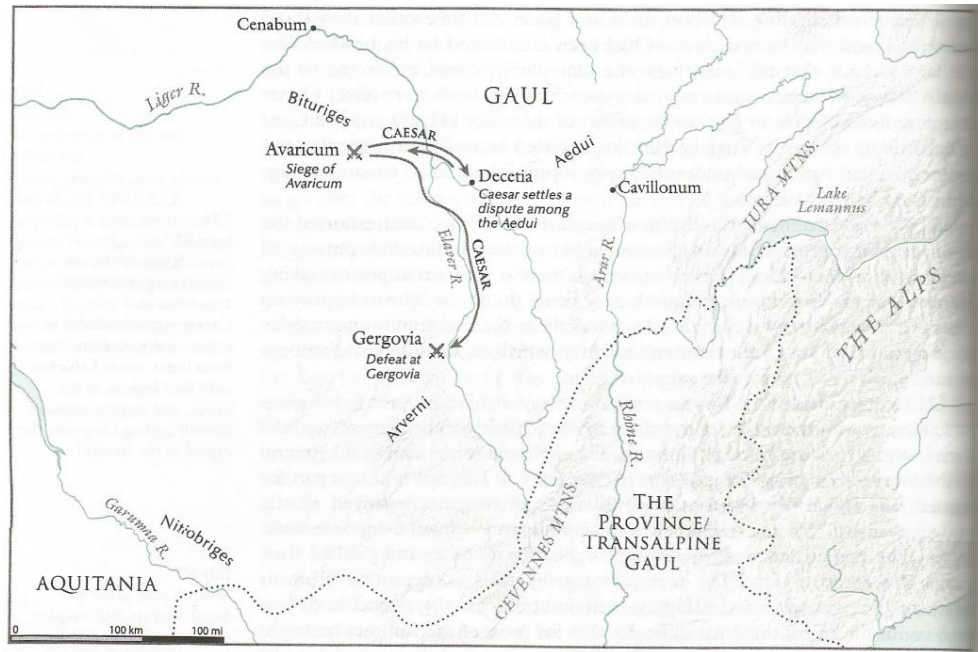


Figure 35: Map of Caesar's route to Gergovia⁷²⁵

Caesar pursued Vercingetorix back to Gergovia, which sat atop a tall ridge. Vercingetorix augmented this natural defensibility with an additional wall on the ascent's midpoint and a small fort on a neighbouring hill. Though Caesar quickly took the latter and stationed two legions there, neither a direct assault on the town nor a prolonged siege (owing to lingering supply issues) were feasible. After departing with four legions to suppress a mutiny amongst his requested Aeduan troops, Caesar returned to find his holding force badly mauled by Gallic assaults on their camp. With the same false stories of Roman injustices responsible for the mutiny threatening to widen the revolt even further, Caesar considered withdrawing to safer territory to regroup. However, believing retreat would only fuel unrest, he decided to risk an assault. Despite reaching the town's walls (allegedly against Caesar's orders), battlefield confusion and a counterattack by Vercingetorix's cavalry saw the legions repulsed with substantial losses. Though their discipline prevented a rout, his battered army was in no state for another assault. Caesar was therefore forced to withdraw and make for ostensibly friendly Aeduan territory.⁷²⁶

⁷²⁵ Raaflaub, *The Landmark Julius Caesar*, 226.

⁷²⁶ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 7.36-7.53; Dio, *Roman History*, 40.36-40.37.

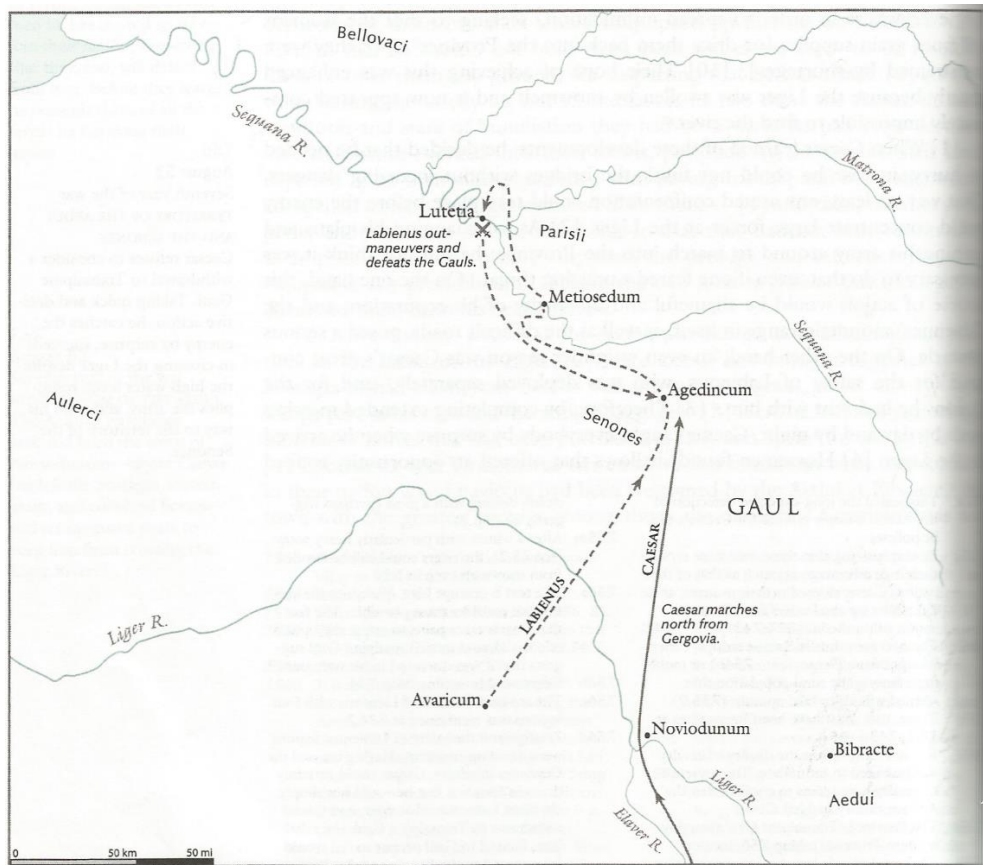


Figure 36: Map showing Labienus' movements after the siege of Avaricum, including the route of Caesar's retreat through Aeduan territory to return to Agedincum⁷²⁷

However, news of Caesar's defeat at Gergovia prompted the Aedui (pledged with gold by Arvernian agents) to defect from Rome and make a formal alliance with Vercingetorix.⁷²⁸ Hoping to earn favour, two Aeduan nobles (ironically dismissed by Caesar for their dubious loyalty) led an attack on a Roman outpost in Aeduan territory at which Caesar kept his Gallic hostages, a portion of his treasury, and a supply of grain. After massacring the Romans there and razing the town, the nobles sent the hostages to the Aeduan leaders at Bibracte. The gold and grain was used to raise forces to garrison the region against Caesar and sever Roman supply lines. Receiving word of these developments, Caesar force marched his men north towards Agedincum to link back up with Labienus, pushing through the unprepared Aeduans. Having initially planned to knock out the Parisii by taking

⁷²⁷ Raafaub, *The Landmark Julius Caesar*, 242.

⁷²⁸ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 7.37.

Lutetia (see *Figure 3.23*), Labienus' campaign foundered when nearby tribes unexpectedly rallied to their neighbours' defence. Though he took the Senonic town of Metiosedum in a surprise attack, news of Caesar's defeat and the Aeduan revolt stirred up more tribes, including the powerful Bellovaci. Increasingly surrounded, Labienus was forced to withdraw, fighting off a large force of pursuing Gauls in the process. After collecting the baggage and its legionary guards from Agedincum, he rendezvoused with Caesar in Senonia.⁷²⁹

As Labienus' operation shows, the defection of the influential Aedui changed the war's dynamic considerably. Chiefly, it convinced many Gauls that the balance of power had shifted decidedly against Rome. Many neutral tribes were induced to revolt by Aeduan envoys, whose wealth, authority, and control over Caesar's hostages gave them considerable leverage. The Aedui also called a pan-Gallic meeting at Bibracte to demand they be given command over the war. That only the Remi, Lingones, and Treveri did not attend (the first two out of loyalty to Roman authority and the latter because security threats from Germania demanded their attention) shows the revolt's momentum. Despite the influence of the Aedui, Vercingetorix maintained command of the Gallic coalition. The Arvernian leader demanded hostages from the new tribes to further cement his authority and ordered them to furnish him with cavalry so that he could continue his scorched-earth strategy. Since Vercingetorix therefore did not plan to engage Caesar directly, he demanded no additional infantry for the army. As part of this indirect strategy, several tribes were ordered to launch attacks on Gallia Provincia in the hopes that Caesar would be either cut off from the province or forced to come to its aid.⁷³⁰

⁷²⁹ *ibid.*, 7.54-7.62; Dio, *Roman History*, 40.38

⁷³⁰ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 7.63-7.64.

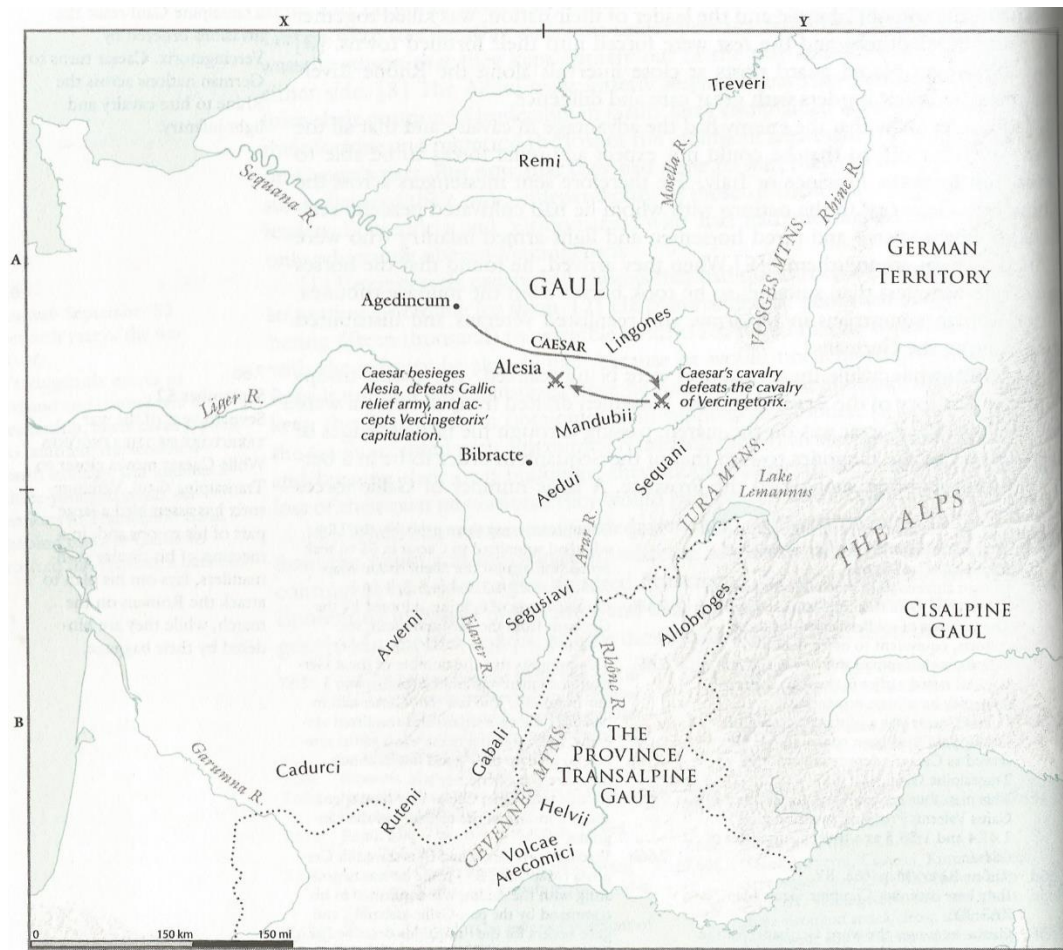


Figure 37: Map of Caesar's movements leading up to the siege of Alesia, including the tribes involved in the fighting around

Gallia Provincia⁷³¹

Although provincial forces and allied tribes were largely able to resist these attacks, this chaos prevented reinforcements from making their way to Caesar from the south. The proconsul therefore recruited auxiliary cavalry and light infantry from the friendly German tribes across the Rhine. This reduced Vercingetorix's overwhelming superiority in this regard following the defection of almost all of Caesar's Gallic allies. Forced to move south to support the defence of Gallia Provincia, Caesar's baggage-laden column was ambushed in Lingonian territory by Vercingetorix, who hoped to either delay the march or capture the Roman baggage train. Vercingetorix's cavalry harassed the column's vanguard and flanks, forcing the infantry to stop and take a defensive formation. However, they were,

⁷³¹ Raaflaub, *The Landmark Julius Caesar*, 248.

driven off with heavy casualties in a counterattack by Caesar's German auxiliaries. Having been so confident in their cavalry and victory, this reversal shattered Gallic morale and Vercingetorix was forced to withdraw towards the Mandubian oppidum of Alesia (see *Figure 3.24*). Seeing the initiative swing back in his favour, Caesar seized his opportunity and harried the rearmost Gallic elements as they marched, inflicting significant casualties.⁷³²

Though smaller than Gergovia, Alesia's hilltop location posed a similar problem for Caesar. Rather than risk another assault, he elected to put the oppidum to a protracted siege, building a massive system of walls and trenches that featured several camps and 23 forts along its length. Vercingetorix attempted to prevent his investment, but was again beaten back by Caesar's Germans. The Arvernian therefore sent his cavalry out through the last gaps to order his allies to mobilise all their military-age men for a relief army. He then withdrew his roughly 80,000-strong army into the town, implementing strict rationing to stretch supplies as long as possible. When what remained of Caesar's intelligence network reported this call for help, the proconsul realised that Vercingetorix planned to fix him there to pincer him between this new army and the besieged one. Unwilling to let Vercingetorix slip through his fingers by withdrawing, Caesar built a second, outward-facing contravallation around his original circumvallation. Both walls were then supplemented with additional defences so that they required fewer men and both sides could therefore be defended simultaneously.⁷³³

⁷³² Caesar, *Gallic War*, 7.65-7.68; Plutarch, *Caesar*, 26; Dio, *Roman History*, 40.39.

⁷³³ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 7.69-7.74; Plutarch, *Caesar*, 27; Dio, *Roman History*, 40.40; Florus, *Epitome of Roman History*, 1.45.24-1.45.25

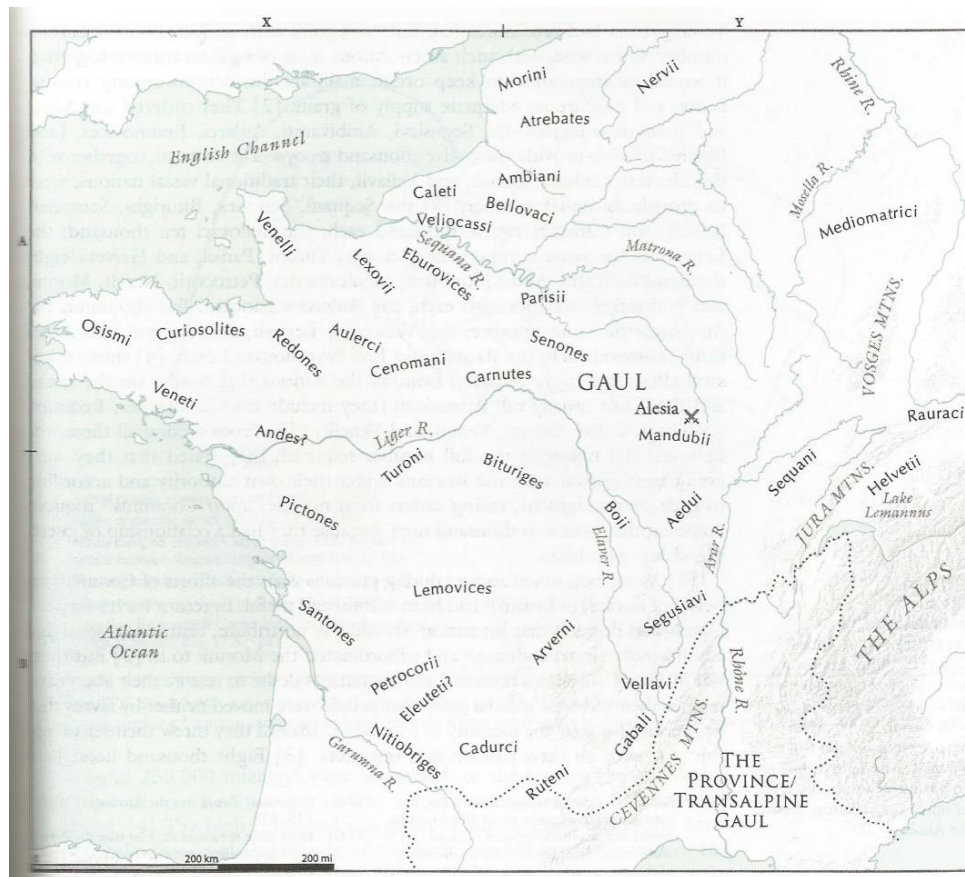


Figure 38: Map showing the tribes involved in the revolt of 52 BC (minus those whose location is unknown)⁷³⁴

Believing so large a force impossible to control or supply, Vercingetorix's allies did not conduct total mobilisation but instead ordered tribes to provide forces seemingly relative to their size, with larger tribes providing tens of thousands while smaller tribes might provide only a few thousand. Caesar attests that this host consisted of as many as 250,000 infantry and 8,000 horsemen (presumably the remnants of Vercingetorix's cavalry). These numbers (like most provided by Caesar) are likely very untrustworthy, since his commentaries were as much a work of Caesarian propaganda as they were a 'history' of the war. Nevertheless, such was extent of the Gallic coalition by now (see Figure 3.25) that this force would likely have been considerable. The relief army arrived just as Alesia's supplies were reaching critical levels, the Mandubian civilians having already been expelled to buy more time.

⁷³⁴ Raaflaub, *The Landmark Julius Caesar*, 255.

For the next few days, the Roman defences were assaulted day and night from both sides. Nonetheless, the fortifications, discipline and fortitude of the legionaries, and fierceness of the Germanic cavalry proved too much. The relief army broke and fled, leaving the defenders with no choice but to surrender to Caesar, who ordered the tribal leaders (including Vercingetorix) turned over to him. Vercingetorix would languish in prison until 46 BC when Caesar, victorious in his civil wars, had him ceremonially strangled to death in the first of his four triumphs. The rest of the captives (so many that every legionary received at least one as plunder) were enslaved. The only contingents spared enslavement were the Aedui and Arverni, whom Caesar planned to return as a gesture of goodwill to these important tribes. Receiving surrenders and fresh hostages from these tribes upon his arrival in their lands, Caesar distributed his troops across Gaul for the winter. While he watched over the Aedui with three legions, Labienus took two to Sequania. Another two legions defended the unfailingly loyal Remi, and the Ambivareti, Bituriges, and Ruteni each hosted one (see *Figure 3.25*). The crisis was not over, but Gallic unity had been broken with the capture of Vercingetorix and the defeat of his armies.⁷³⁵

⁷³⁵ Caesar, *Gallie War*, 7.75-7.90; Plutarch, *Caesar*, 27; Dio, *Roman History*, 40.40-40.41; Livy, *Periochae*, 108.

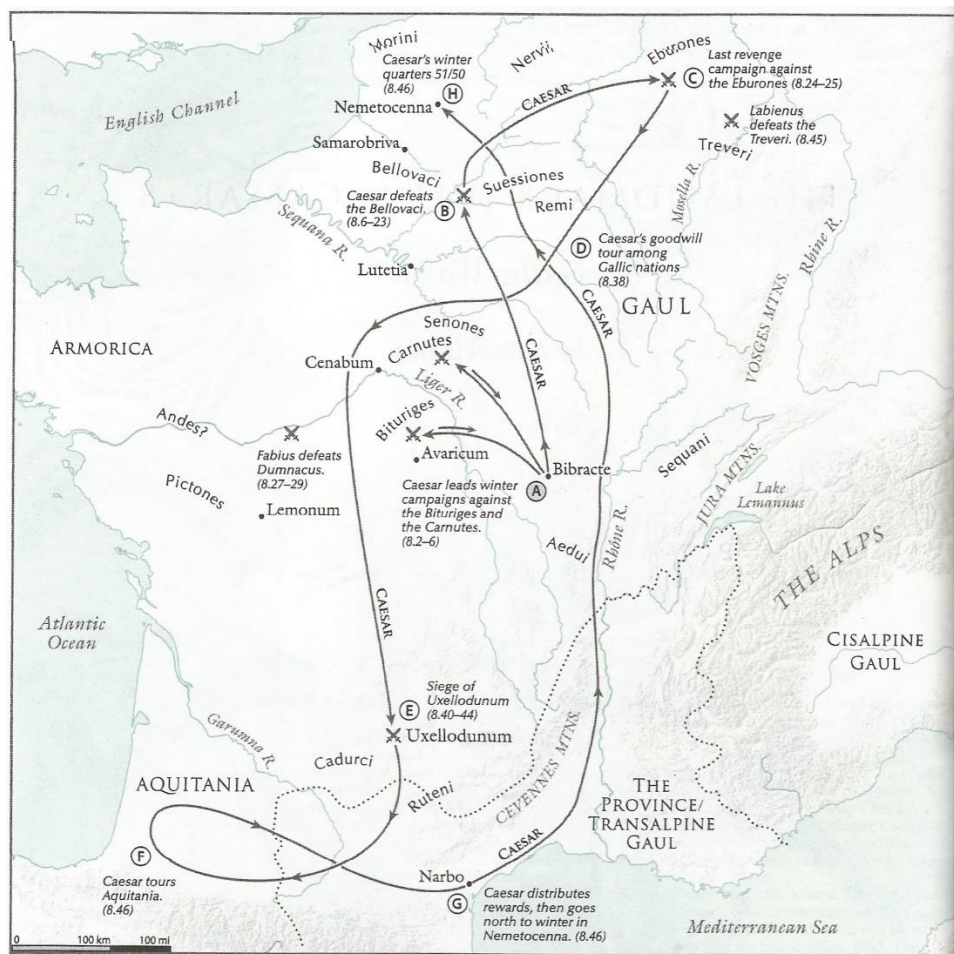


Figure 39: Map of Roman campaigns from the end of 52 BC to the end of 51 BC⁷³⁶

Realising that concentrating their forces into a single large army against which the Romans could bring all their force to bear was not working, the Gauls reverted to organising simultaneous but separate revolts on an individual or regional basis. In doing so, the tribes hoped to overwhelm Caesar's limited manpower and resources. It would not be enough, however. The Bituriges were subjected to a mid-winter raid that, though only conducted by two legions, struck with such speed that the tribe surrendered within a month (see *Figure 3.26*). The Bellovaci and their allies (the Ambiani, Aulerci, Caleti, Vellocasses, and Atrebatres) had some success waging a guerrilla campaign against the army Caesar led against them in defence of the Remi, attacking foragers and cavalry pickets. However, prior

⁷³⁶ Raaflaub, *The Landmark Julius Caesar*, 270.

intelligence of a planned ambush enabled Caesar to inflict a decisive defeat on them that left the bewildered tribes desperately sending envoys.⁷³⁷ In both cases, Caesar treated the defeated with considerable clemency, rushing to the aid of the Bituriges when the Carnutes attacked them after their submission as well as levying no additional punishments on the Bellovaci after their defeat. The proconsul's forgiveness was not limitless, however, and Eburonean territory was subjected to further devastation to ensure they would give no sanctuary to the still-at-large Ambiorix. Nevertheless, Caesar appears to have endeavoured to normalise relations with the Gauls during 51 BC, touring the country to assuage their most pressing concerns even as he collected more hostages.⁷³⁸

Though campaigning was concentrated in the north, with Labienus putting down the Treveri following Caesar's campaigns against the aforementioned Belgic nations, other pockets of resistance persisted. Four legions were sent to relieve a pro-Roman chief of the Pictones beset by a coalition of Celtic tribes. Tracked down by Roman cavalry, this Gallic army was soundly defeated in a battle at the Liger River (see *Figure 3.26*), compelling the Carnutes and Armorican tribes to surrender. However, a few thousand survivors escaped and moved south, attacking Roman supply routes and threatening Gallia Provincia. Pressured by two pursuing legions, they holed up in the Cadurcian oppidum of Uxellodunum, which boasted strong defences and enough supplies for an extended siege. Hearing of the siege, Caesar hurried south to take command, fearing the stubborn resistance of this small band might inspire further revolt if not immediately dealt with and made an example of. Furthermore, with his governorship expiring at the end of 50 BC, he wanted to ensure Gaul's conquest was completed. Eager therefore to force an end to the siege, Caesar used tunnels to cut the town off from its water supply, forcing them to surrender. Rather than putting Uxellodunum to the sword, the proconsul had the defenders' hands cut off, leaving them alive to serve as living warnings to those who might imitate their resistance.⁷³⁹

⁷³⁷ Livy, *Periochae*, 108.

⁷³⁸ A. Hirtius, *Gallic War*. Translated from Latin by K. A. Raafaub (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 2019), 8.1-8.25, 8.38.

⁷³⁹ *ibid.*, 8.26-8.45.

After a short campaign in Aquitania to consolidate Roman control, Caesar sent his legions into winter quarters, stationing pairs in or near the territories of the influential tribes and most recent troublemakers. Caesar himself wintered with four legions in Belgica, considering those peoples most likely to return to arms against him. Against the backdrop of this unspoken threat, he continued his efforts to improve relations with the tribes to reduce desire for revolt: speaking positively of the Gauls, giving lavish gifts to leaders, and limiting the material burdens of subjugation wherever possible. Given the increasing likelihood of Roman civil war, Caesar likely also hoped to prevent fresh war breaking out upon his departure. Whether it was due to this diplomatic offensive or the war weariness that must have been present in Gallic society after nearly a decade of defeats, the remainder of his time in Gaul was reportedly free of incident.⁷⁴⁰ Though the tumultuous two decades of civil war that followed meant that Gaul was not formally organised into Roman provinces until Augustus' reign, the informal Romanisation of Free Gaul began in earnest during the closing years of Caesar's command. These new foundations were built on the ruins of the proconsul's Gallic genocide.⁷⁴¹

⁷⁴⁰ *ibid.*, 8.46-8.49.

⁷⁴¹ Gilliver, *Caesar's Gallic Wars*, 83-92.

Analysis

As with his uncle-in-law Gaius Marius' campaigns, it would be easy to consider Caesar's conquest of Gaul solely in terms of its place within his rise to political supremacy, having earned him the social, political, and financial capital for his war against the political establishment. However, the legions' achievements during the eight years of campaigning cannot be ignored. As mentioned before, Gaul encompassed an area of over 200,000 square miles (around four times the size of the Italian Peninsula).⁷⁴² The Gallic population is believed to have numbered anywhere between 4 and upwards of 20 million, most of whom would likely be hostile to Roman encroachment and thus be a source of considerable friction and limited support. Furthermore, if the proportion of roughly 25% of the tribal population being capable of bearing arms is taken, even the smallest Gallic population estimates project potential combatants in numbers more than ten times greater than Roman forces in Gaul (which seemingly peaked at around 70,000 including auxiliaries).⁷⁴³ Despite their comparatively small size, the legions were able to both conquer the nations of Gaul and wage a successful occupation despite attrition, all while preventing the spoliation of established Roman territory. Though these are not small achievements, nor should the Gallic War be considered anything but historically significant, the following analysis will show that they meet our criteria to be considered a small war.

The popular image of Roman military history is one of professional, disciplined legionaries conquering hordes of savage barbarians. Although this representation is something of an oversimplification (particularly in the case of the barbarians), the Gallic War is arguably one of the first that it can be attributed to with a reasonable degree of accuracy. Having helped to see off the Cimbri, the military reforms of the end of the second century BC (for which Marius is commonly credited) became entrenched. Though the citizen levy remained in use (generally during emergencies), the economic opportunities offered by military service meant the army continued to draw in the masses.

⁷⁴² Drinkwater, *Roman Gaul*, 8.

⁷⁴³ Henige, 'He Came, He Saw, We Counted', 225-227.

By Caesar's time, most soldiers were volunteers from amongst the *capite censi* (i.e., the urban poor, farmers, peasants, etc.).⁷⁴⁴ As a result, they continued to be equipped by the state, resulting in the retention of the homogenous heavy infantry corps mentioned in the previous chapter and the delegation of mounted and skirmishing roles to allies or auxiliaries. The maniples were also superseded as the largest tactical unit of the legion by the cohort, of which each legion had ten. Consisting of six centuries, cohorts were larger than maniples. However, what they sacrificed in manoeuvrability they made up for in mass, a vital factor against the fierce charges of the barbarian foes the legions increasingly faced.⁷⁴⁵ In addition to these combat troops, the legions possessed organic support units, including artisans who carried out engineering works and manned artillery pieces.⁷⁴⁶ Roman artillery was a significant force multiplier on the battlefield, and the advanced siegeworks constructed by Roman engineers offered the legions significant advantages as both the besiegers and besieged.⁷⁴⁷

The legions themselves were not yet truly permanent formations, standing only until their purpose was fulfilled, at which time the commander would discharge the soldiers. However, many chose to re-enlist when discharged, and their long service enabled them to accumulate considerable practical experience on top of the formal training they received from the army. Caesar's centurions (career soldiers promoted for their experience and bravery) were the backbone of the Roman army, leading the men from the front and even participating in the commander's council to contribute to operational and strategic planning.⁷⁴⁸

As explained at the beginning of this chapter, Gallic forces fell into two categories: the warrior-nobles and their semi-permanent retinues, and the levies of free tribesmen. The former represented the warrior class of Gallic society and engaged in the low-intensity inter-tribal warfare that defined Gaul's 'internal' politics. Raised from a young age into the warrior lifestyle and honed in years of raiding

⁷⁴⁴ Santosuosso, *Storming the Heavens*, 13-14, 51.

⁷⁴⁵ *ibid.*, 20-21.

⁷⁴⁶ Sanders, *Julius Caesar and the Gallic Campaign*, 9; Goldsworthy, *Roman Warfare*, 110.

⁷⁴⁷ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 2.12, 7.41, 7.68-7.88.

⁷⁴⁸ Mackay, 'The Roman Military', 672-676; Gilliver, *Caesar's Gallic Wars*, 18-23.

and skirmishing, these warriors developed considerable martial proficiency in the military traditions and tactics of their respective nations. They were subsequently more than capable of facing Roman soldiers in single combat, as shown by the losses the legions suffered when they were forced into such fights by a loss of cohesion, ambush, or geography.⁷⁴⁹

However, if Caesar's estimates of enemy numbers are even remotely accurate, many of the combatants the legionaries faced are likely to have been men outside of this 'professional' warrior class; especially after the warrior class suffered attrition over the years of the Roman conquest. Being civilians levied in emergencies and possessing little or no combat experience, the free tribesmen had no such parity.⁷⁵⁰ The strength of the free tribesmen came in the sheer mass offered by their numbers, whether that was as bodies in the charge or adding weight of fire as skirmishers.⁷⁵¹ There is a simple logic to this, and its most obvious example (the army assembled to relieve Vercingetorix at Alesia) came very close to overwhelming the massively outnumbered Roman army. However, while the motivated and proficient warriors lacked sufficient mass to break out on their own, this massive army of levies had neither the discipline nor experience to carry the assault. In fact, it was due in part to the Gallic leaders' recognition of this poor discipline that the universal mobilisation desired by Vercingetorix was not carried out.⁷⁵²

That is not to say that the Romans faced an entirely undisciplined and disorganised rabble. Indeed, Caesar's commentaries refer to the enemy forming battle lines with distinct ranks.⁷⁵³ This, combined with the existence of Gallic battle standards, suggests at least a basic level of military organisation.⁷⁵⁴ When facing tribal coalitions, Caesar frequently identified distinct political divisions within the enemy battle line, noted at the Battle of Bibracte (58 BC) and the Battle of the Sabis (57

⁷⁴⁹ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 2.19-2.27, 3.28, 4.26, 5.32-5.39, 6.34-6.40, 7.45-7.51.

⁷⁵⁰ McIntosh, *Life in Prehistoric Europe*, 307.

⁷⁵¹ Gilliver, *Caesar's Gallic Wars*, 23-25.

⁷⁵² Caesar, *Gallic War*, 7.75-7.88.

⁷⁵³ *ibid.*, 2.19, 5.34.

⁷⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 7.2, 7.88.

BC).⁷⁵⁵ In his account of the former, Caesar describes the Helvetii as fighting in a close-order phalanx formation, something he also reports the Germans doing.⁷⁵⁶ Such formations require not inconsiderable discipline to maintain. The same goes for deliberate hit-and-run tactics on the battlefield like those ordered by Ambiorix during the Eburones' massacre of the Roman army under Sabinus and Cotta.

However, as with the Lusitani and Numidians, we should be careful not to conflate familiarity with martial traditions with 'regularity'. In fact, so poor was the organisation of Gallic armies that they struggled to stay in the field for extended periods of time due to the absence of any logistical system.⁷⁵⁷ Furthermore, most of the engagements described by Caesar exhibit fairly blunt Gallic tactics for which relatively little is required in terms of organisation or discipline. Even in the case of the above example, Ambiorix only ordered the tactical change after a direct charge failed to break the legions.⁷⁵⁸ As per the importance of displays of bravery and martial prowess in their military culture, this was the most common tactic used by the Gauls, who relied on the natural prowess of their fighters in melee combat to win the day if the shock of a massed charge did not break the enemy first.⁷⁵⁹ This was seemingly the case regardless of the scale or nature of the engagement, whether conducting an ambush against a marching column or even assaulting fortifications.⁷⁶⁰

Pitched battles were a common occurrence in Gallic warfare precisely because they offered the best opportunities for warriors to display their individual prowess.⁷⁶¹ As a result, the Gauls (particularly in the early stages of the Roman conquest) did not avoid the legions but faced them head on, trusting in their arms and numerical superiority. This does not preclude the Gallic War's being a small war, as Callwell himself notes that in some small wars the characteristics of the enemy can result

⁷⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 1.25, 2.19-2.27.

⁷⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 1.24-1.25, 1.52.

⁷⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 2.10, 7.75

⁷⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 5.32-5.35.

⁷⁵⁹ Gilliver, *Caesar's Gallic Wars*, 23-25; McIntosh, *Life in Prehistoric Europe*, 307.

⁷⁶⁰ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 2.19, 3.4, 3.19, 5.39, 7.66, 7.80-7.88; Hirtius, *Gallic War*, 8.18-8.19.

⁷⁶¹ Gilliver, *Caesar's Gallic Wars*, 26.

in warfare that exhibits conventional traits.⁷⁶² Unfortunately for the tribes, this played right into Roman hands. Not only was Roman doctrine built around the attainment of decisive battles, the cohortal legion was specifically tailored to resist the charges the Gallic armies favoured in such engagements.⁷⁶³ As the campaign analysis has shown, the legions won all but a handful of these battles, despite sometimes being outnumbered several times over.

It therefore became increasingly uncommon for the two sides to meet in large engagements as the war progressed as the Gauls shifted to less direct strategies in the face of Roman conventional superiority. Many tribes (e.g., the Morini, Menapii, and Eburones) began withdrawing completely ahead of the Romans, holding up in strongholds or rough terrain while the tribe's warriors harassed the marauding legions.⁷⁶⁴ Vercingetorix' exploitation of Romans supply issues in 52 BC via a scorched-earth policy and guerrilla actions against foragers is another example of this, aiming to weaken the legions for a final decisive strike.⁷⁶⁵ Direct actions therefore did not cease entirely, but simply took on a different character. Ambushes and attacks when the Gauls believed the Romans weak became a particularly common occurrence, sometimes used in conjunction with *ruses de guerre* to draw the legions out.⁷⁶⁶ The ultimate objective was still to degrade the fighting strength of the legions to such an extent that Caesar was forced to withdraw (from their specific territory or Gaul altogether). However, the Gauls increasingly did so in a way that aimed to offset the conventional advantages of the legions by catching them unprepared, forcing them to fight on less favourable ground, or attacking them when they were dispersed. Though they had some successes with this, the Roman military machine ultimately proved irresistible.

The decisive strategic impact (in destroying the enemy's capacity to resist Rome) of victory in large-scale pitched battles was one of the key reasons for the legions' doctrinal preference for such

⁷⁶² Callwell, *Small Wars*, 29-31.

⁷⁶³ Santosuosso, *Storming the Heavens*, 20-21.

⁷⁶⁴ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 3.28-3.29, 4.38, 6.34.

⁷⁶⁵ *ibid.*, 7.14-7.17, 7.64

⁷⁶⁶ *ibid.*, 2.19-2.27, 4.37, 5.26-5.41, 7.18, 7.66-7.67.

engagements. This was likely even more the case when fighting Gallic peoples, whom Caesar describes as being particularly vulnerable to collapses after significant defeats.⁷⁶⁷ As such, even when significantly outnumbered, the Romans rarely refused battle when the Gauls offered it. However, as the Gauls shifted away from this posture, Caesar was forced to change his approach too. If an opposing army through which to compel the enemy into compliance failed to materialise, the Romans instead focused their efforts on the tribes' territory and civilian populations. Fields and villages were razed while *oppida* were systematically put to siege.⁷⁶⁸ *Oppida* that offered little or no resistance were often spared, but particularly stubborn populations were subjected to sackings, enslavement, or even massacres.⁷⁶⁹ The aim of these raids was twofold. Either the enemy would be drawn out by the devastation (as with the Belgic tribes in 57 BC and Caesar's diversionary raid against the Arverni in 52 BC)⁷⁷⁰ or the destruction would be sufficient to compel the targeted tribe to surrender (like the raids against the Nervii and Menapii in 53 BC).⁷⁷¹

If the tribe in question did neither (or the Romans simply refused to accept a surrender), such punitive measures could be continued to their logical and more permanent conclusion: the outright eradication of the rebellious tribe (e.g., the case of the Eburones).⁷⁷² When coalitions of tribes formed, these same methods were used to pick them apart piecemeal. Tribal contingents within larger armies might be forced to decamp to protect their homes, or tribes might be compelled to abandon the cause/surrender in order to save themselves (e.g., the punitive raids against the confederates of Ambiorix).⁷⁷³ However, the hope of drawing the enemy out so that they could be confronted directly remained at the heart of this strategy, as in the case of Rome's early moves against Vercingetorix (e.g., Caesar's advance on Gergovia).⁷⁷⁴ Although Caesar's army was repulsed at Gergovia, the death knell

⁷⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 3.19.

⁷⁶⁸ *ibid.*, 3.29, 6.3; Hirtius, *Gallic War*, 8.5

⁷⁶⁹ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 2.33, 7.11, 7.28; Hirtius, *Gallic War*, 8.44.

⁷⁷⁰ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 2.5-2.28, 7.8.

⁷⁷¹ *ibid.*, 6.3, 6.6.

⁷⁷² *ibid.*, 6.34, 6.43; Hirtius, *Gallic War*, 8.24-8.25.

⁷⁷³ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 2.10 6.5-6.9.

⁷⁷⁴ *ibid.*, 7.11-7.35.

of Gallic liberty ultimately came not from the dismemberment of Vercingetorix's coalition but with the defeat of the pan-Gallic armies at Alesia.

Having covered the military picture, we can now look at the political framing of the campaigns to see if and how they fit in Callwell's typology. One must first consider the extent to which, given the constantly changing array of opponents faced each year, Caesar's conquest should be considered a single continuous war or several interlinked but separate ones. There is certainly an argument to be made for the expeditions to Britain being a case of the latter, given the geographical separation of the theatre from Gaul. However, the web of alliances and causalities that connect the various campaigns cannot be ignored, all building up to the crescendo that was Vercingetorix's pan-Gallic anti-Roman coalition. Framed in this way, the Gallic War becomes exactly that: a single protracted war of conquest waged against the various nations of Gaul by Caesar over the course of nearly a decade. This perspective would seemingly make the Gallic War a cut-and-dry example of Callwell's first class of small war: external campaigns of conquest/annexation that invariably see the regular troops facing tangible (albeit often irregularly composed) armies.⁷⁷⁵ Indeed, though what was once Free Gaul would not be formalised as Roman provinces until some two decades later, this delay was almost certainly only a result of the distractions of the civil wars.⁷⁷⁶ This was itself merely the official reorganisation of territory that the Romans themselves long considered as theirs, as suggested by Caesar's application of Roman law and punishments in Gaul as early as 53 BC.⁷⁷⁷ The campaigns to put down the revolts of the Gallic tribes following their initial subjugation might therefore be thought of as examples of Callwell's second category of small wars (pertaining to the pacification of conquered territory and suppression of insurrection).⁷⁷⁸

Nevertheless, Caesar's own commentaries suggest that the war in Gaul began not out of a desire to conquer but to protect Roman interests from external threats. The opening campaign against

⁷⁷⁵ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 25-26.

⁷⁷⁶ Dio, *Roman History*, 53.22; Strabo, *Geography*, 4.1.1; Drinkwater, *Roman Gaul*, 20-21.

⁷⁷⁷ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 6.44.

⁷⁷⁸ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 26-27.

the Helvetii was launched in response to the threat their migration posed to Gallia Provincia. Meanwhile, the subsequent campaign to expel Ariovistus and his Germans was couched as a mission to free Roman allies from German domination, topple a potentially dangerous foreign king close to Rome's borders, and deter further Germans from crossing the Rhine.⁷⁷⁹ Likewise, the expeditions to Germany and Britain were launched to stem the flow of foreign fighters coming from those places to aid the Gallic tribes.⁷⁸⁰ These justifications present a clear case for the third of Callwell's classes: wars waged to punish an enemy for an injury, overthrow a dangerous military power, or establish order in foreign territory. Callwell's assertion that these often transition into wars of conquest is relevant here. This suggests that, though Caesar might have initially planned to merely establish order in Gaul as a means to protect Roman territory and interests, he soon decided that Roman domination of the region was either necessary or simply possible.⁷⁸¹ This reading is supported by both the testimony of Cicero and the absence of any denials in Caesar's commentaries with regards to Belgic fears of Roman expansionism in 57 BC.⁷⁸²

With all this in mind, the Gallic War sufficiently meets this study's criteria to be considered a small war. As the above discussion shows, Caesar's operations in fact exhibited characteristics of all three of Callwell's classes of small war at various points during the eight years of campaigning. What started off as a stability operation to protect Roman territory and defend Roman allies soon became a protracted war of conquest, one that would see all of Gaul nominally subjugated and Rome make its first forays into Germany and Britain. The Gauls did not give up their liberty easily, however, and more than half of Caesar's campaign seasons were spent putting down revolts of varying scale.

In line with their warrior culture, the Gauls hoped to force Caesar to withdraw from either their territory specifically or Gaul generally by defeating him militarily (be that on the battlefield or in

⁷⁷⁹ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 1.7-1.10, 1.33.

⁷⁸⁰ *ibid.*, 4.16, 4.20.

⁷⁸¹ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 27-28.

⁷⁸² M. T. Cicero, *On the Consular Provinces*. Translated from Latin by C. D. Yonge (London: George Bell & Sons, 1891), 32-33; Caesar, *Gallic War*, 2.1; Drinkwater, *Roman Gaul*, 17.

guerrilla attacks). Indirect strategies were utilised to try and weaken the legions by cutting them off from their lines of supply and denying them access to forage, thereby making them more vulnerable to attack. However, the critical flaw in such a kinetic strategy was that it played to Roman strengths. Though the Gauls could (by supplementing their warriors with tribal levies) field larger armies and had the advantage of local knowledge, this was not enough to overcome the clear superiority of the legions in the conventional contexts within which they were trying to contest them. By now almost exclusively an all-volunteer force of professional soldiers, the legions were a uniformly well-trained, highly disciplined force whose legionaries were equipped on par with some of the wealthiest Gallic nobles. These legionaries were supported by a well-organised logistical system and an array of technologically advanced artillery systems. Asymmetry is a key aspect of small wars, and it proved a key enabler for Caesar in Gaul, allowing him to overcome the fierce resistance of the native tribes despite the scale of the undertaking. As such, the Gallic War has definite value to our study.

Lessons From the Gallic War

We must also look at the extent to which the war can be considered a success from the Roman perspective. Using the three categories of small war that our above analysis shows the Gallic War fits into at varying stages allows us to extrapolate a number of political objectives. The establishment of order in Gaul (specifically one favourable to the Romans) was the first of these. However, this soon developed into the extension of Roman domination across the whole region. Once this had been established, the maintenance of this control then became the objective.

Caesar's initial campaigns were launched in response to the disruption of the *status quo* in Gaul and the threat posed to Roman territory by the migration of the Helvetii and a large Germanic incursion. The immediate threat posed to Gallia Provincia was ended with the repulsion and destruction of the migratory horde, the survivors of which were returned to their old territory to serve as a buffer against the Germans. Though the province would later be attacked by tribes allied to Vercingetorix, seemingly disproving this, the new threat was a consequence of the insurrection rather

than representative of an earlier failure and had little success thanks to the preparedness of local garrisons. Meanwhile, the expulsion of Ariovistus and his army removed the threat the growing German bloc posed to Roman territory, as well as both restoring the independence of the Roman-allied Aedui and (albeit temporarily) stabilising the Gallic geopolitical situation. Again, the instability that followed 58 BC does not disprove Caesar's achievement of this, being a result of his own conquest rather than the Helvetii or the Germans.

Following Caesar's aim transitioning from one of stabilisation to conquest, the proconsul was often forced to rapidly switch between conquering new tribes and putting down revolts amongst those who had previously surrendered to him. Caesar's conquest of the Belgae in 57 BC was accompanied by the submission of the Armorican tribes to Crassus. However, these maritime nations revolted not long after, requiring a campaign to restore their subjugation the following year. His operational boldness meant that Caesar's campaigns progressed very quickly, but it is possible that this sometimes left the conquest 'half-done' as a result, with pockets of resistance left behind and Roman supremacy not completely established. Indeed, though Caesar's commentary claims that the majority of Gaul (with the exception of the portion of Gallia Celtica dominated by the Arverni) had been conquered by 55 BC, the conquest would not be completed until the end of 51 BC. Even taking into account that the next two campaign seasons (55 BC and 54 BC) were dominated by expeditions to Britain and Germany, this is a considerable stall.

The reason for this was ever increasing unrest amongst the nominally subjugated tribes, which eventually blew up in the winter of 54 BC. In addition to localised revolts by single tribes or neighbours, the next three years also saw revolts on both regional (i.e., Ambiorix's revolt) and national (i.e., Vercingetorix's revolt) scales. Though the legions suffered several setbacks (e.g., the destruction of Sabinus and Cotta's force, Caesar's defeat at Gergovia, etc.), these revolts were eventually stamped out.⁷⁸³ Following the victory over Vercingetorix at Alesia, it allegedly only took a single campaign

⁷⁸³ Suetonius, *Julius Caesar*, 25.

season to complete the conquest of Gaul, achieving this objective too. Roman success in consolidating control over Gaul is further shown by the fact that only a handful of bouts of localised unrest are reported in Gaul in the decades following the conquest, despite the opportunity Rome's preoccupation with its civil wars presented for the tribes.⁷⁸⁴

Centres of Gravity

With his expeditionary force dwarfed by the manpower reserves of the Gauls, Caesar had to ensure that the blows his force struck would be significant enough to achieve his objectives as expeditiously as possible. Roman strategies throughout the conquest of Gaul reflect this necessity, displaying an understanding that directing operations against the enemy's centre of gravity was the best way of achieving Roman aims. In doing so, the legions were able to overcome the significant numerical superiority often possessed by the Gallic tribes by gaining control over the pattern of the conflict, Wylie's concept that we explored in the previous chapter.⁷⁸⁵ Central to Wylie's theory of power control is the principle that control is exerted by manipulation of the enemy's centre of gravity. The varied use of this term by different scholars is an issue we have already encountered in this study. Though Wylie also seemingly implies a geographic element, his definition of the centre of gravity as "a point at which the opponent is more than casually sensitive...some kind of national jugular vein" lines up with the effects-based interpretation of the concept that this study favours.⁷⁸⁶

While Clausewitz's own writings on the topic suggest a variety of different forms a centre of gravity may take, he saw the enemy army as typically filling this role.⁷⁸⁷ The Gauls' battle-centric strategic culture meant that they often fielded significant forces against the legions, particularly during the early phases of the conflict. These could constitute the entire military age population of the tribe in question, the destruction of which would subsequently remove in one decisive action the only

⁷⁸⁴ Gilliver, *Caesar's Gallic Wars*, 91.

⁷⁸⁵ Wylie, *Military Strategy*, 87-91.

⁷⁸⁶ *ibid.*, 91.

⁷⁸⁷ Clausewitz, *On War*, 162-164, 485-487, 595-596.

means with which the Gauls could resist the Romans. Even if other means existed or the army escaped total destruction, the psychological impact of an army's defeat often proved sufficient to force a capitulation itself.⁷⁸⁸ In this way, Gallic armies represented a dual moral and physical centre of gravity.⁷⁸⁹ In the instances where these armies presented themselves, they thus became the primary target of the legions in Gaul. This is a posture demonstrated throughout Roman operations. Examples from early phases include: the pursuit and destruction of the Helvetic host in 58 BC,⁷⁹⁰ the diversion to confront the Belgic army at the Sabis in 57 BC,⁷⁹¹ and the construction of a fleet to destroy that of the maritime tribes in 56 BC⁷⁹². Even when the Gauls adopted less direct strategies, this Roman inclination remained, as shown by Caesar's clear desire to draw out and destroy Vercingetorix and his army (who likewise hoped to eliminate Caesar's army) in early 52 BC. Though poor Roman fortunes would delay the decisive moment in the latter case somewhat, in all of these examples the destruction of the enemy army achieved decisive impact against the enemy, vindicating both the identification of these forces as the centre of gravity and the strategic value of its elimination.⁷⁹³

However, as explained earlier, the Gauls increasingly avoided direct confrontation once the conventional superiority of the legions became apparent. As such, enemy armies did not materialise as readily, and favoured guerrilla tactics that involved less operational exposure if they did. The legions were therefore directed against alternative centres of gravity, namely the territory of the tribe itself. This sometimes took the form of the systematic reduction of a tribe's territory (with particular focus on tribal capitals), as seen with Caesar's sweep across Belgica during 57 BC.⁷⁹⁴ The capture of an enemy's capital is mentioned by Clausewitz as an important factor for the defeat of an enemy due to its political prominence, effectively decapitating the enemy executive or coopting it into securing the

⁷⁸⁸ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 3.19.

⁷⁸⁹ Strange, *Centers of Gravity & Critical Vulnerabilities*, 45-46.

⁷⁹⁰ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 1.12, 1.23-1.27.

⁷⁹¹ *ibid.*, 2.16-2.28.

⁷⁹² *ibid.*, 3.14-3.16.

⁷⁹³ *ibid.*, 7.11-7.90.

⁷⁹⁴ *ibid.*, 2.12-2.30.

capitulation of the wider nation.⁷⁹⁵ In addition to their political value, these *oppida* represented significant moral symbols to the tribes, being the social and cultural centres of their tribe. Furthermore, they were often the best protected locations in their territory, as suggested by the fact that it was to these settlements that the tribespeople would retreat to in emergencies. As a result, their seizure (whether by arms or by capitulation) by the Romans would inflict not only a practical effect but also a psychological one too. In Belgica, Caesar was able to compel many of the hostile tribes to submit by either capturing their principal *oppidum* or simply threatening the settlements with his army.

A common thread so far has been willpower, as in the enemy's will to fight. Strange notes in *Centres of Gravity and Critical Vulnerabilities* that this popular energy can itself be a centre of gravity on the national strategic level, fuelling lower order centres of gravity.⁷⁹⁶ Clausewitz thought this to be the case too, particularly in popular uprisings, which the revolts of the Gauls after their initial conquest can arguably be considered.⁷⁹⁷ By undermining or attacking the will of the population, one can therefore weaken their wider war effort, with the potential to achieve decisive effect. It was this centre of gravity that Caesar commonly resorted to targeting in the face of Gallic uprisings, especially when the enemy did not present an alternative physical centre of gravity (e.g., an army). The most common means of doing this was through devastation. This generally involved the looting and destruction of settlements, burning of fields, and the slaughter of livestock. Though homes could be rebuilt, it sent a powerful message that nowhere was safe from Roman reach. Furthermore, the loss of crops and animals not only robbed the tribes of a vital part of their economic base but threatened their entire population with starvation.⁷⁹⁸

In this way, Caesar was attacking both a physical and moral centre of gravity. Obviously seeing this as a direct result of resistance to the Romans, the tribes were compelled to surrender in order to survive. Indeed, devastation and the threat thereof proved instrumental in maintaining and restoring

⁷⁹⁵ Clausewitz, *On War*, 596.

⁷⁹⁶ Strange, *Centers of Gravity & Critical Vulnerabilities*, 45-47.

⁷⁹⁷ Clausewitz, *On War*, 596.

⁷⁹⁸ Sanders, *Julius Caesar and the Gallic Campaign*, 25-26, 31.

order in Gaul, nowhere more so than in Belgica. With the revolting Belgic tribes unlikely to meet him in battle, Caesar decided on a path of wholesale destruction and slaughter. The lands of the Nervii, Menapii, and Atuatuca were put to the torch, with large numbers of their animals and people captured. Though only the first two tribes are mentioned to have surrendered as a result of this, that the Menapii and the Atuatuca did not contribute men to Vercingetorix's revolt suggests that they did in fact surrender. The Eburones were given no such opportunity, resulting in their virtual annihilation. This was itself part of Caesar's wider campaign to eliminate the moral centre of gravity that Ambiorix represented by removing his allies and turning the Eburones against him, thereby robbing him of influence and (in theory) facilitating his capture by denying him sanctuaries.⁷⁹⁹ Even though Ambiorix himself evaded capture, the unwillingness or inability of all but the Nervii to renew their resistance later shows that the attacks on these centres of gravity had worked.

The nature of the conquest of Gaul and the campaigns suppressing the violent unrest that followed required Caesar to make these assessments and formulate strategies accordingly as each conflict developed, a significant challenge of command. Nevertheless, the relative speed with which Roman campaigns were concluded speaks to the success he had in this regard. Even the national uprising led by Vercingetorix was brought under control within a single campaign season through the elimination of the dual moral and physical centre of gravity the Pan-Gallic army represented. Only the Menapii, protected by their impenetrable swamps and forests, were able to stave off defeat for longer than a season or two before the centres of gravity that fed their resistance were broken by the cumulative effects of three years of devastation. Had Caesar not properly identified and tailored his operations to exploit potentially vulnerable enemy centres of gravity, the war would likely have dragged on a lot longer. This would have posed a problem for the proconsul given the limitations he faced in terms of supplies and reinforcements. Indeed, it is possible he would not have been able to

⁷⁹⁹ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 6.2, 6.5-6.6, 6.33-6.34; Hirtius, *Gallic War*, 8.24-8.25.

continue the war, be that through military practicality or the time constraints of his already politically contentious proconsulship.

Initiative and Boldness

In *Small Wars*, Callwell remarks that the seizure of the initiative is one of the best means of commanding success because it dislocates the enemy's strategy, compelling them to instead react to one's own actions.⁸⁰⁰ In this way, one can exert some measure of control over the enemy by dictating the pattern of the war, taking us back to Wylie and his assertion that control over the pattern of the war is had by manipulation of the enemy's centre(s) of gravity.⁸⁰¹ In order to best achieve the intended effect against Gallic centres of gravity with his relatively limited resources, Caesar operated with a boldness and at a pace that seemingly shocked his adversaries.

The Marian reforms had massively reduced the size of Roman baggage trains by having legionaries carry their possessions, equipment, and supplies themselves; massively increasing their mobility.⁸⁰² This mobility was often further augmented by Caesar through the use of forced marches and even the outright abandonment of the army's baggage. The latter cut loose the final burdens limiting the legions beyond simply what the considerable endurance of the legionaries could manage. However, it posed a great risk to the army, as they would have to rely purely on foraging (a resource easily denied by scorched earth or attacks on foragers) to meet their needs before long. Indeed, it was the risk associated with the act that contributed to the enemy's failure to predict it. On the operational level, this allowed the Romans to dictate when and where the war would be fought, using their mobility to strike when the enemy was unprepared or arriving to threaten the enemy's vulnerable centres of gravity. The devastating surprise attack on the Tigurini at the Arar in 58 BC was made possible by the speed with which the legions caught up with the Helvetian host,⁸⁰³ and the sudden

⁸⁰⁰ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 71-72.

⁸⁰¹ Wylie, *Military Strategy*, 91.

⁸⁰² Santosuosso, *Storming the Heavens*, 21.

⁸⁰³ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 1.12-1.13.

arrival of the legions (previously thought far off) turned the battle against the Usipetes and Tencteri in 55 BC from a hard fight against an entrenched enemy into a massacre.⁸⁰⁴

Part of why this was successful is that this tactical surprise was used alongside strategic surprise. A key part of this was Caesar's propensity to undertake unexpected courses of action. As in the case of his frequent operation without his baggage, these often posed considerable risk to the himself and his legions (be that from the enemy or simply exposure to the elements). The punitive raid against the Nervii in 53 BC is a good example of this, combining the strategic surprise of a winter expedition with the tactical surprise afforded by the legions' relative speed to amplify the psychological shock of the Romans' attack on the Nervian centre of gravity and force a capitulation. By leveraging the psychological threat of their potential sudden arrival (and the implied result of such an attack) in the immediate aftermath of this, the legions were also able to compel the Senones and Carnutes to follow suit.⁸⁰⁵ In other cases, these risks were taken for expedience, as in the case of the pursuit of the Helvetii in 58 BC. Caesar's direct route through the Alps from Cisalpine Gaul forced his five legions to deal not just with the difficulties of transit through the mountains but also with attacks from the hostile Alpine tribes. However, this risky shortcut undoubtedly contributed to how swiftly the Roman army caught up with the migrators, directly enabling the surprise attack on the Tigurini at the Arar and setting up the destruction of the centre of gravity it represented.⁸⁰⁶ Similarly, his unexpected raid on Arvernia risked a winter crossing of the Cévennes mountains to divert Vercingetorix's attention and enable Caesar to link up with his legions, thereby foiling a central part of Vercingetorix's strategy and wresting control of the pattern of the conflict from him.⁸⁰⁷

Another feature of Roman operations was their constant momentum. As we have seen, the mobility of the legions and their direction against sensitive enemy centres of gravity (combined with Caesar's audacious operational art) resulted in rapid campaigns wherein tribes were overawed and

⁸⁰⁴ *ibid.*, 4.14-4.15.

⁸⁰⁵ *ibid.*, 6.3-6.4.

⁸⁰⁶ *ibid.*, 1.10-1.12.

⁸⁰⁷ *ibid.*, 7.5-7.10.

forced into submission in short order. However, this vigour was not merely on the operational level, but existed on the strategic level too. The legions would conduct these campaigns of conquest or suppression one after another (as in the campaigns in Belgica in 57 BC and 53 BC)⁸⁰⁸ or even simultaneously (as with the campaigns of 56 BC).⁸⁰⁹ In both cases, the different operations often took place at different ends of the country entirely. Enabled by the endurance and discipline of the legionaries, this constant application of pressure on the Gauls served a dual purpose. Primarily, it largely kept the Romans in control of the pattern of the war by forcing the Gauls into a reactive stance rather than striking blows of their own. However, the inexorable momentum of both the Roman advance in a limited sense and the conquest in a wider sense likely also had an impact on the will of the Gallic population. For much of the war, only the operational impediments of winter (rather than the efforts of the Gauls) checked Roman operations, and often even that was not always enough.

Callwell saw the initiative in small wars as generally beginning in the favour of the regular army, making the goal of boldness and operational vigour to maintain its possession.⁸¹⁰ However, as per Wylie's shifting equilibrium of control, this can change as the war progresses and the effects of both sides' strategies manifest (or not).⁸¹¹ Throughout this case study, repeated mention has been made of the audacious (sometimes bordering on reckless) actions of Caesar in his operations in Gaul. Clausewitz argues strongly for the merits of boldness across the levels of war, commenting that "timidity will do a thousand times more damage in war than audacity", and Caesar's campaigns seem to support that notion.⁸¹² The dynamic character of Roman operations occasionally exposed the legions to considerable risk, but this only served to add strength to the blows Roman forces struck by giving them the element of surprise. Combined with the natural celerity and endurance of post-Marian legions, Caesar's audaciousness and the perpetual vigour with which the legions operated kept the

⁸⁰⁸ *ibid.*, 2.11-2.16, 6.3-6.44.

⁸⁰⁹ *ibid.*, 3.9-3.11.

⁸¹⁰ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 71-84.

⁸¹¹ Wylie, *Military Strategy*, 87-91.

⁸¹² Clausewitz, *On War*, 190-192.

Gauls largely on the back foot. This allowed Roman forces to maintain the all-important initiative and exploit the opportunities to regain it in the rare instances that it shifted in the Gallic favour.

Divide et Impera and the Power to Hurt

During the civil war that followed his conquest of Gaul, Caesar displayed an ability to win over and reintegrate many of his opponents, often without having to fight them first. This was done through generous displays of mercy towards not just those who surrendered to him, but also defeated opponents. Though it was during the civil war that this reputation emerged, one can see its antecedent behaviours during the Gallic War.⁸¹³ That is not to say that his approach in Gaul was without punitive measures. In fact these instances of generosity are highlighted by their juxtaposition with the occasionally extreme punishments meted out by the legions, an effect that is of course deliberate. In this dual use of both rewards and brutality, Caesar was able to exploit pre-existing divisions in Gallic society to expedite and consolidate his conquest of Gaul. Though these two behaviours are distinct from one another, they both seek to influence and ultimately control the population (and in doing so also exert control over the enemy). As Caesar showed, they are particularly effective when used synergistically and so are being dealt with together here.

Politically divided Gaul was fertile ground for Rome's less kinetic instruments of power: those of wealth, trade, and the political support that accompanied it. The Aedui were the principal Roman-allied nation in Free Gaul at the beginning of the Gallic War, and served as an immediate example of the benefits of Roman friendship, being defended from the depredations of the Helvetii and liberated from the Sequani and Ariovistus at Caesar's initiative.⁸¹⁴ The Aedui were joined the next year by the Remi, who surrendered to the proconsul upon his army's arrival in Belgica following the region's revolt. Providing Caesar with supplies, valuable intelligence, and offering a useful base for operations in the north, they became one of his most important allies in Gaul.⁸¹⁵ In exchange for hostages, Roman

⁸¹³ C. C. Coulter, 'Caesar's Clemency', *The Classical Journal*, 26, 7 (April 1931), 513-524.

⁸¹⁴ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 1.11-1.14, 1.31-1.37.

⁸¹⁵ *ibid.*, 2.3-2.5.

friendship brought with it status for amenable tribal chiefs, as well as considerable opportunities for increasing their wealth through the influx of Roman merchants and their goods into Gallic towns (not to mention gifts to tribal leaders themselves). On top of this, tribes might also hope to benefit from Roman protection against external threats as the Aedui did (albeit somewhat belatedly) and even the possibility of expanding their territory or gaining new vassals. These benefits were a highly valuable bargaining chip in Rome's dealings with the nations of Free Gaul, allowing Caesar to manipulate amenable tribes into furthering his own goals by elevating the pro-Roman factions that existed within them. This strategy was itself helped by the intense inter-tribal rivalry that dominated the Gallic political landscape, wherein many self-interested tribes were happy to side with the Romans if it allowed them to gain an advantage over their neighbours.⁸¹⁶

While some tribes actively sided with the Romans for these benefits at the expense of their rivals, more were content to simply watch other tribes come under Roman domination, even if they were not directly benefiting from it. This lack of Gallic unity enabled Caesar to defeat the tribes 'in detail' on both an operational and strategic level. When the Belgic nations stood against Caesar in pre-emptive defence of their liberty in 57 BC, the rest of the Gaul happily stood by while Caesar waged his campaign of subjugation against them. In fact, many supported his campaign with troops and operational support, including actively razing Bellovacian territory on Caesar's behalf. Indeed, even within Belgica, Caesar's arrival led the Remi to forsake their neighbours and actively collaborate with the Romans.⁸¹⁷ This prompted a Belgic attack on them which was repulsed with Roman assistance, reinforcing the benefits of such a choice to both the Remi and others who might hear of it.

On the operational level, this self-interest combined with decentralised command/planning structures and organisational limitations to reduce both the capacity and willingness of even allied tribes to cooperate in their collective defence. This allowed Caesar to direct his forces against each of

⁸¹⁶ Sanders, *Julius Caesar and the Gallic Campaign*, 24-25, 28.

⁸¹⁷ *ibid.*, 20-21.

them individually, or at the very least in smaller groups.⁸¹⁸ Again, 57 BC provides a good example of this, where the division of the Belgic army (due to supply concerns and Bellovacian restlessness) removed a serious threat from the legions' path and enabled the piecemeal defeat of the tribes.⁸¹⁹

These operations were not always sequential, either. Sanders identifies Rome's use of what is known as 'distributed operations'. This warfighting concept refers to the deliberate dispersal of relatively small but highly capable units (an accurate descriptor of Roman legions) across the area of operations to conduct independent but coordinated actions, whilst simultaneously retaining the ability to converge or support one another. The intention with this approach is to create a spatial advantage over the enemy, keeping them off balance by threatening multiple axes and denying certain areas or avenues of approach. In Gaul, this also served to prevent revolting tribes from joining their forces, enabling the legions to defeat them while they were divided and relatively weak.⁸²⁰ The campaign against the maritime tribes saw a very adept use of this concept in active operations. While Caesar moved against the Venetic centre of gravity, he broke off three smaller columns to prevent other tribes from assisting the Veneti or exploiting Roman distraction to revolt again (or invade Gaul in the case of the Germans).⁸²¹ This allowed multiple threats to be dealt with at the same time without spreading Roman forces too thinly by simultaneously threatening their various centres of gravity.⁸²²

Sanders points out that the maintenance of division (both political and practical) between the Gallic tribes was further aided by Caesar's use of the strategy of the central position. As has been discussed, the Aedui and Remi were Caesar's principal Gallic allies, providing support in the form of both men and logistics. *Figure 3.2 & Figure 3.3* show how these two tribes and their vassals occupied a position roughly in the centre of the wider Gallic region. In an operational context, the strategic location of these vital supply hubs ensured that lines of communication were not forced to stretch

⁸¹⁸ *ibid.*, 28.

⁸¹⁹ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 2.1-2.34.

⁸²⁰ Sanders, *Julius Caesar and the Gallic Campaign*, 32.

⁸²¹ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 3.10-3.11.

⁸²² Sanders, *Julius Caesar and the Gallic Campaign*, 28-29.

across Gaul's entire breadth. This eased operations generally, but was particularly useful when legions were deployed in different parts of the country at the same time. Sanders also identifies their value as a strategic barrier. Stretching from the Alps just north of Gallia Provincia up into Belgica, they also formed a pro-Roman spine that separated the Belgae, Celts, and Germans (on both sides of the Rhine) from one another. Already less than enthusiastic about cooperating with one another, this geopolitical bulwark restricted the ability of these groups to consolidate or even interact. Bringing these points together, this also provided Caesar with a strategically positioned staging area from which the legions could move against the divided inhabitants of Gaul and react to incidents across the country in good time.⁸²³

In her article *Caesar's Clemency*, Coulter examines the interesting dynamics present in Roman treatment of defeated tribes. In the main, Coulter describes the Romans as being relatively reasonable in victory, generally demanding little more than the surrender of arms, hostages, and tribute.⁸²⁴ In some cases, steps were even taken to reduce the immediate hardships of defeat. These included the withdrawal of Roman troops from a surrendered town to prevent violence against the inhabitants and assurances that their weakened state would not be allowed to be exploited by hostile neighbours.⁸²⁵ Now subordinate to Roman authority, the tribe and its leaders might then be able to take advantage of the potential rewards that came with collaboration, which acted as an additional motivation for the more cynical among them. This was calculated leniency designed to exploit Gallic self-interest. By treating surrendering enemies well, Caesar encouraged the act in his enemies. Furthermore, those tribes who surrendered early would receive more favourable agreements with their new Roman masters, such as lower tax rates.⁸²⁶ As such, when the Roman army appeared in their lands, a tribe might be more willing to give up or even forsake their allies in the hopes of getting a better deal. The

⁸²³ *ibid.*, 29.

⁸²⁴ Caesar, *Gallie War*, 1.27-1.28, 2.13-2.15, 2.32.

⁸²⁵ *ibid.*, 2.28-2.33.

⁸²⁶ Sanders, *Julius Caesar and the Gallic Campaign*, 26.

latter was particularly relevant in the context of Caesar's overall 'divide and conquer' strategy, as it broke up blocs of resistance, and Coulter correctly identifies that the surrenders of the Bellovaci and Atuatuci in 57 BC support the validity of this part of his strategy.⁸²⁷

However, these more lenient terms tended to be reserved for those tribes who surrendered either without fighting or with relatively little resistance. Those who put up more stubborn resistance or revolted against Roman authority would instead experience the various 'sticks' that Caesar could employ. As with the rewards, economics were a key part of Caesar's power to hurt. The devastation of property was a common tool that we have already explored as a means of forcing an enemy into submission, but for the same reasons it was an effective punishment. The targeted tribe had their economic base crippled, impacting not just their immediate ability to continue the war but also their long-term ability to both feed their population and engage in wealth-generating economic activity.⁸²⁸ This served as a warning to other tribes too though by showing what those who continued to resist were inviting upon themselves. This again contributed to the willingness of tribes to accept Roman authority when the legions came knocking. The devastation of Catuvellaunian territory (alongside promises of Roman protection) helped to tip the scales in Roman favour during Caesar's second British expedition, with many tribes defecting in order to avoid suffering similar attacks.⁸²⁹ Similarly, the devastation of the Nervii in 53 BC led to the hasty sending of envoys by the Senones and Carnutes when Caesar turned his gaze on them.⁸³⁰

As his conquest progressed, Caesar's objective in Gaul became less about taking territory and more about consolidating control and ensuring compliance. His chief means of doing this, particularly during winters where his army could not as easily keep the Gauls on the back foot with active campaigning, was by quartering his legions amongst them. Occasionally, the legions were wintered in

⁸²⁷ Coulter, 'Caesar's Clemency', 515-519; Caesar, *Gallie War*, 2.14, 2.31.

⁸²⁸ Sanders, *Julius Caesar and the Gallic Campaign*, 26.

⁸²⁹ Caesar, *Gallie War*, 5.19-5.21.

⁸³⁰ *ibid.*, 6.3-6.4.

a tribe's territory on protective missions, as in the case of the two legions wintered in Remian territory to deter Bellovacian aggression after the Roman victory at Alesia.⁸³¹

However, it was more common for the legions to be wintered either in or around areas recently conquered or suppressed. A legionary garrison enabled the Romans to keep watch for and react quickly to signs of fresh revolt or deter it by the threat of their presence. In this way, as Wylie wrote, they exerted control by being 'on the scene'.⁸³² However, Caesar also used them as a passive economic weapon against the Gauls. As the need to distribute them more widely following 54 BC's poor harvest shows, wintered legions were a major burden on the tribes.⁸³³ Sanders therefore identifies their secondary purpose as being one of punishment. The lingering presence of their recent conquerors and their unclear intentions will have undoubtedly elicited considerable anxiety on their part, an emotional hardship. More tangibly though, sustaining the legions drained the tribe's resources (i.e., food and fodder) considerably, leaving less for the tribe themselves. In addition to the obvious physical hardship of having less food to go around, the added demand reduced the tribe's income by preventing them from selling their surplus elsewhere. Wars are resource intensive, and so these factors subsequently reduced the capacity of the tribes to make further war against Rome.⁸³⁴

The psychological burden the quartered legions imposed on the Gallic population stemmed from the potential the legions had for extreme harm. The legions were brutally efficient on the battlefield, and many tribes found their populations decimated in defeat. Of the Helvetic migrators, reportedly less than a third survived their encounters with the legions and made it back home. Within these losses were several thousand Verbigeni who, following the host's surrender to Caesar, attempted to renege on the terms and flee. When the runaways were caught, Caesar had them 'treated as enemies' (meaning either enslavement or death).⁸³⁵ Though Coulter remarks that Caesar evidently

⁸³¹ *ibid.*, 7.90.

⁸³² Wylie, *Military Strategy*, 85.

⁸³³ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 5.24.

⁸³⁴ Sanders, *Julius Caesar and the Gallic Campaign*, 25.

⁸³⁵ Caesar, *Gallic War*, 1.27-1.29.

worked hard to cultivate his forgiving reputation, there were some transgressions he had to punish more severely lest Rome look weak. Violations of truces might result in either the enslavement or massacre of a population's, as in the cases of the Atuatuci in 57 BC and the German invaders of 55 BC.⁸³⁶ A similar fate awaited those who harmed Roman citizens or officials, as shown by the punishment of the Veneti in 56 BC and the rebel towns of Cenabum and Avaricum during Vercingetorix's revolt.⁸³⁷ This extreme violence was also directed against particular centres of resistance, such as the defenders of Uxellodunum in 51 BC, who were mutilated to serve as living reminders of the consequences of resistance.⁸³⁸

The point of these various acts was not just to make an impression on the victims but to make an example of them for others, be that other tribes or indeed other parts of the same nation. Specifically, Caesar wanted to discourage these behaviours.⁸³⁹ This meant resistance generally, but also ensuring that tribes might be reluctant in the future to interfere with Roman citizens or envoys and that they would not immediately renege on their surrender for fear of the consequences. Furthermore, these more literal displays of the proconsul's power to hurt served to highlight the relative mildness and even generosity of his wider conduct. Indeed, he spent time both before and after Uxellodunum touring Gaul improving relations with the tribes through assurances, honours, and gifts.⁸⁴⁰

Gaul was a divided country before Caesar's arrival, and it would remain so even when it was seemingly 'united' under Roman authority with the conclusion of his conquest. This was by design. Caesar, and the Romans generally, recognised that an enemy united was all the harder to fight, and so made use of all instruments of grand strategy to maintain and even stoke Gallic disunity wherever possible. The legions were a key part of this, particularly in the physical separation of the tribes that enabled their defeat in detail through, among other things, distributed operations and the strategy of

⁸³⁶ *ibid.*, 2.32-2.33, 4.11-4.15.

⁸³⁷ *ibid.*, 3.8-3.16, 7.3, 7.11, 7.28.

⁸³⁸ Hirtius, *Gallic War*, 8.44; Coulter, 'Caesar's Clemency', 515-519.

⁸³⁹ Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 1-34.

⁸⁴⁰ Hirtius, *Gallic War*, 8.38, 8.49.

the central position. However, its efficacy was increased using Roman hard power to exploit Gallic self-interest and rivalry. Pro-Roman (or simply cynically opportunistic) factions and tribes were enriched and empowered at the expense of those who resisted. Opponents were themselves encouraged to surrender by the promise of more lenient treatment and the prospect of 'getting in on the racket', as well as the credible threat of devastation, economic ruination, and death. In many cases, the Gauls were happy to allow others to be run roughshod over provided it did not happen to them. That it took six years of steady conquest (and considerable cajoling from Vercingetorix), for a large-scale coalition to unite against Rome in 52 BC is evidence of this. By actively manipulating this attitude, Caesar eased his conquest and ensured that his Roman successors would not have to deal with a Gaul united in opposition to Rome again, even during the chaos of the civil wars.

Conclusions

Introduction

These case studies have given us an insight into how the Roman Republic approached small wars and how the legions fared in this operational and strategic environment. This conclusion will therefore bring these findings together to answer our research objectives. As a reminder, our research objectives were as follows: to define the nature and identifying characteristics of small wars; to explore the small wars experience of the Roman Republic; to identify the challenges that small wars pose and how they can be addressed; and what implications this has for modern theory and practice. We know from our earlier investigation into the nature of small wars that their primary identifying characteristic is asymmetry between the two sides involved in the conflict. With this in mind, our next step will therefore be to establish if a dominant Roman approach to small wars existed, whether that be one based on doctrine or some innate direction stemming from Roman strategic culture. From there, we will examine how the Roman experience relates to that of modern militaries, looking at shared difficulties and solutions as we discuss the various lessons we have identified in this project.

The sections of Polybius pertaining to accepted practices in military organisation, marching order, and battle formations suggest that the legions had established *modi operandi*. However, though the often very specific procedures described by Polybius suggest many aspects of operations were done according to some form of guidelines, there is no mention of how the army should be directed.⁸⁴¹ Indeed, there is nothing from this period of Roman history that discusses how commanders should approach certain tactical, operational, or strategic situations. The closest examples of such documents in our historical context, Onasander's *Strategikos* and Frontinus' *Stratagemata*, were not written until the end of the first century AD. Interestingly, this points to the development of a discipline of military science in line with the maturation of the new Roman military class that filled the Imperial Roman

⁸⁴¹ Polybius, *Histories*, 6.19-6.42.

army following Augustus' military reforms. However, this line of investigation lies outside of this project's scope.

The absence of codified sources of doctrine does not mean that there were no guiding principles in Roman practice, however. During our period of study, Roman commanders were not professional soldiers but politicians who held rank by virtue of their office. While some, like Caesar or Marius, embraced their military responsibilities and took an active interest in their good conduct; others were rank amateurs in this regard, causing the quality of Roman leadership to vary considerably. Despite this apparent lack of a guiding hand in military affairs, common threads in Roman strategies and operational art can be identified throughout the wars these case studies have covered, particularly when campaigns are led by leaders committed to good practice. By combining these commonalities, we can attempt to synthesise what might be described as a 'Roman' approach to small wars.

One of the key characteristics of the Roman campaigns is the philosophy with which they approached these conflicts. Based on the records this thesis has examined, there was relatively little difference in terms of initial preparation and deployments between how Rome treated these campaigns we recognise as small wars and their wars with peers. Though there was an element of proportionality, resulting in forces of varying sizes, these deployments consisted principally not of auxiliary troops but of legionaries. The legionaries were Rome's principal conventional warfighting force, and their deployment in lieu of local troops shows that Rome both took the threat seriously and planned to deal with it in a conventional manner.

This is further corroborated by the operational posture of the legions in the field. The Roman strategy throughout these case studies prioritised the defeat of the enemy in battle and the capture of their settlements just as they would in a conventional war against a regular adversary. Enemy leadership was also routinely targeted as part of this strategy, whether that was by prioritising the forces these individuals led to knock out their physical centre of gravity or by more literally eliminating the leaders and the moral centre of gravity they represented. A key part of this approach was the

Roman strategy of keeping enemies both militarily and politically divided. Distributed operations and the domination of the theatre kept the enemy physically and militarily divided, enabling them to be defeated in detail. Meanwhile, political division was sown and maintained using Rome's political and economic instruments of power, including the power to hurt. The latter also contributed to Rome's post-conflict consolidation as part of the process of Romanisation, which aimed to gradually assimilate previously hostile populations into the Roman cultural bloc over successive generations.

This points to another less operational characteristic of the Roman approach: its potential longevity. Although individual commanders often sought quick victories to win kudos, the Roman state itself recognised that not all conflicts could be won quickly. Indeed, it was understood that the ethnic conflicts their imperialism brought about often endured long beyond the initial cessation of hostilities. As such, the Romans were content to play the long game with their strategies, committing to the conflict with as many resources and for as long as it took to achieve their objectives. This was of course in part due to Rome's ultimate imperialistic intentions there. At the same time, this was also a practical consideration that accepted both the protracted nature of asymmetric conflict and the need to ensure that the immediate war was won in such a manner that the relevant population understood Roman domination.

Given the absence of any clear formal military science guiding their actions, one can therefore assume that this approach was instead influenced by an informal strategic and operational culture.⁸⁴² Although not without setbacks, our research shows that Rome enjoyed a good level of success with this approach in the small wars this project has covered. As pointed out in the introduction, the modern era has seen many states struggle with the successful prosecution of small wars, even as the asymmetry became even more pronounced with advances in military technology. The primary aim of this thesis is to identify what, if any, lessons today's strategists can learn from the Roman experience that was seemingly so comparatively successful. In doing this, we must therefore consider conduct

⁸⁴² Gray, *Modern Strategy*, 129-151.

from the modern experience alongside that of the Romans when extracting our lessons so as to put the practices and difficulties into perspective.

To risk stating the obvious, modern technology has completely altered the character of warfare, opening up entire new strategic domains and drastically changing operational realities. With this growing asymmetry, irregular opponents increasingly utilised guerrilla warfare and terrorism as a means of mitigating this disparity. As a result, most small wars in recent decades have taken the form of insurgencies and counterinsurgencies.⁸⁴³ Another key development has been the increased media coverage of conflict, exposing both domestic and international audiences to the realities of operations on the ground. This necessitated a change in approach for many actors. Reports of losses will gradually reduce the support of the domestic population for the government and the conflict, while brutal conduct (e.g., inflicting hardships on civilian populations) risks alienating not just one's own population but also the international community. It is from this shifting mindset that the modern, 'classical' response to insurgencies developed, the theory behind which was discussed in the literature review.

Despite their outward dissimilarity, there are definite areas of shared difficulties and responses between the Roman and modern small wars experiences. The case studies in this thesis have identified many areas of interest in this regard. However, for the sake of brevity and to best answer our research questions, these lessons and principles will concentrate on the most pertinent, which are outlined below.

Lessons and Principles

Limiting Enemy Freedom of Operation

One of the key differences between modern and ancient small wars that we discussed at the start of this conclusion is how asymmetry manifests itself in operations and strategy. Technological advances

⁸⁴³ C. Paul et al., *Paths to Victory: Detailed Insurgency Case Studies* (Washington, D.C.: RAND Corporation, 2013), xi.

have begun to filter through to irregular adversaries, as shown by the increased use of technologies like unmanned aerial vehicles (e.g., drones and loitering munitions) by these actors.⁸⁴⁴ However, regular armed forces still possess significant conventional advantages in the form of greater arsenals and resources, better discipline and training, and (generally) dominance of the relevant strategic domains. Though this asymmetry is obviously less pronounced from a technological standpoint in the ancient case studies we have looked at, the other characteristics of the legions made up for this parity to provide the asymmetry inherent to small wars. These characteristics include more consistent training to improve competency and discipline, better personal equipment, battle-centric doctrine, and more developed military institutions.

In both contexts, the less regular enemy is (or at least soon becomes) aware of their tactical disadvantage and thus avoids direct confrontation in open engagements where the regulars are most effective. This is one of the challenges of small wars. As Callwell says, this is enabled by the advantages irregulars possess on the strategic level compared to the regulars, which afford a freedom of operation the regulars cannot match due to their operational requirements.⁸⁴⁵ The regulars must therefore seek to deny the irregulars this critical capability, weakening the enemy and impeding their operations so that they can be more effectively engaged. One way of achieving this is by exerting sufficient control over the operational environment.

The Romans particularly struggled with this in Numidia, where enemy freedom of operation enabled Numidian guerrilla warfare against the legions. Following the breaking up of his army by Metellus at the Muthul, Jugurtha adopted a guerrilla strategy that sought to force a Roman withdrawal via gradual attrition by hit-and-run attacks. The Numidian king was able to harass the legions as they undertook their campaign by relying on a network of forts and cities across his kingdom, each of which could serve as forward operating bases, supply hubs, and places of refuge for Jugurthine forces. As

⁸⁴⁴ H. Haugstvedt & J. O. Jacobsen, 'Taking Fourth-Generation Warfare to the Skies? An Empirical Exploration of Non-State Actors' Use of Weaponized Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs – 'Drones')', *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 14, 5 (October 2020), 26-40.

⁸⁴⁵ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 43-56, 85-89.

long as the Numidians possessed this capability to engage on their own terms, the legions stood little hope of decisively defeating them militarily and could only react to Numidian actions, ceding control of the pattern of war to the enemy. The commands of Metellus and Marius saw the Romans respond by systematically eliminating these strongpoints, reducing the space in which Numidian forces could easily operate and thus serving to corral them. By wresting control of the operational environment from the enemy, the legions subsequently made Jugurtha and his warriors easier to locate, eventually enabling Marius to inflict a decisive defeat.

Though Holroyd points out that a similar scenario played itself out during the French conquest of Algeria in the early 19th century (with similar results), more recent conflicts have also demonstrated this imperative.⁸⁴⁶ While the implementation was different, British counterinsurgency operations in Malaya and Kenya are clear examples of this principle in modern practice. In both examples, the British paired coercive control of the population (something which we will examine later) with a concerted strategy of what Hack refers to as spatial control.⁸⁴⁷

In Malaya, a villagisation programme forcibly relocated the suspect Malay Chinese population into fortified settlements where government forces could prevent them providing (either willingly or otherwise) material or physical support for the insurgency. Villagisation also took place in Kenya's Reserves, where its impact on the Mau Mau insurgents was increased by the destruction of their primary support infrastructure in 'Operation Anvil'. This operation saw large numbers of Nairobi's Kikuyu population, reportedly the most sympathetic to the Mau Mau, detained.⁸⁴⁸ In both theatres, ground forces systematically reduced enemy control of the country using a combination of larger-scale sweeps and small-unit patrols to disrupt and destroy these weakened insurgent forces within their jungle and forest sanctuaries. Aerial bombing campaigns (sometimes utilising defoliants) were used to complement these ground operations, targeting infrastructure or simply areas of known enemy

⁸⁴⁶ Holroyd, 'The Jugurthine War', 6-7.

⁸⁴⁷ Hack 'Everyone Lived in Fear', 690.

⁸⁴⁸ Paul et al., *Paths to Victory: Detailed Insurgency Case Studies*, 57-59, 71-72.

activity so as to either force them into more open ground or contain them for upcoming offensives.⁸⁴⁹ This constituted a deliberate strategy to not just deny the enemy the operational freedom they relied upon for their continued survival, but to subsequently assert control of the pattern of war.⁸⁵⁰

Both conflicts are typically reported as ending in 1960 after 12 and 8 years respectively, victories largely attributed to these methods of control. It is worth noting, however, that the military defeat of these conflicts' respective adversaries is often located significantly earlier. In the case of the Mau Mau, this military defeat is usually dated to 1956.⁸⁵¹ Meanwhile, the military defeat of the Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA) is usually placed at 1954. In fact, Hazelton asserts that this could be considered complete as early as 1948 after the MNLA's capacity to achieve its political and military objectives was broken by the initial offensive sweeps of government forces.⁸⁵²

Though these historical and technological contexts are worlds apart, there are clear parallels in both the strategic problem and the response to it. Ultimately, it boils down to a matter of control. As in the work of Callwell, the regulars in these examples faced irregular foes whose light operational footprint and experience of fighting in the local conditions were ideally suited to the requirements of the guerrilla warfare they intended to wage.⁸⁵³ The regulars must give the irregulars no choice but to instead fight the war on the terms that suit *them*, ensuring a decisive end is achieved as quickly as possible. Otherwise, the regulars risk the campaign devolving into a protracted affair, which often only strengthens the enemy by showing the regulars' continued inability to defeat them.

As per Wylie's theory of strategy as a means of control, control over the pattern of war is achieved by manipulating the enemy's centre of gravity.⁸⁵⁴ If Clausewitz's claim that enemy forces

⁸⁴⁹ S. Ritchie, *The RAF, Small Wars and Insurgencies: Later Colonial Operations, 1945-1975* (RAF Centre for Air Power Studies, 2011). Available online: <https://www.raf.mod.uk/our-organisation/units/air-historical-branch/regional-studies-post-coldwar-narratives/raf-small-wars-and-insurgencies-vol-2-later-colonial-operations-1945-1975/> [Accessed 10/1/2024], 24, 39.

⁸⁵⁰ Wylie, *Military Strategy*, 87-91.

⁸⁵¹ Paul et al., *Paths to Victory: Detailed Insurgency Case Studies*, 72.

⁸⁵² Hazelton, *Bullets Not Ballots*, 33-35.

⁸⁵³ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 85-89.

⁸⁵⁴ Wylie, *Military Strategy*, 87-91.

represent the most likely centre of gravity is accurate, the operational freedom of these forces constitutes a critical capability.⁸⁵⁵ The strategies adopted in Numidia, Malaya, and Kenya all sought to undermine this capability by systematically destroying the support infrastructure that underpinned it. These expanding zones of denial eventually forced the irregulars to conform to the regular pattern of war and fight the tactical engagements the regular force wants to fight. As the Romans and the British demonstrated, this often proves disastrous for the irregulars.

Centres of Gravity

A key factor in the development of strategy, and by extension adaptation of one's strategic approach, is ascertaining where one's resources should be directed. In the modern era, this calculation might be directed by the 'centre of gravity' concept we have touched upon in our analysis. Clausewitz asserts that the enemy army often fulfils this role, since it represents the enemy's primary means of both offence and defence in terms of each side's struggle to attain their objectives.⁸⁵⁶ However, Clausewitz recognises that the enemy's nature and military-political circumstances can lead to their centre of gravity lying elsewhere. Indeed, it may not always be possible to trace enemy strength back to a single point, potentially resulting in the existence of several across the different levels of war. Given the significance of centres of gravity to the enemy, Clausewitz advocated for focusing one's efforts consistently against this focal point as the surest means of the enemy's conclusive defeat. Though Clausewitz's own experience was primarily of conventional warfare, his principles of strategy apply to all forms of warfare. In the case of small wars, however, the diverse nature of the less regular actors makes the identification of both their centre(s) of gravity and their exploitable critical vulnerabilities both more difficult and more important (in directing adaptation).⁸⁵⁷

Our investigation has shown that the Romans displayed a consistent ability to correctly identify and then adopt measures to neutralise enemy centres of gravity. Viriathus' tactical victories over the

⁸⁵⁵ Clausewitz, *On War*, 485-487, 595-597.

⁸⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁸⁵⁷ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 29, 56; Strange, *Centers of Gravity & Critical Vulnerabilities*, 74.

Romans turned him into a national figurehead, embodying the spirit of Lusitanian resistance to Rome. This in turn caused much of the Lusitanians' previously dispersed and largely independent fighting strength to unite under him. Viriathus and his army thus became a pair of interlinked centres of gravity, one moral and one physical. Roman commanders clearly recognised the importance of this focal point, constantly trying to engage it in the hopes of dealing a decisive blow. Though Roman failures to adapt to Lusitanian tactics resulted in infrequent tactical successes, the legions were able to weaken the Lusitanian army by cutting it off from its domestic and external support network. This produced the circumstances which allowed Caepio to orchestrate Viriathus' assassination. Weakened and robbed of their capable figurehead, the Lusitanian army soon surrendered, exactly the decisive effect Clausewitz visualises.⁸⁵⁸ A similar approach was taken in Numidia, where Metellus and Marius attacked the critical requirements that underpinned the centre of gravity Jugurtha represented, capturing his strongholds and seizing his treasuries. This forced the Numidian king out into the open, where the legions decisively defeated both his army and that of his vital ally (who promptly defected). The Romans knew that Jugurtha's moral centre of gravity could not be left in play, and so conspired with his former ally to capture him, definitively ending the Jugurthine War.

The scale of the Gallic campaign required Caesar to be economical with his strength, which was insufficient for a long slog across Gaul. The proconsul's response to this was the imposition of shock and awe on the country's tribes and nations via the concerted reduction of their centres of gravity.⁸⁵⁹ Armies (or, in the case of the Veneti, their fleet) were generally the legions' initial target. Led by its traditional leaders and often representing a large part of its martial strength, the defeat of a tribe's army could potentially leave them defenceless and leaderless. Even if not total, Roman commanders recognised that the psychological impact of a defeat was often enough to force a surrender, and thus sought out such opportunities. This is why Caesar chose to risk the Gallic pincer at

⁸⁵⁸ Clausewitz, *On War*, 485-487, 595-597.

⁸⁵⁹ J. D. Kiras, *Special Operations and Strategy: From World War II to the War on Terrorism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 32-34.

Alesia. Though facing both armies was a risk, victory would break the back of the Gallic tribes and leave Vercingetorix at Roman mercy. As Clausewitz says, “daring all to win all” by striking the enemy’s strength is best way to ensure your enemy’s defeat.⁸⁶⁰ If an army did not present itself, the legions would often shift focus to the tribes’ *oppida*. Serving as the socio-political capitals of the tribes, these fortified settlements were often inhabited by tribal leaders and their retinues. In addition to the decapitation seizing this would represent, the impact of the loss was amplified by their cultural value to the tribes in question. These are two of the primary centres of gravity Clausewitz identifies in his conception of the topic, indicating Caesar’s clear understanding of the impact he was hoping to achieve with these actions.

The *Iraq Liberation Act of 1998* formally stated that it was the goal of the US to remove Saddam Hussein and his government from power.⁸⁶¹ The US military therefore had adequate time before March 2003 to identify the key targets and pressure points within the Iraqi state that would lead to its defeat, the efficiency of which was key if the US hoped to prevent the deployment or concealment of suspected weapons of mass destruction. Saddam was the lynchpin of the Iraqi state, and the neutralisation of his moral centre of gravity became a core component of US military planning. With much of Saddam’s command and control infrastructure, as well as the general mechanisms of government, concentrated in Baghdad, the city itself represented another important strategic centre of gravity that required addressing. Much like in the 1991 Gulf War,⁸⁶² the Iraqi Armed Forces (particularly the Republican Guard and *Fedayeen Saddam*) represented an operational centre of gravity, being the only means with which Saddam’s regime could defend itself from both external and

⁸⁶⁰ Clausewitz, *On War*, 596.

⁸⁶¹ Dale, *Operation Iraqi Freedom*, 7.

⁸⁶² S. H. Lee, *Center of Gravity or Center of Confusion: Understanding the Mystique*. Research Report (Air Command and Staff College, April 1999). Available online: <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA397314.pdf> [Accessed 10/1/2024], 26-31.

internal threats. Instead of occupying Kuwait, these forces now barred the way to Baghdad.⁸⁶³ 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' was built around these centres of gravity.

Though an air strike on a countryside retreat failed to eliminate Saddam himself, his centre of gravity was neutralised by the wholesale destruction of Iraqi command and control infrastructure in the Coalition's 'shock and awe' air campaign.⁸⁶⁴ Baghdad was the clear target of the Coalition ground invasion, which took the form of a direct, two-pronged push to the capital from Kuwait in which most other cities were bypassed. While some Iraqi forces offered at times determined resistance and threatened Coalition forces' long lines of communication, US forces were able to push on and reach Baghdad by early April. This shift from conventional engagements towards exploitation of Coalition logistical requirements and their vulnerability is an interesting parallel to Vercingetorix's own operational shift during Caesar's offensive in central Gaul. While the fall of Baghdad marked the end of his regime, Saddam was able to escape into hiding around Tikrit. US determination to remove his key centre of gravity saw them continue to hunt for Saddam long after the end of major combat operations, finally capturing him in December.⁸⁶⁵ Although US commanders felt their invasion force was insufficient for the task,⁸⁶⁶ the US strategy's committed targeting of Iraqi centres of gravity ensured success in this first phase of the small wars in Iraq. However, we must remember Clausewitz's words as to the limits of force and that war is never the final act of a conflict.⁸⁶⁷ There is more to good strategy than the mechanical neutralisation of centres of gravity, as shown by the failure of Operation Iraqi Freedom to pave the way for the secure and stable Iraq US strategic objectives desired.⁸⁶⁸

In his book, *On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context*, Harry Summers asserts that the US failed to properly address any of the potential North Vietnamese centres of gravity. Summers identifies

⁸⁶³ J. R. Leskovich, *An Operational Center of Gravity Analysis of Operation Iraqi Freedom*. JMOD Research Paper (Naval War College, February 2006). Available online: <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA463502.pdf> [Accessed 10/1/2024], 14-16.

⁸⁶⁴ Strange & Iron, 'Center of Gravity – What Clausewitz Really Meant', 26.

⁸⁶⁵ Dale, *Operation Iraqi Freedom*, 18-24.

⁸⁶⁶ *ibid.*, 13-14.

⁸⁶⁷ Clausewitz, *On War*, 78-80.

⁸⁶⁸ Dale, *Operation Iraqi Freedom*, 9.

these as “[the North Vietnamese] army, their capital, the army of their protector, the community of interest with their allies, [and] public opinion”. As we will examine later in our lesson on adaptation, the US approach revolved around the degradation of enemy combat power, appearing to suggest the acceptance of these forces as the centre of gravity. However, a desire to avoid escalation meant that an invasion of North Vietnam was never attempted or seriously considered beyond limited operational-level raids. This is despite the fact that North Vietnam was where the bulk of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA), the logistical infrastructure that supported the Viet Cong (VC), and (obviously) the North Vietnamese capital were located. Furthermore, serious attempts to sever the link between Hanoi and its international allies (both military support itself and the diplomatic will that enabled it) were not made until late in the war, by which time they were ‘too little, too late’. Summers attributes this to the perception of the VC as a separate entity, rather than just as another instrument of North Vietnamese power, effectively making it “a centre of gravity which did not exist”. Summers states that the continuation of the war following the massive degradation of the VC in the Tet Offensive proves that this interpretation was incorrect. Indeed, it was not the VC that defeated the South, but a conventional invasion by the NVA.⁸⁶⁹

The Romans faced a similar situation in the Lusitanian threat to Hispania Ulterior. However, rather than adopting a strategy of playing military ‘whack-a-mole’ against Lusitanian incursions like the US did in Vietnam, the legions sought out the sources of Lusitanian strength. Strikes against Lusitania and its people curbed the initial raids, while later expeditions targeted the critical vulnerabilities of Viriathus and his army, whose strength underpinned the entire war. By focusing their efforts on enemy centres of gravity, the Romans achieved their strategic objectives even when outnumbered and other parts of their campaign were not going as planned. The Vietnam War was one for the survival of South Vietnam, the principal threat to which was North Vietnam. The centre of gravity concept contends that

⁸⁶⁹ H. G. Summers, *On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context*, 2nd edition (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1982), 80.

the best way of defeating an enemy in war is to direct your efforts against their centre(s) of gravity. This was a principle that Summers reports the US dismissed as irrelevant to the “new” realities of counterinsurgency, to considerable cost.⁸⁷⁰ Though the Cold War context that admittedly complicated the Vietnam War was absent for ‘Operation Iraqi Freedom’, the initial invasion of Iraq was successful because US planners recognised that the war was exactly that: a war. They thus fought it like one, applying the basic principles of formulating that defeat to their strategy.

Commitment

Clausewitz famously describes war as a battle of wills in which each side tries to overcome the other’s power of resistance, itself the product of both one’s physical means of resistance and moral capacity to sustain it.⁸⁷¹ Though the character of asymmetric conflict is often different from the conventional wars between peers Clausewitz’s work is primarily concerned with, this principle is just as true (if not more so) for small wars. The nature of many of the kinds of conflicts that Callwell places within the small wars bracket, involving weighty philosophical concepts like revenge and liberation, is liable to increase the strength of will of those actors affected.⁸⁷² This is on top of the already potent mix of “primordial violence, hatred, and enmity” which Clausewitz states are inherent to armed conflict in general.⁸⁷³

This is further exacerbated by the strategies of those involved. In his various works on strategy and warfare, Mao makes repeated reference to the necessity of ‘people’s war’ being protracted in nature. This stems from a recognition that the armed forces of the state are initially much more powerful than the revolutionaries, who should avoid confronting the regulars lest such a move result in a decisive defeat of the fledgling movement. While the movement builds up its strength (both political and military), military operations should seek to draw out the conflict and gradually attrit both

⁸⁷⁰ Summers, ‘A War is a War is a War is a War’, 33.

⁸⁷¹ Clausewitz, *On War*, 75-77.

⁸⁷² Callwell, *Small Wars*, 25-28.

⁸⁷³ Clausewitz, *On War*, 89.

the enemy forces themselves and their will to fight through a mobile guerrilla strategy that conserves the irregulars' strength.⁸⁷⁴ On the other side, many of the strategies which counter this approach (including the control strategies discussed earlier) require a steady, methodical approach that can take time to produce results and the application of significant manpower to be effective.⁸⁷⁵ States waging small wars must therefore commit to the conflict from the outset, being willing to put in the time and resources to do the job properly.

This was something the Romans displayed a clear understanding of, in large part due to their imperial mindset and chauvinistic approach to their military prestige. This manifested itself in an unwillingness on the part of the Romans to let reversals of fortune deter them from achieving their long-term policy objectives. The Hispanic provinces were valuable territories that the Roman state had no intention of giving up or being forced out of (least of all by barbarians), so fresh reinforcements were sent each year to contest enemy control. Though successive armies sent to Lusitania achieved limited success individually, these increasingly large deployments applied continual pressure on the Lusitani and contributed to the gradual attrition of their combat power. This eventually pushed the balance of the war decisively in Roman favour. Roman outrage at Jugurthine transgressions fuelled a similar outlook towards Numidia, a strategically valuable allied kingdom that the Romans were unwilling to let slip out of their control. Despite very limited progress in early campaigns, the Senate approved a significant reinforcement of the army for Metellus, an escalation which later enabled him to begin the Roman ground control campaign. Marius would continue this approach during his own command, organising an even larger increase in the army's size with which to extend the campaign across the whole country. That these escalations took place while the Cimbric threat still loomed is further evidence of Roman commitment. Both Metellus and Marius had taken command with

⁸⁷⁴ Mao, *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung*.

⁸⁷⁵ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 58-59.

promises to achieve a quick conclusion, but both rapidly accepted the reality that the war in Numidia had no such quick fix and instead required a long-term methodical victory to be won.

The modern small wars experience of Iraq and Afghanistan displays less commitment, however. Both before and after major combat operations in Iraq, US commanders were concerned that the US force would be insufficient for expansive provision of security across the country. As a result, when the security situation began to deteriorate, the US' 'clear-hold-build' approach failed to achieve any meaningful results because US manpower was insufficient to 'hold' the areas they had cleared.⁸⁷⁶ The situation was even worse in Afghanistan, where the initial invasion force had been much smaller to begin with.⁸⁷⁷ With their focus on Iraq, the US' footprint in Afghanistan had remained very light, limiting their capacity to contest the Taliban resurgence whilst also supporting the nation-building efforts increasingly demanded of them.⁸⁷⁸ Afghanistan is larger than Iraq and possesses a more dispersed population, another complicating factor for a strategy of control. However, while US forces peaked at just under 200,000 in Iraq, the peak in Afghanistan was around half that.⁸⁷⁹ This insufficient commitment of resources from the get-go arguably contributed significantly to the conflicts spiralling out of control.

Central to this was an unwillingness among US policymakers to devote significant resources to what were increasingly unpopular wars.⁸⁸⁰ As a result, the surges did not take place until 2007 and between 2010 and 2011 in Iraq and Afghanistan respectively. Furthermore, though the surges did have a positive impact on security (albeit more so in Iraq than Afghanistan), their ultimate efficacy and that of the US strategy was fatally undermined by this delayed implementation and flagging will of the US to maintain this commitment. The desire for an exit strategy meant that these surges were framed as

⁸⁷⁶ Dale, *Operation Iraqi Freedom*, 13, 51.

⁸⁷⁷ S. G. Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan: RAND Counterinsurgency Study – Volume 4* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008), 89-95.

⁸⁷⁸ Collins, 'Defeat in Afghanistan', 6-8.

⁸⁷⁹ Malkasian, 'The Meaning of Setbacks in Iraq and Afghanistan', 42.

⁸⁸⁰ G. C. Jacobson, 'A Tale of Two Wars: Public Opinion on the U.S. Military Interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq', *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 40, 4 (December 2010), 585-610:590.

temporary measures intended to provide host nations with breathing space to prepare for a US withdrawal, signalling to insurgents that they only had to survive this blitz and wait until the US threat left of its own accord.⁸⁸¹ Furthermore, the lateness of this commitment meant that the job in both countries was arguably not done when the withdrawal began, as shown by the rapid deterioration of the situation in both countries afterwards (most obviously in Afghanistan).⁸⁸²

The irregular character of small wars often tricks states into believing that they can be won with a lighter footprint. However, as per Clausewitz's conception of warfare as a battle of wills, the idea of limiting one's effort in war can only lead to strategic failure.⁸⁸³ Galula himself stresses the need for "a large concentration of efforts, resources, and personnel".⁸⁸⁴ Furthermore, even if sufficient force is applied, a quick victory is not always possible due to the tactics and strategies of those involved. States waging small wars must therefore accept this and commit to 'seeing the course' from the outset if they want to achieve their objectives. This is a sentiment shared by McCuen, who asserts that "half-measures lead only to protracted, costly defeats".⁸⁸⁵ The Romans understood this, aided by their imperialist mindset and attendant military chauvinism. Despite the simultaneous threat posed by the Cimbri, reminiscent of the US' division of effort between Iraq and Afghanistan, significant strength was deployed to Numidia to deal with the irregular threat posed by Jugurtha from very early on. Had the US devoted sufficient resources to both conflicts from the outset, events might not have spiralled out of control as they did. When greater resources *were* devoted, not only was there an element of 'too little, too late' to the decision, but an unwillingness to sustain the associated expenditure of economic, human, and political capital meant that these initiatives wound down before achieving their full effect. Melshen identifies this as a particular problem for the liberal democracies of the West.⁸⁸⁶

⁸⁸¹ Malkasian, 'The Meaning of Setbacks in Iraq and Afghanistan', 42.

⁸⁸² *ibid.*, 43-46; Collins, 'Defeat in Afghanistan', 5-6.

⁸⁸³ Clausewitz, *On War*, 75-77.

⁸⁸⁴ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 58-59.

⁸⁸⁵ McCuen, *The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War*, 330.

⁸⁸⁶ P. Melshen, 'Mapping Out a Counterinsurgency Campaign Plan: Critical Considerations in Counterinsurgency Campaigning', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 18, 4 (December 2007), 665-698:670, 672.

In comparison, Rome's desire to maintain its holdings in Hispania and influence in Numidia ensured lasting commitment to those theatres in pursuit of the long-term objectives, even when the costs of the campaigns outweighed the short-term progress they were achieving. The British acceptance of a lengthy (and ultimately successful) commitment in Northern Ireland, an integral part of the United Kingdom, is another more modern example of this. Grygiel writes that part of the reason Roman strategy was successful in small wars was that it was not thought of as a temporary means of permanently ending a crisis, but rather "a constant posture aimed at managing a perennial condition" which they were prepared to maintain for generations if necessary.⁸⁸⁷ This is not to say that failed strategies should be accommodated indefinitely, as Chaliand's reflection that "time belongs to those who can put it to productive use" points to, just that success often requires the *persistent* and *determined* application of the required strength.⁸⁸⁸

Intelligence

The nature of irregular enemies like those often encountered in small wars necessarily makes some of the tasks we have explored thus far difficult, something Callwell himself identified as both a source of friction for regulars and an area where the enemy has a distinct advantage.⁸⁸⁹ This is reflected in the chapters on intelligence in both versions of *FM 3-24*, which stress intelligence's importance to the counterinsurgency threat specifically (itself a kind of small war).⁸⁹⁰ Intelligence as a field has developed significantly since Callwell's day, having come to incorporate a number of highly technical aspects as technology advanced. That being said, reconnaissance and human intelligence remain constants, due to the need to locate the enemy to eliminate him and the fundamental nature of war as a phenomenon between groups of people. This importance of intelligence is backed up by the experience of the Romans as well as other modern states.

⁸⁸⁷ J. Grygiel, *Tacitus' Agricola and Lessons for Today* (Philadelphia, PA: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2014). Available online: https://www.fpri.org/docs/Grygiel_-_Tacitus_Agricola.pdf [Accessed 10/1/2024], 4.

⁸⁸⁸ G. Chaliand, *Terrorism: From Popular Struggle to Media Spectacle* (London: Saqi Books, 1987), 71.

⁸⁸⁹ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 43-56, 143-145.

⁸⁹⁰ United States Department of the Army, *FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5: Counterinsurgency*, 3-1-3-35; United States Department of the Army, *FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5: Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies*, 8-1-8-7.

During the period of history this project examines, the Roman military had not yet developed formal intelligence structures, putting the onus on the commander to have the understanding to pay proper attention to intelligence concerns. As we know, the political basis of command appointments in the legions often resulted in poor leadership, leading to numerous failings in this regard by commanders who did not appreciate intelligence's value and what it offered. This was particularly evident in Lusitania. Intelligence failures in Lusitania can be divided between the tactical and strategic levels. On the tactical level, the routine neglect of reconnaissance led to difficulties in locating the Lusitani apart from when *they* wanted (i.e., Lusitanian ambushes on ground favourable to their tactics). This undermined the kinetic foundations of Rome's strategy while playing into the enemy's attrition strategy. On the strategic level, failures in the intelligence cycle meant that each new commander often entered the theatre unaware of its operational conditions, impeding institutional adaptations like increased reconnaissance. These failings ensured successive commanders made the same operational mistakes and limited the efficacy of Roman strategy.

Caesar's Gallic conquest, on the other hand, shows the benefit of positive engagement with intelligence. Throughout the conflict, Caesar utilised both tactical and strategic reconnaissance extensively. Both short- and long-range reconnaissance assets were used to locate enemy forces and conduct route security, cutting down the risk of surprise attacks significantly.⁸⁹¹ Meanwhile, the proconsul cultivated intelligence relationships with friendly tribes possessing greater local knowledge and access to learn more about enemy intentions, tactics, weaknesses, and troop strengths. All this intelligence fed directly into Caesar, whose uninterrupted command allowed him to utilise it in a harmonious way across the levels of war. This centralisation of intelligence removed the issues that had plagued the Lusitanian War, allowing Caesar to adapt his operations and strategy to account for these variables, identifying threats early, and targeting centres of gravity. This was undoubtedly a key enabler of the boldness and high tempo of operations that allowed Caesar to keep the initiative and

⁸⁹¹ Elliott, *Roman Special Forces*, 60-64, 69-70.

dominate the pattern of the war, a vital force multiplier given his relatively small force.⁸⁹² It was the coordination of intelligence that Melsham identifies as a key failing in Vietnam. Indeed, a unified system to coordinate intelligence pertaining to the identification and destruction of the Viet Cong was not implemented until 1968 (the Phoenix Program), by which time it was largely too late to have significant strategic impact and make up for lost ground.⁸⁹³

Arguably the most famous example of the effectiveness of intelligence in small wars is that of Malaya. In response to the British spatial control strategy in the early stages of the Emergency, the MNLA began operating in smaller units, complicating efforts to locate and eliminate them. In response, the British established cross-service intelligence frameworks to collate and distribute any collected intelligence to all branches of the effort, as well as strengthening Malaya's Special Branch. Rewards were offered for accurate information about the insurgency, bringing in actionable information from the public but also from insurgents or supporters, who were then turned to become government assets. This intelligence supported the wider spatial control strategy by identifying areas of enemy activity and directing targeted strikes against insurgent cells.⁸⁹⁴

A similar scenario played itself out in Northern Ireland, where the loss of their 'no-go area' sanctuaries following 'Operation Motorman' caused the IRA to shift to a cellular terrorist structure with fewer active members.⁸⁹⁵ Security forces therefore had to intensify intelligence efforts to gather sufficient information to counter the IRA's increasingly covert activities, with around an eighth of all British forces in Northern Ireland performing intelligence functions by the end of the 1970s.⁸⁹⁶ These included overt army reconnaissance sweeps, covert surveillance operations, and observation posts, as

⁸⁹² Callwell, *Small Wars*, 71-84; Wylie, *Military Strategy*, 87-91.

⁸⁹³ Melsham, 'Mapping Out a Counterinsurgency Campaign Plan', 676-677.

⁸⁹⁴ Paul et al., *Paths to Victory: Detailed Insurgency Case Studies*, 57-60.

⁸⁹⁵ R. English, *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 213.

⁸⁹⁶ Ministry of Defence, *Operation Banner: An Analysis of Military Operations in Northern Ireland* (Ministry of Defence, 2006). Available online: https://www.vilaweb.cat/media/attach/vwedts/docs/op_banner_analysis_released.pdf [Accessed 10/1/2024], 5-1.

well as the use of informers, infiltration, and the interrogation of detainees. The intelligence this produced enabled arrests and direct action by special forces to attrit IRA organisations.⁸⁹⁷ These missions served to reduce the violence and force the Provisional IRA to recognise that they could not achieve their objectives through insurgency.⁸⁹⁸

Though it is not enough to win a war alone, effective gathering and application of military intelligence has long been recognised as a vital enabler of military strategy and operations.⁸⁹⁹ Its importance is clear just in relation to the key lessons this study identifies. As Kitson stresses, the destruction of the enemy is severely hamstrung if they cannot be adequately identified and located.⁹⁰⁰ Without adequate intelligence as to the nature of the enemy, identifying their centre of gravity for the formulation of effective strategy or operational plans becomes very difficult. Furthermore, the ability to adapt more generally relies heavily on the availability of intelligence to direct these changes. Though many of the means utilised in the two different contexts vary wildly, the guiding principle remains the same: proper attention must be paid to intelligence concerns if the enemy's irregular characteristics are to be countered sufficiently for success.

Adaptability

The 2014 version of *FM 3-24* stresses the need for counterinsurgents to exhibit flexibility and a willingness to adapt in their operations and approach.⁹⁰¹ This is hardly exclusive to counterinsurgency, or indeed even small wars, given the diverse character of warfare. Indeed, British defence doctrine lists 'flexibility' as one of the key principles of war, describing it as "the ability to change readily to meet

⁸⁹⁷ B. W. C. Bamford, 'The Role and Effectiveness of Intelligence in Northern Ireland', *Intelligence and National Security*, 20, 4 (December 2005), 581-607.

⁸⁹⁸ D. McKittrick et al., *Lost Lives: The Stories of the Men, Women and Children who Died as a Result of the Northern Ireland Troubles* (Edinburgh: Random House, 1999), 1473-1474; Paul et al., *Paths to Victory: Detailed Insurgency Case Studies*, 322-325, 327-328.

⁸⁹⁹ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*. Translated from Chinese by S. B. Griffith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 144.

⁹⁰⁰ Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations*, 95.

⁹⁰¹ United States Department of the Army, *FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5: Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies*, 1-21, 4-7.

new circumstances...adjusting to new external conditions or responding to adversaries".⁹⁰² Though strategic culture means that certain strategic characteristics or operational approaches might be favoured by a given actor,⁹⁰³ one cannot use a single template (regardless of previous success) for all kinds of warfare and expect similarly positive results. While the 'classical' Roman approach might work for conventional conflict against peer states, parts of this proved wholly unsuitable when the enemy did not fit these criteria.

The absence of formal Roman doctrine had a twofold effect in this regard. On one hand, it left those commanders for whom military command was not their forte without a safety net. With doctrine to guide them, inexperienced commanders have a better chance of being simply 'unimaginative' rather than 'incompetent'. However, without such guidance, these men were left more prone to operational mistakes and the conception of poor strategy (if any at all). This was exacerbated by the intelligence cycle deficiencies laid out in the chapter on the Lusitanian War, which further affected performance by impeding planning and preparation for what could be expected in a theatre of operations. The absence of formal doctrine effectively forced commanders to improvise in the field beyond those practices that lay within the culturally ingrained *modus operandi* of the legions. While less able commanders often suffered in these conditions, those who took an active interest in the proper conduct of war could freely adapt their tactics and strategies to the unique operational requirements of their respective theatres. The professionalisation of the military as a field, the development of military science, and improvements in military training/educated mean that the issue of incompetent or uninterested command is much reduced nowadays. The same goes for the absence of doctrine, with most states possessing developed militaries having formulated doctrine to outline their employment.

⁹⁰² Ministry of Defence, *Joint Doctrine Publication 0-01: UK Defence Doctrine*, 6th edition (London: Ministry of Defence, 2022), 22.

⁹⁰³ Gray, *Modern Strategy*, 129-151.

One could argue that the abundance of doctrine risks fostering reliance on its dogma, with officers either unable or unwilling to deviate from prescribed methods.⁹⁰⁴ This is not an argument against doctrine, which has a legitimate place in supporting the consistent and coherent application of power. However, one must remember that doctrine's purpose is to serve as a guide rather than a set of rules.⁹⁰⁵ Commanders must therefore be willing and able to apply doctrine flexibly to the unique demands of the operational environment.

The willingness to adapt is something the Romans displayed throughout their military history, both that covered by this study and periods outside of it. The two famous building blocks of the Roman army, the maniple and cohort each rose to prominence as a direct response to operational problems the legions were facing. With the Roman phalanx struggling with the relative manoeuvrability of Samnite forces in the rough ground of the Apennines, the legions adopted the maniple (allegedly from the Samnites themselves) as the basic organisational unit of their armies. This served to improve their tactical flexibility and reduce their reliance on flat topography somewhat.⁹⁰⁶ The maniple was itself then superseded by the larger cohort when Roman contact with the Gauls required a more robust formation that could better withstand Gallic charges and increased independent operations.⁹⁰⁷

Adaptation is about more than organisational developments, however, and it is here where some problems were encountered. As mentioned above, successive Roman commanders failed to properly adapt to the irregular operational art of the Hispanic tribes and the Lusitani in particular. Continued neglect of military intelligence-gathering in the form of scouting (both tactical and long-range) resulted in repeated ambushes by the Lusitani. These ambushes were made more devastating by the apparent inability of Roman commanders to identify the recurring Lusitanian tactic of feigned retreats to disrupt the Roman battle line and draw the legions into further ambushes or rough ground.

⁹⁰⁴ J. F. C. Fuller, *The Foundations of the Science of War* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1929), 254-255.

⁹⁰⁵ Clausewitz, *On War*, 132, 141.

⁹⁰⁶ G. Forsythe, *A Critical History of Early Rome: From Prehistory to the First Punic War* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), 304-306.

⁹⁰⁷ Santosuosso, *Storming the Heavens*, 20-21.

This failure played into Viriathus' strategy, prolonging the war and costing Rome multiple armies. When Caepio did finally bring the war to its conclusion, it was enabled by adopting a less direct strategy that took these failings into consideration. Realising the folly of pursuing the Lusitani into ground of their choosing, Caepio weakened Viriathus by cutting him off from his internal and external allies. Furthermore, instead of attacking Viriathus' mountain stronghold, Caepio eliminated the Lusitanian leader through treachery within the Hispanic camp.

As posited earlier, the relative absence of disastrous defeats to irregular methods in Numidia and Gaul suggests that the legions came to recognise and adjust for the associated risks and difficulties on an institutional level following Rome's experiences on the Iberian Peninsula. Veterans of Hispania were brought in during the Jugurthine War, an implicit acknowledgement that a campaign against an infamously irregular enemy would require a distinct approach to conventional operations. This included greater use of scouts, pickets, and the adoption of battle-ready marching formations to detect and defend against guerrilla warfare, as well as a recognition of the dangers of pursuing 'retreating' guerrillas. A deliberate strategy of ground control was also adopted in response to enemy avoidance of conventional engagements, divesting Jugurtha of his support infrastructure to either draw him out or gradually strangle him into submission. Caesar, himself a veteran of operations against Lusitanian bandits, would make extensive use of scouts and fighting columns during his conquest of Gaul, further supporting the hypothesis of institutional lessons learned. Though the willingness to commit to more conventional engagements imparted by Gallic strategic culture reduced the Gauls' relative irregularity compared to other enemies from this study, not all tribes fought the same way. Some, enabled by rough terrain, preferred guerrilla methods while others eschewed land warfare almost entirely. Caesar's willingness to make coherent adaptations to the varied requirements of his conquest undoubtedly expedited Roman progress considerably.

This is something with which regular states in the modern era have a somewhat spotty record, the most obvious negative example being the US' conduct in Vietnam. The complicating factor in

Vietnam was that the US faced two different but intertwined threats: the more conventional North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong insurgency. This is reminiscent of the dual threat posed by Roman enemies covered in this study, who often posed a credible (if not always as potent) conventional threat as well as a guerrilla threat to the legions, confusing response on the part of the legions. US doctrine of leveraging superior technology and firepower in larger tactical engagements was suited to dealing with the NVA, but entrenched conventional mindsets hindered consistent adaptation to address the VC.⁹⁰⁸ Experience from the advisory period informed the adoption of new small unit tactics, particularly amongst the Special Forces and the historically small wars-oriented Marine Corps, but this was not replicated consistently across all levels.⁹⁰⁹

The US' highly kinetic approach aimed to destroy North Vietnamese combat power through 'search and destroy' strikes against guerrillas and enemy formations as part of a massive mobile defence, using principles from their conventional warfare doctrine. The logic of this approach is not necessarily unsound. Indeed, the US enjoyed tactical successes, particularly with airmobile and riverine operations that were adopted in response to local geography.⁹¹⁰ However, senior leadership failed to alter their approach to incorporate the various adaptations to local operational conditions. The failure of the Strategic Hamlet Program, due to a combination of trying to superimpose a successful technique from Malaya onto an entirely different socio-cultural setting and indifference from US commanders,⁹¹¹ ceded large parts of the country (and its support infrastructure) to the VC. The US Marines' Combined Action Program (CAP) was a response to this need to deny the enemy operational freedom and gather workable local intelligence, involving stationing squads to villages alongside local militia platoons. This principle of denying operational freedom had underpinned

⁹⁰⁸ E. D. Angell, *The Vietnam War: US Military Failure to Adapt*. JCSP Paper (Canadian Forces College, 2015). Available online: <https://www.cfc.forces.gc.ca/259/290/317/305/angell.pdf> [Accessed 10/1/2024], 1-2.

⁹⁰⁹ R. A. Doughty, *The Evolution of US Army Tactical Doctrine, 1946-1976* (Fort Leavenworth, KA: Combat Studies Institute, 1979), 25-40.

⁹¹⁰ *ibid.*; Melshen, 'Mapping Out a Counterinsurgency Campaign Plan', 678-679.

⁹¹¹ Melshen, 'Mapping Out a Counterinsurgency Campaign Plan', 667.

successful Roman operations in Numidia's irregular environment, and areas where the CAP was implemented soon experienced greater security at the cost of fewer casualties. Despite this, senior US leaders were unwilling to adjust their strategy to incorporate this approach, and it was not implemented beyond USMC commands.⁹¹² These failings ultimately undermined the broader impact of US tactical successes, a fatal flaw in the context of their attritional strategy.

The US displayed an improved capacity for adaptation to small wars in Iraq. Having successfully fought a more conventional small war against Ba'athist forces in their invasion, Coalition forces soon found themselves facing a complex nexus of irregular threats that they were not prepared for. The US response blended both bottom-up adaptation and top-down institutional innovation.⁹¹³ Fresh doctrine and training informed by the experience of in-theatre commanders was crafted, guiding a new operational approach that was enabled by a significant influx of additional troops into the country. The Jugurthine War saw a similar departure from earlier methods and troop increases following limited progress, with Metellus and Marius subsequently achieving positive results. Likewise, the security situation in Iraq began to stabilise following this shift in approach, with violence falling to the lowest levels since the war began. This provided Coalition forces with the breathing room necessary to focus on preparing the new Iraqi state for their withdrawal. Though, in the context of the wider Iraqi conflict, this phase of the 'Iraq War' would prove only a short-term success,⁹¹⁴ it remained just that: a success. Furthermore, it was a success brought about by a recognition of the need to adapt to the new operational reality. However, this same approach failed to replicate its success in Afghanistan, having been designed for the strategic context of an entirely different conflict.⁹¹⁵ This again proves the importance of a flexible approach to small wars that considers local operational conditions.

⁹¹² A. F. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 66-69, 172-177.

⁹¹³ D. Ucko, 'Innovation or Inertia: The U.S. Military and the Learning of Counterinsurgency', *Orbis*, 52, 2 (2008), 290-310:292.

⁹¹⁴ Malkasian, 'The Meaning of Setbacks in Iraq and Afghanistan', 43.

⁹¹⁵ C. Tripodi, 'Hidden Hands: The Failure of Population-centric Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan 2008-11', *Journal of Strategic Studies* (2023), 7. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2023.2169673> [Accessed 10/1/2024].

As we have seen in this study, small wars can take on any number of forms, ranging from guerrilla wars to campaigns more closely resembling conventional warfare. Often, small wars can take on multiple forms within the same conflict, as in the case of the modern wars in Iraq and Vietnam and Caesar's conquest of Gaul explored in this section. As Gray points out, this is not unique to irregular warfare, but it *is* more pronounced in this context.⁹¹⁶ Indeed, Callwell notes that "the art of war, as generally understood, must be modified to suit the circumstances of each particular case". To this end, he also advises that the enemy's methods should therefore be studied in advance so that they can be adapted to from the outset.⁹¹⁷ However, this is not always possible, due to failures of intelligence or the fact that the enemy themselves may change their approach mid-war. Forces conducting small wars must therefore enter the fight with a willingness to tailor their approach to the unique requirements of the conflict, whether that is the enemy themselves or the theatre in which the war is fought. This is aided significantly by competent command, who can harmonise these lessons with wider strategy.

This was the failure in Vietnam, where disharmony and institutional inflexibility prevented the effective implementation of responses to the challenges of the conflict. In Lusitania, Roman commanders failed to adapt to the irregular operational art of the enemy, causing several costly setbacks and prolonging the war significantly. It was not until a new approach that recognised these difficulties was implemented by Caepio that decisive progress was made. This study has shown that, following this hard lesson, the Romans displayed a keener awareness of the need to adapt their approach not just for small wars generally but to the specific characteristics of each campaign. The failure in Afghanistan of counterinsurgency methods that had met with some success in Iraq also supports this. Ultimately, it is important to remember that adaptation is not about trying to reinvent the wheel in that one strays from the principles of warfare. The continued importance of the use of force and centres of gravity show that these principles still apply to small wars. However, their

⁹¹⁶ C. Gray, 'Irregular Warfare: One Nature, Many Characters', *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, 1, 2 (Winter 2007), 35-57.

⁹¹⁷ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 23, 32-33.

implementation must be moulded to suit the context of the war, with Callwell warning that those who fail to adapt “will assuredly find themselves in difficulties and may meet with grievous misfortune”.⁹¹⁸

The Population is Important

Classical counterinsurgency theory asserts that the support of the population is the key in small wars, with the 2006 version of *FM 3-24* identifying it as the centre of gravity over which both sides fight.⁹¹⁹ This so-called ‘population-centric’ approach is much influenced by Maoist theories of people’s war, in which the people are a vital source of energy, material support, and sanctuary.⁹²⁰ This aligns with Clausewitz’ view of the people as one of the core pillars of war in general, their passion and will fuelling the war effort with their direct involvement in the fighting and support of the political goals in play.⁹²¹ The logic inherent to this population-centric approach that has been dominant in small wars circles is therefore clear: by exerting control over the population, one can rob the enemy of an important means of sustaining their war efforts and thus achieving their political objectives.

The case studies show that the Romans understood the importance of the population and its function in small wars, and therefore sought to influence them in various ways. The primary dynamic with which they did this revolved around the contrasting and complimentary applications of the carrot and the stick. Though there are examples of this in our case studies of Numidia and Lusitania, it is best shown by Caesar’s handling of the Gallic tribes during his conquest. Like the Romans did, we will begin with the stick, the Roman use of which displayed an innate understanding of the principles underpinning Schelling’s thoughts on violent diplomacy.⁹²²

Much of this came during the active phase of hostilities, where the Romans leveraged their military dominance to inflict severe hurt on hostile Gauls. The inexorable momentum of the legions and their destruction of Gallic armies on the battlefield imparted major moral blows against the tribes,

⁹¹⁸ *ibid.*, 32-33.

⁹¹⁹ United States Department of the Army, *FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5: Counterinsurgency*, 3-13.

⁹²⁰ Mao, *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung*.

⁹²¹ Clausewitz, *On War*, 89.

⁹²² Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 1-34.

shattering their illusions as to the possibility of resisting Roman will. The costs of resistance were reinforced by displays of the power to hurt Roman dominance imparted. These ranged from the destruction of economic potential via the destruction of settlements and devastation of lands to more existential threats like the enslavement or outright slaughter of tribal populations. These were followed up by further latent threats in the form of legionary garrisons (which also imparted an economic cost) and the taking of hostages, the latter of which Schelling describes as “the power to hurt in its purest form”.⁹²³ These displays of Roman dominance and potential for hurt served as bargaining tools to break the popular will, compelling their submission and deterring future support for hostility.⁹²⁴

This was contrasted with more lenient treatment of tribes that gave up resistance and submitted to Roman authority. Aside from the obvious benefit of avoiding the more painful examples of brute force, these tribes might receive reduced hostage requirements, indemnities, or the avoidance of a legionary garrison. Furthermore, active collaboration by tribal elites (e.g., providing direct military support, intelligence, or logistics) could see them empowered and enriched both nationally and personally through the conferment of vassals, additional territories, Roman trade rights, and promises of protection.⁹²⁵ This transactional accommodation formed an integral part of Rome’s post-conflict management strategy of Romanisation, which worked from the top down over successive generations to secure the peace Rome’s initial displays of military dominance had won. More immediately, by leveraging their military dominance and power to hurt against these perceived benefits of compliance, the Romans were able to manipulate large segments of the populations in question into giving up on resistance and even supporting Roman efforts.⁹²⁶ In Gaul, this kept the tribes divided for much of the Caesar’s command, serving as a vital force multiplier by enabling his small force to confront the tribes in detail.

⁹²³ *ibid.*, 6, 14.

⁹²⁴ *ibid.*, 14, 30.

⁹²⁵ Sanders, *Julius Caesar and the Gallic Campaign*, 24-26.

⁹²⁶ Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 4.

This combination of the military defeat of combatants, the use of force against civilians, and the accommodation of elite interests applied by the Romans in Gaul interestingly mirrors the “compellence theory” of counterinsurgency success advocated for by Hazelton.⁹²⁷ As part of her dismantling of the narrative of the “good governance” approach, Hazelton tackles the infamous misinterpretation of the Malayan Emergency as a successful example of such an approach. Though Malaya does not feature quite the same levels of compellence as used by the Romans, the concept still underpinned many counterinsurgent interactions with the Malay Chinese population.⁹²⁸ Bennett describes how security forces razed entire communities, liberally applied lethal force, conducted mass arrests/deportations, and forcibly resettled populations into highly-controlled ‘new villages’ where infractions were often punished collectively.⁹²⁹ Authorised by emergency legislation, these were deliberate measures of what Schelling labels ‘brute force’ and ‘coercion’ directed against the population to deter involvement in or support for rebellious behaviour.⁹³⁰ Combined with the proactive attrition of the insurgents, these brutal measures served to break the will of the enemy’s supporters as well as physically preventing them from aiding the irregulars. This fatally weakened the MNLA and eased their ultimate destruction considerably.⁹³¹

Galula’s work asserts that most of the population in a given small war is neutral and will make rational choices as to which side to support, one of which is a calculation as to which has “the will, the means, and the ability to win”.⁹³² This is an important characteristic of the population, and one which can at times be exploited through coercive displays of dominance like those undertaken by the British and the Romans. Clausewitz identifies that simply disarming the enemy can sometimes prove insufficient to disabuse them of their hostile intentions if their will has not been sufficiently broken,

⁹²⁷ Hazelton, *Bullets Not Ballots*, 18-21.

⁹²⁸ *ibid.*, 33-41.

⁹²⁹ H. Bennett, “‘A Very Salutory Effect’: The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949”, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32, 3 (June 2009), 415-444.

⁹³⁰ Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 2-6.

⁹³¹ Hazelton, *Bullets Not Ballots*, 18.

⁹³² Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 56-58.

appearing to leave room for applying the power to hurt against the popular will directly.⁹³³ It bears mentioning that the harshest treatment must be directed against the hostile minority rather than the neutral majority,⁹³⁴ as we identified Caesar's brutality largely was. However, though Clausewitz asserts that the imposition of limits on the use of force contradicts war's nature,⁹³⁵ even Callwell admits that excessive coercive measures can sometimes be counterproductive.⁹³⁶ Though Kitson advises altering legal frameworks to give the state a freer hand,⁹³⁷ modern concerns as to legitimacy and *jus in bello* can complicate the use of coercion, which must be adapted to the requirements of acceptability as well as policy. Ultimately, like Murray and Grimsley note, "strategy is the art of the possible".⁹³⁸

Just as the Romans understood the utility of the power to hurt, they also understood its limits. Roman exploitation of their conquests required stability and the collaboration of the locals. The thorough application of force set the short-term conditions for stability by displaying Roman dominance and the folly of resistance.⁹³⁹ These are sentiments shared by Callwell, who espoused that "prestige is everything in such warfare".⁹⁴⁰ However, the long-term conditions required by Roman policy necessitated the use of both soft power and the less kinetic elements of hard power to control popular resistance. It is nevertheless important to remember that the carrot relies upon the stick to give it context, suggesting the relevance of all elements of grand strategy to control. Popular support is thus not an end itself, since such an interpretation ignores the fact that small wars are violent struggles between armed groups. Nevertheless, the population and its will can be a centre of gravity or a supporting critical requirement, giving manipulation of all kinds to that end strategic value. These examples have shown that exerting control over these factors can enable the defeat (which must

⁹³³ Clausewitz, *On War*, 90.

⁹³⁴ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 56; J. Paget, *Counter-Insurgency Campaigning* (London: Faber & Faber, 1967), 168-169.

⁹³⁵ Clausewitz, *On War*, 75-77.

⁹³⁶ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 147-149.

⁹³⁷ F. Kitson, *Bunch of Five* (London: Faber & Faber, 1977), 290-291.

⁹³⁸ W. Murray & M. Grimsley, 'Introduction: On Strategy', in W. Murray et al. (eds.), *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1-23:22.

⁹³⁹ Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 5.

⁹⁴⁰ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 40-42, 79.

remain the focus) of hostile actors by leaving them isolated and weakened, as Rome's initial subjugation and subsequent control over Gaul displays.

The Application of Force and Defeating the Enemy

Many of the lessons we have explored have looked at how military force can best be directed against irregular enemies in pursuit of their defeat. As identified in this thesis' introduction, Callwell was clear in his conception of small wars as a military problem first and foremost, reflected by the overwhelmingly military nature of his recommendations. The case studies we have examined suggest this understanding of small wars as military problems with kinetic solutions is one the Romans shared.

We have seen that other elements of Roman power were leveraged as part of their grand strategy for "managing [the] perennial condition" of armed resistance to Rome,⁹⁴¹ a posture which itself recognises that "in war the result is never final".⁹⁴² Nonetheless, the outbreaks of the overt symptoms of said condition were dealt with by the use of force. The gradual attrition of Lusitanian forces allowed the Romans to re-establish control over Hispania Ulterior, weakening Viriathus sufficiently that he was made vulnerable to elimination, after which what remained of Lusitanian strength was decisively crushed under his less capable successor. Likewise, it was the occupation of Jugurtha's country and the destruction of his armies by Metellus and Marius that ultimately forced the Numidian king to seek the surrender that led to his capture and execution. Meanwhile, though enabled by Caesar's 'divide and rule' strategy, it was the myriad defeats handed to the tribes' armies by the legions on both an individual and collective basis that enforced Gallic subjugation to Roman authority.

A key ingredient of Caesar's success in Gaul was his exploitation of the legions' endurance and relative speed (coupled with an almost reckless operational boldness) to dominate the initiative, recognised by Callwell as just as important in small wars as in regular warfare. Gaul shows how maintaining the initiative can enable success across the levels of war, just as Lusitania shows the effects

⁹⁴¹ Grygiel, *Tacitus' Agricola and Lessons for Today*, 4.

⁹⁴² Clausewitz, *On War*, 80.

of ceding it to the enemy in terms of allowing him control over the pattern of war.⁹⁴³ Less regular enemies in small wars often seek to exert significant control over their contact with regulars so as to protect themselves from their conventional strength. These characteristics of Caesar and the legions kept the Gauls on the back foot for much of the Roman conquest, denying them this control and ensuring Roman blows struck all the harder.⁹⁴⁴ The legions' battlefield victories and the dominant fashion in which they were won then underpinned the wider system of population control that the Roman state effected as a constant, generational process.⁹⁴⁵

The direct, kinetic approach of the Romans is one that finds a modern equivalent in the so-called 'enemy-centric' paradigm of counterinsurgency. Rather than seeing counterinsurgency as a matter of population control like classical theory largely does, this approach sees the military defeat of the enemy as the regulars' primary task. However, classical counterinsurgency thought contends that kinetic strategies are doomed to failure, as the liberal use of force risks strengthening popular will against the regulars and causing only greater resistance.⁹⁴⁶

Much like Roman conduct, the Sri Lankan Civil War shows that this is not always the case. This conflict saw the majority Sinhalese Sri Lankan government face an asymmetric threat from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a militant group representing the country's Tamil minority. Over the course of the conflict, the LTTE accumulated significant strength, bolstering their guerrilla warfare with conventional capabilities like artillery, naval, and air support. After decades of conflict, the government decided the matter by seizing the initiative and going on the offensive with overwhelming conventional force. Government forces conducted targeted strikes against LTTE infrastructure and leadership, engaged larger formations in the field, and laid siege to LTTE-controlled population centres. Little attention was paid to what modern counterinsurgency theorists might call 'minimum force', and

⁹⁴³ Wylie, *Military Strategy*, 87-91.

⁹⁴⁴ Callwell, *Small Wars*, 71-84.

⁹⁴⁵ Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 2-3.

⁹⁴⁶ C. Paul et al., 'Moving Beyond Population-Centric vs. Enemy-Centric Counterinsurgency', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 27, 6 (2016), 1019-1042:1023.

large numbers of Tamil civilians ended up as casualties. Far from strengthening the LTTE, Sri Lanka's enemy-centric approach resulted in the group's total destruction within a handful of years, expedited by mass surrenders amongst LTTE militants. The Sri Lankan government did not attempt to increase its popular support amongst the Tamils through political accommodation or by 'protecting them' from the LTTE, it won by ensuring it decisively defeated the group militarily.⁹⁴⁷ Though, as we discussed earlier in our lesson on the need to adapt, the diverse nature of warfare (and small wars in particular) means that its application must vary, these considerations show that the use of conventional force to defeat enemy forces does have a place in small wars.

In his writings on counterinsurgency, Galula famously asserted that "a revolutionary war is 20 per cent military action and 80 per cent political".⁹⁴⁸ This premise was seized upon wholeheartedly by the small wars community, and its influence is clear in both iterations of *FM 3-24*, where military action is much restrained and clearly subordinated to efforts to gain the support of the population as a means of ending insurgency.⁹⁴⁹ This was the problem in Afghanistan, where the fundamental failure was in not defeating the Taliban militarily. The Taliban did not ride a wave of popular support back to power in 2021,⁹⁵⁰ but seized control of the country in a military offensive that marked the culmination of years of steady gains at the bloody expense of Afghan forces.⁹⁵¹

This failure stemmed from a misunderstanding as to the nature of force and warfare in general, one that is in fact endemic to the field of small wars; largely thanks to the dominance of counterinsurgency. Galula's statement as to the proportion to which military or political actions make

⁹⁴⁷ Paul et al., *Paths to Victory: Detailed Insurgency Case Studies*, 435-438; A. S. Hashim, *When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka's Defeat of the Tamil Tigers* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 42-45, 132-196.

⁹⁴⁸ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 66.

⁹⁴⁹ United States Department of the Army, *FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5: Counterinsurgency*, 1-20–1-29; United States Department of the Army, *FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5: Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies*, 1-19, 1-21, 7-1–7-2.

⁹⁵⁰ The Asia Foundation, *A Survey of the Afghan People: Afghanistan in 2019* (San Francisco, CA: The Asia Foundation, 2019). Available online: <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/survey-afghan-people-afghanistan-2019> [Accessed 10/1/2024], 19.

⁹⁵¹ Collins, 'Defeat in Afghanistan', 5-13.

up revolutionary war exemplifies this. These statements fly in the face of the basic principles of strategy by attempting to separate military force from political policy. As these lessons have noted repeatedly, 'military action' (war) does not happen in a vacuum but is the vehicle by which an actor enforces its policy objectives on another. 'Insurgency' is a label applied to complex conflicts that exhibit certain characteristics. However, this complexity does not change the fact that insurgencies are still (small) wars, albeit ones hyper-adapted to the asymmetric challenges of the modern day.

The Romans had an innate understanding of this in that they were not distracted by the character of a conflict but viewed it abstractly in terms of the natural and eternal principles of warfare. The legions, a conventional warfighting force, were dispatched in strength proportionate for the use of force in pursuit of a certain policy objective. This was principally achieved by the attrition of enemy forces in the field to, as Clausewitz says, disarm the enemy and thus force them to bow to the Roman will.⁹⁵² This clearly prioritised the enemy army as a centre of gravity, a core principle of the Clausewitzian understanding of the concept. Roman logic here is clear: if the aim in war is to compel one's enemy to do one's will, and their principle means of resisting that is their armed forces, removal of this barrier is the way to success.⁹⁵³ This was supplemented by the capture or destruction of physical infrastructure like settlements, another key Clausewitzian ingredient of the defeat of the enemy. These are principles conceived in the context of conventional warfare but which proved highly effective in the asymmetric contexts in which Rome applied them by virtue of the fact that, regardless of the characteristics of the war in question, there was the same ultimate purpose behind the act.

Concluding Remarks

This thesis set out to contribute to the ongoing learning experience within the small wars community following the high profile modern day small wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; particularly as fresh conventional war, and the overwhelming demands for attention that will surely accompany it,

⁹⁵² Clausewitz, *On War*, 75-77.

⁹⁵³ *ibid.*, 485-487, 595-597.

threatens its proper completion. To this end, the thesis examined the small wars experience of the Roman Republic to find out what, if any, lessons it may offer the modern context.

Central to this was identifying what is meant by the term 'small wars'. This thesis worked from a Callwellian understanding of the topic that stresses, above all other factors, asymmetry as being the key marker of a small war. This can manifest itself in a multitude of different ways, many of which influence one another. Regular forces possess superior firepower, better training, discipline, and organisation when compared to their less regular opponents. These chiefly provide them with a major conventional advantage that proves most impactful on the tactical level. In many cases, however, the less regular side responds to this by adopting irregular tactics and indirect strategies, which can help to mitigate their conventional disadvantages by playing to their other strengths. Callwellian theory, supported by the findings of our case studies, shows that these can include superior manoeuvrability thanks to operational lightness; greater proficiency in irregular methods due to strategic culture; better knowledge of how to operate in the local terrain; and advantages in terms of military intelligence. Small wars campaigns can take various forms, ranging from wars of conquest to campaigns for the suppression of rebellion (which might today be referred to as counterinsurgency) and those of expediency. Asymmetry remains small wars' defining characteristic, however. This fulfils our first research objective.

Three wars of the Roman Republic were examined through this lens: the Lusitanian War, the Jugurthine War, and the Gallic War. Roman campaigns were explored, looking at the strategies adopted, operational art, and the key considerations which could be seen to be taken into account. The relevance of these conflicts to the topic of small wars was tested by applying Callwellian criteria as the touchstone, as was the success of these campaigns in relation to their policy objectives. These case studies showed that, despite the lack of formal doctrine to guide Roman practice, what passes for a 'Roman approach to small wars' can be identified. The Romans saw small wars as military problems with broadly conventional solutions, including the targeting of key centres of gravity like the

enemy's army, leadership, and settlements. Maintaining division (both military/physical and political) amongst the enemy was an important enabler of this. The former was achieved by spatial dominance, while the latter was enabled by the use of the proverbial carrot and the less proverbial stick. Underpinning all of these was a willingness to commit both materially and temporally to the conflict to ensure success. Our analysis of these wars shows that, though not always smooth-sailing, this approach often met with success. This fulfils our second research objective.

The character of the modern small wars experience presents much differently than that of the Romans due to advances in technology, changing attitudes as to what is acceptable in warfare, and changing perceptions as to how to approach certain strategic problems on a theoretical level. However, comparison between the two reveals several commonalities in terms of shared difficulties and experiences. The primary areas of overlap were identified as: the practicality of limiting enemy freedom of operation; the value of effectively targeting centres of gravity; the necessity of commitment to the conflict in question; the need for proper attention to be paid to intelligence; the advantages of adaptation; the importance of the population; and the fundamental fact that the enemy must be defeated. Some of these are more important than others, but taken together they represent key factors in the proper conduct of small wars, regardless of the context.

These factors may seem obvious, but this thesis' ultimate lesson is that those conducting small wars must not forget the basics of strategy. Many of the lessons explored in the case studies and the conclusion draw us back to the fundamental and eternal principles that underpin the endeavour that is war, in particular those espoused by Clausewitz. Though these concepts had not been 'theorised' yet, this thesis has shown that the Romans understood many of the principles implicitly, and built their approach to warfare (and small wars within that) around these natural laws of 'good warmaking'. Meanwhile, the development of reams of theory on warfare of all forms and varieties has sometimes led modern practitioners of strategy to overthink their discipline and thus lose sight of these eternal principles. Counterinsurgency, a discipline which sets itself apart from its cousins by virtue of the fact

that it is 'more political' than 'regular' warfare (itself an inherently political act) is a good example of this.

This thesis is not arguing that small wars as a discipline should be done away with entirely and that all wars should be fought in the same way; to suggest as much would also fly in the face of the nature of warfare (in this case its diversity). What the examination of the two experiences shows is that, regardless of the character of the fighting, practitioners of strategy must remember that war is about *the tailored use of force to defeat the enemy in pursuit of a certain political object*. Indeed, this thesis' analysis shows that this is something which Callwell's more straightforward approach had a better grasp of. This is not pitched as a cure-all for small wars, but it is a necessary ingredient for all good strategy, and one will be right more often than he is wrong if he keeps it in mind. This, taken together with the previous point, fulfils the third and fourth research objectives. Ultimately, the lessons of this thesis point us back to Clausewitz's statement that "everything in war is very simple, but the simplest thing is difficult".⁹⁵⁴ Adapting to the specific character of small wars can be difficult, but the principles behind them are fundamentally simple and should not be overthought.

⁹⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 119.

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